STRIPPING OFF THE VEIL

Women's Performances of the Veil from Street to Stage

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ABSTRACT

Through a practice-based research, this thesis engages at theorising the different performances of the veil. Unlike the Western postulation of the veil as an icon of Muslim women’s oppression, I see it as not one but fluid, very complex and multi-layered in meanings, performances, forms, fabrics and colours. Each woman has her own veil; real, or metaphoric. For the veil is not exclusively Muslim, but universal; ranging from the ‘hijab’ that Muslim women wear to feminist literary theory that Cixous, for instance, labels as "écriture féminine", to British women’s theatre: ‘Herstories’, to Moroccan women’s oral performances in women’s-only-spaces/ ‘pri-blic’ spaces – my invented word for public spaces which are used as private ones. In this thesis, I have tried to analyse the veil as both a signifier and a signified, and to study it as a ‘third site’ of women’s resistance, contestation, and empowerment.

The mapping of this thesis is meant to be as fluid, plural, non-linear, and non-conclusive as the veil itself in order to match theory with practice, but since this work is an academic research, conventional criteria of organisation are maintained. Consequently, this thesis is divided into three parts. The first one is a theoretical and practical framework of the Muslim veil’s different performances; in which I try to encompass personal observations, interviews, and photographs with relevant theoretical perspectives with the aim of coming up with an analysis of a background questionnaire that complements what is said about the real veil. The second part deals with Cixous’s "écriture féminine" and the British women’s theatre as two samples of the metaphoric veil that empower women and enable them to represent their bodies in the male-centred literary canon. With the video performance of Lear’s Daughters by my students and under my direction, I
attempt to illustrate the British women's theatre; "herstories" as a metaphoric veil. In the third part, I attempt to test the extent to which the metaphoric veil -theatre- could help me in stripping the veil off some of the Moroccan women veiled site-specific performances -'pri-blic' spaces- such as the Hammam, the Fitness Gym, and the Moroccan Salon.

Finding it impossible to have a live record of these Moroccan veiled women's site-specific performances, and to practice what I theorised as the metaphoric veil, I improvised the play-text: *The Harem* (2000) as a substitute. This allows me to represent the 'pri-blic' on the stage, testing its realism by a questionnaire that I devised for this purpose. Accordingly, both the live performance of *The Harem* and the performance of *Lear's Daughters* by the students should be judged as technically modest endeavours that attempt to experiment what this thesis attempts to theorise, with very elementary means and non-professional performers who have never seen any real theatrical performance (for the simple reason that there is no theatre in the city we are living in).

Although this thesis format is traditional I hope that it remains very open in spirit. The interdisciplinary nature of the methodology and approaches employed make this thesis touch upon religion, feminist theory, British women's theatre, Moroccan oral culture, social and cultural studies, theatre and performance studies, and ethnography. The aim is to open new horizons for women to use the veil to highlight both its fluidity in its everyday performativities, and in its metaphoric ones as a means of crossing boundaries not of imprisonment.
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3. With a lot of rage and anger, but with red flowers and white handkerchiefs, thousands and thousands of secularists paraded on the main streets of Rabat on 12th March 2000, for the celebration of the 8th March. In Western casual clothes, the supporters of "the Integration Plan" were yelling no to violence, and yes to change". Their slogan was: "Onward-to-modernity and equality". 25

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23. In the theatre festival of Meknes in 1999, I met one of the founders of Moroccan professional theatre Mr Ahmed A1j, and one of the first Moroccan professional actresses, Habiba El Madkouri.
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INTRODUCTION:
Real/ Metaphoric Veils: Theories and Practices

Numerous are the veils that used to muffle women, and that have been stripped off in many places of the world, but numerous are the new veils that emerge again and need to be removed. Veils are produced by all societies; they are defended by those who benefit from the imposition of rules, and resisted by those who see them as boundaries. If all the veils are stripped off what space can be left to writers to discover? Like taboos, veils:

have the ability to rise from their own ashes and to emerge, a decade or so later, simply because moral victories are not necessarily long-lived, new generations bring about new taboos, unpredictable new approaches, new definitions and, of course, raise new questions.

The modern writer is required to blur, re-consider, subvert, and deconstruct boundaries, or use them in order to play with them and not within them. Yet, the veil, ranging from the Muslim dress to the invisibility and under-representation of women in the literary canon and theatre, is a gender-based practice, as more females than males hide behind veils: natural or constructed, real or metaphoric, physical or moral, religious or political, cultural or aesthetic.

What attracts me in this term is its complexity, its richness, and its spatial and cultural transgression. It is dynamic, and present everywhere, in Morocco as in other geographical spaces. The veil is plural, fluid, and changeable. Each performance space has its own veil, as each woman has her own veil, that some want to preserve, others crave to strip off. It is the cloak
that covers the Muslim women's bodies, as well as the barrier that divides the space into private and public; into female and male. It is the traditions and the shackles that tie women's bodies, and the rules and authorities that make them invisible in the canon, in theatre, in parliament, in government, and in other patriarchal spaces. It may be a political, religious or cultural taboo that women are trying to dismantle, as it may be a mask, a site of resistance, a third space that women hide behind.

This thesis aims to engage, theoretically and practically, in stripping off some of the performances of the veil. For the veil is not a homogenous concept as Fadwa El Guindi (1999) writes in the opening statement of her book:

Despite the inclusion of the word 'veil' in the titles of many publications, the veil as a phenomenon has been treated in a perfunctory manners as a homogenous object, a material element of clothing almost exclusively embedded in gender, and distorted by ethnocentric account, or studied from the perspective of women's studies alone (p:1)

The veil is not only a dress, nor only a symbol of the Muslim identity, but it is a female's body performance, and a mask behind which women could speak their bodies, and transmit their discourses. Resistance to definition appears to be the redefining characteristic of this term. This is apparent in common usage where the veil is treated as the Muslim dress/ hijab, or commonly used, by Western feminists, as an icon of Muslim women's oppression.

In my opinion, these two views on the veil are too simplistic. The term 'veil' is very complex and multi-layered. It is at the same time the real veil: the Muslim veil/ hijab, a cloak that Muslim women wear, and the metaphoric veil, a mask, a women's writing and performance that women use as sites to
perform their resistance to the boundaries. My alternative to defining what the
veil is, is to illustrate the everyday performativities of the veiled women’s
bodies, and the literary and theatrical performances of women writers and
performers behind the metaphoric veil.

Veiled women in Morocco take the veil as an icon of their Muslim
identity. It is a third space that enables them to write their bodies (in the
Cixousian sense) in the public space because they believe that:

more people throughout the Middle East look to Islam as a
liberatory project and conformity to the sacred texts, a
revitalised Shari’a, and the rule of Muslim jurists appeal to
the disenfranchised masses as the only hope for meaningful
change in their lives.2

Likewise, Cixous exhorts women to write their bodies in order to make
their voices heard using “écriture féminine”. Thus Cixous’ “écriture féminine”
could be a metaphoric veil that provides women writers with a space in which
they can break their silence and voice their invisibility:

In the beginning the gesture of writing is linked to the
experience of disappearance, to the feeling of having lost the
key to the world, of having been thrown outside, of having
suddenly acquired the precious sense of the rare, of the
mortal, of having urgently the entrance, the breath to keep the
trace (Coming to Writing, p:19).

The correlation between women’s invisibility from the canon is writing
their “écriture féminine”. Cixous purports that theatre offers women
playwrights a space where they can write their bodies and represent themselves
as subjects, not objects:

In the theatre one can only work with a self that has almost
evaporated, that has transformed itself into space (“Aller à la
Mer”, p: 546).
Theatre, as a metaphoric veil, provides women with a place to perform their bodies, and initiate their ‘alternative’ theatre. This is confirmed by the popularity of women’s theatre which is continuously consolidating its position in the British theatrical tradition, for instance.

My awareness of the richness, plurality, and fluidity of the veil, whether in its forms, colours, fabrics, or as a third space of resistance and contestation, has fostered my new awareness of its multilayered and rich performances. The veiled body does not only write her own body, but performs its cultural, social, political, and sexual roles and boundaries. For real or metaphoric, the veil is gender performance.

In this dissertation, I seek to explore, textually and performatively, the multiple performances of the Muslim veil/ the real veil, and the metaphoric veil. By the real veil, I mean what is widely known as the Muslim veil or the hijab; the long, large and dark-coloured dress and the scarf that the Muslim women wear, what is known in the Islamic world as the separation between the sexes into male and female, or the division of the space into private and public. My aim is to study the real veil in its everyday performances of resistance against Muslim women’s marginalization and seclusion. On the other hand, I introduce in the second and the third parts of this thesis, what I call "the metaphoric veil", that is the literary, theatrical discourse that women writers use as a disguise to invade one of the "male's world": the literary canon.

In the course of this research, I realised that relatively little attention has been given to the study of the veil as a site where resistance is performed. Whatever studies existed about the real veil, are mainly about it as the Muslim dress, and these are, with a few exceptions, scattered in texts and records. This
is so, because the concept of the veil is perhaps still misunderstood and loaded with many prejudices. It is either completely avoided as a subject of research or dealt with in a biased way because of its ideological connotations or orientalist fantasies. It is only recently that some serious research has been done on the real veil: Fatima Mernissi (1991), Leila Ahmed (1992), Margot Badran (1995), Mai Yamani (1996), Fadwa El Guindi (1999), and Haideh Moghissi (1999), as feminism and women studies gained momentum within the Arab-Islamic academia, but almost nothing has been said about the metaphoric veil so far.

This thesis began as a curiosity triggered mainly by the absence or the under representation of British women’s playwrights in the literary theatrical canon. As it evolved, it went beyond the re-reading of the theatrical tradition, to a re-discovery of Moroccan women’s oral performances in their every day women’s-only-spaces that I label ‘pri-plic’ spaces in the absence of women’s theatre in the Moroccan academic syllabi. My task as a drama researcher, who identifies with women’s struggle against all forms of subordination, is to unveil this genre of theatre (women’s theatre) to the Moroccan academia and audience. This discovery and re-discovery are motivated by two main cultural, social and political impetuses. Firstly, the absence of women’s theatre in Morocco. Secondly, the up-roar instigated by the “Integration-Plan” that divided Moroccan women’s body into two halves, veiled and non-veiled. Never had gender relations been at the forefront of public, private, and national debates in Morocco as during the last two years that followed March 12th, 2000.

This research charts my voyage of discovery from the everyday performances of the veil to the metaphoric veil as sampled by Cixous’
écriture féminine, British Women’s Theatre ‘Herstories’, and Moroccan Women’s ‘Pri-blic’ Spaces delineated in The Harem.

This dissertation is, therefore, structured around a process of interrogation, which is often self-reflexive in so far as it offers interpretations of different women’s performances of the veil while questioning the ground on which these interpretations are constructed. This is achieved by exploring the different performances of the veil from the street, through the text, to the stage. This implies the critical perspective shifts from Qur’an and Hadith to Cixous ‘écriture féminine’ to British women’s theatre, and last to Moroccan oral culture and its performance on the stage. However, this is a thesis which attempts to preserve and respect differences, and which resists synthesis and the a priori establishing of a single model for either creating or analysing any sort of performance practice, political or otherwise.

I have organised the discussion of the veil, be it real or metaphoric, not around schools of theory or the work of particular theorists, but rather around issues related to the specific veil under discussion. These issues are organized as follows.

Firstly, I deal with the real veil/ the Muslim veil/ hijab. In a religious theoretical framework of the veil, I analyze the dynamics of the veil as a garment and as a body language in its spatial, visual, ethical, and performative dimensions. My focus is on the different readings of the Muslim veil, and its effects on the political, economical, and social conditions of Moroccan women as a means of division of space: public and private, for instance. Since the veil has many colours, forms, and fabrics, it has definitely many performances in the street as a political space.
Being fluid and gender-based, the veil is differently defined in the world's societies and cultures. Each woman has her own veil which varies from the garb that Muslim women wear to the literary discourse "écriture féminine", or women's theatre. My point, then, is to argue that the veil is a very dynamic site of resistance that both oppresses women and empowers their performances, whether on the street or on the stage. It is the metaphorical veil sampled in Cixous “écriture féminine” and British women’s theatre, mainly ‘herstories’, that women use to write their bodies, represent, and perform their bodies on the stage.

Finally, the process outcome of this practice based research includes the textual and the performance of The Harem, a play improvised to unveil Moroccan women’s ‘pri-blic’ spaces to the audience, to prove that the everyday practices constitute the backbone of theatre, to show that the subaltern can speak, and to test the postulation that theatre can be a metaphorical veil behind which women could dismantle taboos.

Within the structure of the thesis, I have applied specific theoretical trends which seem most appropriate to the issues under consideration. First, I have not undertaken an exhaustive discussion of the religious explanations of the term ‘veil’, but rather have tried to give a broad, general coverage of its main dimensions, as those that seem most relevant to the Moroccan women’s everyday performances of the veil.

Second, I have devised each part to the analysis of a type of women’s veils, be it real or metaphorical, as a site of their resistance and empowerment not of their oppression and marginalisation. I also have investigated the reception of the spectator as a critic of the two performances of the
metaphoric veil: *Lear’s Daughters* and *The Harem*. The writing and the production of these two performances, as well as the analysis of the reception of the spectators are meant to create a dialogue between the theory of the performance of the metaphoric veil and the practice of making this performance work.

Given these caveats, the theoretical movements I discuss are intermingled with the diverse practical performances of the veil. Geraldine Harris (1999) observes that the divide between theory and practice is insurmountable, so she would prefer to acknowledge that:

> while the perceived ‘gap’ between theory and practice is at times a locus of difficulty, it is also a potentially productive space (p:2).

It is this productive space between the theory and the performance of the veil that I have explored in the search for a dialogue between theory and practice. The emphasis on the practice is greater as it serves to test out and illuminate the postulation of the metaphoric veil as an empowering mask behind which women playwrights could hide to perform their bodies and speak their voices.

However, given the academic nature of this work, a great deal of space is inevitably given over to elucidating theory, sometimes at the expense of discussing the practice. My starting point has been the work of a number of feminist theorists ranging from Arab feminists such as Mernissi (1987, 1994), Yamani (1996), Leila Ahmed (1982, 1992), and many others, French Feminists such as Cixous (1975 to 1998), Irigaray (1974, 1977), Kristeva (1975), to name but a few, to performance and theatre feminists theorists such as Goodman
I have used approaches and methodologies that seemed suitable to the discussion and the reception of the veil. My interests are somewhat different from those of most of the ethnographists and theoreticians who have tackled the concepts that I focus on in different performances.

This dissertation, therefore, is not only about women's performances of the veils, but it also includes the 'marginalised' performances of Moroccan traditional actants such as shikhat, neggafat, and hannayat, and those of professional performers since the beginning of modern theatre in Morocco. It also aims at considering Moroccan women's performances within the women's-only-spaces such as the Hammam, Fitness Gym and the Moroccan Salon as Moroccan women's theatre, and sites of resistance to all forms of shackles that the patriarchal system imposes. I have also made occasional references to performance art and performances in everyday life.

My own position through this thesis is 'central' that is, involving both outside and inside dimensions. Inside because it is in my gender, I am a woman who is very familiar with Moroccan veils, and outside because I am a researcher who is seeking objectivity, and analysing processes from a distance. Although I observe a conventional academic written layout and allot the thesis into three parts, I have adopted strategies of writing that favours non-linearity and fluidity.

Hence my discourse is free-floating between various texts as critic, narrator, playwright and director. As an investigative work, it is open to
plurality and diversity of meanings, and seeks to remain open-ended and generative, rather than closed and conclusive.

The project is interdisciplinary and includes performance practice as well as written texts, ranging from religion, observation, interviews, questionnaires, photography, ethnography, feminist theorists’ texts, theatre and performance studies, production, and playwriting, as it also includes fieldwork research. I have encountered various difficulties that I try to record in the beginning of each part, for each part engenders its own difficulties that I endeavour to overcome.

This thesis aims to underline the fluidity and unchangeability of concepts and postulates that generalisations in research, as Patricia Sexton writes, can be:

misleading, inadequate, and lacking in any flesh and blood reality, they can also fail to take account of the astonishing variations among women and the work they do. Women have not one but many voices... Both the themes and the variations, the individual and the collective voices need to be heard.7

I have organised this thesis in three parts structured as follows. In the first part, “To Each Her Own Veil”, I map the real veil to explore its spatial, visual, ethical, and performative dimensions. This part attempts to consider the veil not as merely a Muslim dress, but as a body language that performs its will to invade the public sphere. It ends with asking this question: is the veil oppression or empowerment? To elucidate this question and others about the Muslim veil, I devise a questionnaire 1 (see Appendix1). My aim in this part is to study the real veil in its everyday performances of resistance against Muslim women’s marginalization and seclusion.
In part two, “This Veil Which Is Not One”, the veil provides women with a mask behind which they voice and write their bodies. This highlights my adaptation of Cixous’ “écriture féminine”. Cixous’s ideas have a strong impact on women’s writing in general, and on women’s theatre and performances in particular. Her “écriture féminine” has inspired women writers to subvert not only themes, contents and characters, but also the structural legitimacy of traditional forms of their plays. Playwrights of ‘herstories’ are significant figures that use theatre as a metaphoric veil behind which they narrate “herstories”. Cixous’ “écriture féminine” has a major impact on women playwrights which resulted in creating women’s theatre as a metaphoric veil. The reception of the local audiences is considered in the written analysis that accompanies the video’s of Lear’s Daughters as a part of the thesis.

Nonetheless, an informed critical reading of Cixous’ “écriture féminine” demonstrates the limited scope of Cixous’ theory when applied to the study of Moroccan women’s oral performances in the ‘pri-blic’ spaces such as the hammam, fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon. Though Cixous’ writing is itself performative and influenced by a knowledge and appreciation of the stage dynamics into which her words may be projected, it remains restrictive to the women’s writing, thus excluding the performing of their bodies.

In part three, "The Metaphoric Veil on Performance: Moroccan Women’s ‘Pri-blic’ Spaces", deals with theatre as a metaphoric veil in a textual/performance praxis. Having done extensive research in the status of women in Moroccan theatre, and having discovered that there is virtually no female Moroccan women’s writing tradition for theatre, an alternative framework for comparison of performances by Moroccan women in their ‘pri-blic’ spaces...
such as the hammam, fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon, was developed. These everyday performances can be contrasted with the more textual, verbal plays of British women writing and producing. Faced with the lack of a live record of these spaces, I have improvised a play, *The Harem*, that the students performed under my direction and before an audience whose reception of the play was recorded by means of a questionnaire 2 (see Appendix 2). Both the performance of *Lear's Daughters* and that of *The Harem* should not be judged as professional since they are realised by students who have never seen any performance on theatre given the absence of theatre in their hometown, Fez. With no professionalism, no funding, and no material or moral help whatever, it is very difficult to achieve professional performances.

Overall, this thesis is an attempt at re-reading the concept of the veil, women's literary theory, theatre, and everyday performance. It is a re-reading that tries to take into consideration the different discourses that consciously, or unconsciously inform and orient it.
PART I:
TO EACH HER OWN VEIL

Let us raise the sails and lift the veils
Let us lift the veils with which contemporaries
Disguise the past in order to dim the present.
Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and The Male Elite*

1. The Real Veil: The Muslim Veil/ The *Hijab*

2. The Real Veil: A fieldwork Study
1. The Real Veil: The Muslim Veil/ Hijab

In this part, I seek to explore, theoretically and practically, the multiple performances of the Muslim veil/ the real veil. My aim is to study the real veil in its everyday performances of resistance against Muslim women's marginalization and seclusion. By the real veil, I mean what is widely known as the Muslim veil or the hijab[^1]; the long, large and dark-coloured dress and the scarf that the Muslim women wear, what is known in the Islamic world as the separation between the sexes into male and female, or the division of the space into private and public. On the other hand, I introduce in the second part of this thesis, what I call "the metaphoric veil", that is the literary, theatrical discourse that women writers use as a disguise to invade one of the "male's world": the literary canon.

In this respect, I argue that the veil is a dynamic practice in its historical, religious, spatial, visual, and performative dimensions. To display the multiple facets of the veil, I will try to explore the question of the veil from the very complex perspective of an Arab Muslim Moroccan woman who is stuck between a rock (religion, past, patrimony, culture and traditions), and a hard place (Western education with all its precepts of change, emancipation, and liberty). In addition, I live in a country whose geography permits it to be open to Western culture and modernity without renouncing its culture and traditions. You need only to look at Moroccan women's daily performances, across the spectrum in the public[^2] and domestic spheres, to become aware of this. Everything surrounding the Moroccans illustrates this dichotomy between the Western and the Moroccan. It is apparent everywhere in the post-colonial
Morocco; in language, food, celebrations, furniture, clothes, thoughts and dreams. One would be startled as a visitor for the first time in Morocco to see a woman wearing a *djellaba* and just near her a daughter, a sister, or a friend who is wearing the latest Western fashionable clothes. It is a daily image in Moroccan streets and homes to notice things that remind the visitor of Moroccan cities of the Western modernity, and just near them very traditional things that evoke Morocco's Arab and Muslim roots. It is this complex synthesis of the opposition between the modern and the traditional that symbolises Morocco: the modernist.

A new visitor to Morocco might be startled to find a wide range of rich and contradictory performances of the female body in public spaces; such as streets, offices, schools, universities, and markets. Since the sixties (after the independence), the Moroccan female body has become the site of struggle between modern (the Western) and traditional (the Eastern) -as you can notice in the picture below.
Figure 1. On the narrow streets of the old medina (city) of Fez, it is a common image to witness the traditional djellaba cohabiting with the Western modern clothes as short skirts and jeans.
But since the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, a "new" female body has been introduced to the Moroccan scene; the Muslim veiled body, which increases in number and performances, the dress of the women who are labelled as "Muslim Sisters". Nowadays, this veiled body has won every corner of Moroccan streets, universities, offices, and schools. It has forbidden the fantasy and condemned the Western. The austere dress covers the whole body and the hijab imposes itself to hunt every single rebellious hair. Instead of co-existing, modernity and tradition collide, and the result is a clear division⁴ in the Moroccan society between modernists and traditionalists those who reject the veil, and those who coax women to it. Why is this return to the veil? Is it oppressive -as it is believed in the West- or liberating -as it is maintained in the East?

The veil is not a uniquely Islamic convention; the practice has a long history in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Catholic nuns engage in the practice, of course, and there are several references to the practice in both the Old and New Testaments (King James Version). In the Oxford dictionary, the English term "veil", likewise the French term "voile", derive from the Latin vēla, pl. of vēlum, which means "a covering". In this sense, the veil has four meanings: a) a length of cloth that women put over their heads, shoulders, and even their faces; b) a piece of thin cloth attached to a woman's hat to cover the head and face, or for decoration; c) a nun's head-dress that protects the face and falls over the shoulders; d) a piece of light fabric hung to separate or hide what is behind it: a curtain. In general, the Western meanings of the veil hover around these terms: concealment, hiding, invisibility, seclusion, monastic, and disguise.
I will argue in this part that the veil, like women, is not one but plural; it can take many forms and colours; to each her own veil. There is the real veil, the visible garment, that the Westerners call the “Muslim veil” with all its forms, colours, fabrics, and performances. It is an icon of Islamic religion and culture, as it is a feminine disguise within a sexual/political game that could shackle women as it could free them. On the other hand, there is the metaphoric veil; the veil as pretence; 'écriture féminine'; a theatrical style, and a site-specific-performance, which will be discussed in the second and third parts, respectively.

The question is not so much whether the veil is Islamic or not. The relevant question that this part of the dissertation engages in enlightening is the element of choice that Muslim women -especially the veiled- attach to the garment, whether it is a women's right to choose to veil or not, and their awareness that the veil makes another public spectacle of their bodies and confines them to move within certain sexual and cultural boundaries. The challenge is to know these boundaries and to play with them rather than within them. To clarify this ambiguity, the two chapters of this part ask many questions: Why is this return to the veil witnessed in the Islamic world in general, and Morocco in particular these last decades? Is it a form of reclusion, a boundary, a frontier that limits Muslim women's movements and freedom, and sends them back to the "harem"; or is it a blur of gender, a wall of protection that serves women as a shield, provides them a certain licence, helps them integrate into "man's world", and avoids his censorship? What are the types of the Muslim veil? Is it a liberation or oppression? Is there a veil discourse; is it a body language, a clothing practice, a social indicator of a
crisis, a drag performance, a masquerade, a pretence that allows women to enter the public, and express themselves?

My journey to understand the signifier and the signified of the concept of the veil, and to try to answer all these questions, has many important stations; from observation, theory, religious texts as the Qur'an and the Hadith, ethnography, everyday life, photography, interviews, to questionnaires, and to theatrical performances. A journey that left me breathless.

The methods I deem most relevant to answer these questions are mainly ethnographic so as first, to document some of the Moroccan women's veils, second, to understand the veiled women experience with the veil not only from the gazer's point of view, but from the veiled women's point of view as well - this is the aim of the first questionnaire. It is a fieldwork research that I have been conducting since December 1997, in the university of Fez, and in almost every place in Morocco I find a veiled body. During these years, I have conducted one-to-one interviews on the streets, on trains, in gym clubs, in social and family gatherings, and focus group interviews with my students, and veiled colleagues at the university. I have interviewed almost all the categories of veiled bodies that I could meet: young, old, beautiful, ugly, rich, poor, literate, illiterate, relatives, friends, and strangers.

During my research, I have had to deal with very co-operative informants who are willing to help, and answer my questions without any prejudice, and very suspicious informants who deem even the questioning of the veil a blasphemy. I have noted that the majority of my informants define the veil from a purely religious angle, and they express a feeling of surprise when we delve into the subject and see that the veil is not only religious, but it is more
Taking photographs was a real frustration to me, because of the resistance and the reluctance of veiled bodies to be photographed. This could be explained by the deep belief that these women have in Islamic traditions that condemn all visual representations of the body. This belief explains the absence of visual arts such as sculpture, painting, carving, and theatre in the past Islamic civilisation.

Finally, I need to mention that the studies carried in this field, mainly the Middle East feminists' and Fatima Mernissi's, have constituted a very important source of my data for the first chapter of this part. In addition to literature, there is the questionnaire to investigate the perceptions of the female students concerning the different meanings of the veil.

In carrying out these methods of research, I was-as feminist ethnography stipulates in a "closeness distance dilemma". I felt close to the veiled women because I am a Moroccan Muslim woman, and this makes it "easy" for me to integrate these veiled bodies, their only-spaces, communicate with them, and even sometimes identify with them. I felt distant because I am a non-veiled researcher who tries to be objective, and use scientific methods of observation and comparison with other cultures. Yet, the researcher, though disciplined by the dictates of research, can hardly escape subjective and personal intuitions, because he/she is simply human. In any case, I am motivated by genuine concern for Moroccan women not their exploitation.
a. The Muslim Veil/ The Hijab

Let us situate the veil in its historical framework. The question of the veil or hijab for Muslim women has caused considerable controversy for centuries, and will probably continue to do so for many more. Some learned people do not consider the subject open to discussion and consider that Muslim women should cover their bodies, while others are of the opinion that they are not required to do so. A middle line position is taken by some who claim that the instructions are vague and open to individual discretion depending on the situation.

The veil as a garment appeared in the Arab world with the wives of the Prophet, who were required to veil their bodies so that men would not think of them in sexual terms. Veiling was not extended to other women when it first appeared, it was meant to differentiate the "Mothers of the Believers" from the non-believers. The two surats, most cited for the imposition of the veil on women, have no fixed standards as to the style of the veil or type of clothing that Muslim women must wear. They are both vague:

O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw down their jilbabs (long and large dresses). That is better in order that they may be known (to be Muslims) and not annoyed... (Qur'an 33:59)

And,

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils (khimar) over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands... (Qur'an 24:30-31)
Literally, these verses are directed to the wives of the Prophet, and the women of the believers at the time, but the *Qura'n* orthodox interpreters\(^9\) -the *Ulama*- who do not advocate the literal interpretation, postulate that all Muslim women should take the wives of the prophet and the women of the believers as their example. As it is mentioned in the first *surat*, the wearing of the veil applies specifically to the mothers of the believers, and has been used by Muslims to distinguish believing women from slaves and non-believers. The two kinds of veiling cited in the two *surats*; the long and modest dress (*jilbab*), or the head veil (*Khimar*), remain very vague, and open to many readings.

Because of the profound impact religion has on Moroccan society and culture, the position of women in Morocco, for instance, cannot be understood without reference to Islam. Islam is neither "all there is to know", nor of little value in understanding the Moroccan women's question. Especially that Morocco is not a secular country where religion and politics are kept separate. On the contrary, Islam in Morocco is State religion, for in the Constitution, Morocco is an Islamic monarchy. This is symbolised in the king's status as both the head of the executive power and the Commander of the Believers.

It is the importance of this Islamic background that the writers of "the Plan for the Integration of the Moroccan Woman in the Development of the Country"\(^{10}\) seemed to have ignored or neglected. To my mind, this ignorance or neglect was not only behind the contradictory and the polemic reactions the plan has engendered, but behind the two Moroccan women demonstrations for and against that has 'balkanized' (my word for "shattered") both the plan and Moroccan women's cause into pieces, and the fact that obliged the plan
defenders to seek the king's interference to save it from this deadlock on 5th March 2001.

The half million Islamists, veiled women (on the right of the picture below) and bearded men (on the left), marched in separate male and female columns (see the image of the right) in Casablanca on 12th March 2000 – which was an utter surprise, never mentioned before- to demonstrate against the 'Integration Plan' and against the government's proposals to ban polygamy, raise the legal age for marriage from 14 to 18 and reform divorce laws. The anti-reform protesters -as they define themselves- denounced the reforms as Western-inspired, and alien to Islamic religion and Moroccan traditions. They advocate a return to Islamic precepts and tradition, a return to the glorious past, a return to the veil, a return to the dominance of man, because they see that the ship cannot be navigated by two commanders, a return to .....
Casablanca demonstrators had been persuaded by the fundamentalists that a return to veiling and religion is the only answer to their social and political problems, and that there are even some divine rewards to be gained if they express their opposition to the "Plan" through formulas invoking 'Islamic identity'. This 'return' has been bewildering and raised many questions: why is this strong resistance to women's claims for change especially, that Moroccans are very open to modern change, Western clothing, food, films, technology, and T.V. channels? Why does this open-mindedness turn to its opposite whenever Moroccan women seek change? The only words that still translate what I deeply believe are Mernissi's, though they are said as early as 1987:

Whenever an innovation has to do with free choice of the partners involved, the social fabric seems to suffer some terrible tear. Women's unveiling seems to belong to this realm. For the last one hundred years, whenever women tried or wanted to discard the veil, some men, always holding up the sacred as a justification, screamed that it was unbearable, that the society's fabric would dissolve if the mask is dropped. I do not believe that men, Muslims or not, scream unless they are hurt. Therefore, the ones calling for the reimposition of the veil surely have a reason and a good one. What is it that Muslim society needs to mask so badly? (p: xviii)

It is not hard for an objective eye to witness how deeply the 'Integration Plan' has disturbed the Islamists not because it threatens Islamic religion and tradition, but because it augurs and symbolises what the future and its conflicts are about: the inescapability of renegotiating new sexual, political, economic, and cultural boundaries. For the education of women, the postponed age of their marriage, and the limitation of birth rate do not only dissolve women's
traditional function as defined by family ethics, but allow them to claim a larger place in the public sphere.

To avoid alienating the masses, the secularists and the intellectuals had not kept quiet. Another similar demonstration was held in Rabat at the same time, but it had different colours, different female bodies, and different goals. The Rabat demonstration was planned two years earlier, and the majority of its performers were literate and not alien to the world of politics and demonstrations. On the contrary, the majority of these women, who rallied in Rabat, are members of political parties, of women's associations, intellectuals, ministers, journalists, feminists. Rabat demonstrators issued demands for equal rights for women in the family, abolition of polygamy, girls' compulsory education, franchise for women, and equal pay for equal work. They stressed that Moroccan women's degraded conditions were the outcome of a gender-biased misreading of the Qura'an, not the text itself. They claimed Islam as their moral and religious guide, but they demanded to de-shari'atize (to separate state from religion) the legal and political structures of the country. They advocated modern political, administrative, legal changes, the rule of law, and equality for women. They were aware of what they were parading for: against violence, poverty, and the subordination of Moroccan women in the public sphere.
Figure 3. With a lot of rage and anger, but with red flowers and white handkerchiefs, thousands and thousands of secularists paraded on the main streets of Rabat on 12th March 2000, for the celebration of the 8th March. In Western casual clothes, the supporters of "the Integration Plan" were yelling no to violence, and yes to change". Their slogan was: "Onward-to-modernity and equality".

Never have the main streets of Casablanca and Rabat been open stages to women's public political performances as that day -Sunday, 12th March, 2000. The street, which is defined by fundamentalists as a space of sin and temptation,\textsuperscript{14} because it is public and sex-mixed, becomes a political space of women's political performances. Moroccan women made 'spectacles' of themselves to contest the socio-cultural oppression. This kind of street protest may be the beginning of the body-centered critique of gender representation that subsequently will set up Moroccan women theatre and new Moroccan female spaces. This engenders a very important question: Is it the beginning of Moroccan women's political awareness of how they have been either oppressively positioned, or completely left out of, the 'malestream' of social, cultural and political activities?
In the beginning of the twentieth century a woman wrote her name in Arabic history with a daring gesture. Upon her return from the Rome conference in 1923, Huda Shaarawi -the first Arab Egyptian feminist- performed an act that has come to stand as a central symbol in her life, and the lives of the majority of Arab Muslim women of the time: she removed her veil in public at a Cairo train station. While clearly a bold act, the significance of this gesture had a tremendous impact on all the Arab and Muslim women ever since. A similar act was repeated in Morocco in 1947 by king Mohammed V, who unveiled his daughter - Princess Aicha - the first Moroccan ambassador to U.K. after Moroccan's independence. A new era had started for Arab and Moroccan women. The beginning of the Twentieth Century witnessed again radical changes in political rule. Arab countries' fight for independence offered women another opportunity to re-establish independent professional status.

Arab countries knew the beginning of contemporary political performance: the use of performance- by the State, by oppositional groups, by theatre practitioners, and by women to solidify or challenge structures of power. Public spectacles were used since then to control and contest the political stage. They transformed the public sphere from an instrument of colonial oppression into an oppositional, at times revolutionary, "theatre of the oppressed". This has been noticed in the West where the convergence of performance and politics have taken many forms: from issues of gender, sexuality and race in late sixties, to neo-colonialism in the eighties, and globalism in the nineties - the last demonstrations of Genoa in Italy in July 2001 are live witness.
It is generally assumed that the origin of British women's collaborative theatre has been geared to women's concerns and preoccupations and was set up by women's political demonstrations in the streets. Does this mean that the two Moroccan women demonstrations in the streets of Casablanca and Rabat are the roots of the emergence of Moroccan women's theatre? Especially that, just after these demonstrations, Moroccan theatre produced for the first time in its history a play - _l'histoire des femmes (The Story of Women)_- which has been the output of a collaborative work of women. It is written by a woman, Naima Ben Zidane (2000), produced by a woman, and played by women only. This leads us to be optimistic about the future of Moroccan women's theatre and claim that they are breaking ground and paving the way for the emergence of a women's theatre as it happened in the West in the Sixties. Lizbeth Goodman (1994) reviews this period and confirms that:

The use of the women's movement in this period (in the 1960s) influenced the first specifically gender-oriented political demonstrations since the suffragette movement. Such active representation of and by women in the public sphere influenced the growth of women playwrights on both sides of the Atlantic (p: xi).

This is supported by Patti Gillespie who links women's collaborative theatre to the feminist politics and rhetoric:

All feminist theatres are rhetorical enterprises; their primary aim is action, not art. Each group is using theatre to promote the identities of women, to increase awareness of the issues of feminism, or to advocate corrective change.

Since then, women's staged performances and theatre have foregrounded women's political issues, and feminist ethnographic inquiries which explore cross-cultural performances of womanhood. Can explicit stagings of women's
issues illuminate the performative nature of womanhood in other contexts? And can cross-cultural perspectives expand the political potential of staged performances? These questions and others are discussed in the second part of this thesis.

The public protest, that characterised the colonial period in Morocco, empowered women as a group, and made them conscious that this was the appropriate way to contest social, political, and cultural conditions. The stripping off the veil was a free-choice of both nationalist men and women who were craving for political freedom; it was not lack of faith in Islam. The stripping off the veil was the expression of their refusal of colonialism, and social oppression. This explains the unveiling of Princess Lalla Aicha while making her first public speech in Tangier in 1947. Once women had demonstrated in the streets for the independence of their countries, they crossed a point of no return. Their bodies started to enjoy the new public performances; going to schools, helping their brothers, or fathers against the coloniser, as Alison Baker (1998) argues:

By walking through the streets to get to school, and by attending school together with boys and getting the same education, these women were breaking out of their seclusion, their restriction to the "women's space" inside the house, and moving into the "men's spaces" of the streets and the schools. Then they took on roles that were new for Moroccan women in the women's associations of the political parties, mobilising and organising other women, and learning how to make them work together. Women who joined the armed resistance took on active, militant roles, working together with men. Missions for the resistance not only brought them out of seclusion, but sent them into dangerous situations, travelling long distances by themselves, carrying messages and weapons, even setting bombs, all the while using wits to escape detection. Several of the women defined these roles as "men's roles" that they were taking on in the resistance. One woman, Fatima Roudania, a resistance fighter in Casablanca,
is described as dressing in "men's clothes"-wide-legged golf pants and a man's head covering (p:8).

Was not Fatima Roudania actually performing a new female role in this large performance space- the battlefield-? Was not that colonial performance space a site of resistance and contestation of power from all the forms of oppression -colonial and patriarchal? Wasn’t it the rise of popular theatre movements in Morocco in the light of the politics of performance space? Wasn’t it even the beginning of woman's representation of herself and the other? By wearing men's clothes, wasn’t Fatima Roudania setting up what is now known in performance theory as 'trans-performance' -meant to index various performances and performative acts that venture to become 'the other' -performances of crossing, passing and becoming?

But their deception was great and bitter when they were relegated to seclusion after the independence. Alison Barker (1998) recalls the memories of some of the resistance women:

It was a great shock to women from the armed resistance to discover after independence that not much had changed in the society at large, especially in regard to the status of women. This harsh reality was brought home to some in a way that struck at the very core of their new found sense of themselves. These were women who had worked with their husbands during the resistance, and then suddenly, after independence, found themselves repudiated (p:10).

The non-veiled body that had fought for the country's independence refused to be imprisoned again, and since then a new struggle has started. Education for women and especially university education after independence was their most important target. Is it woman's right to education or is it a privilege? Why is there still a high percentage of women who are illiterate in
Morocco? According to the last official statistics (Rabat, 1995) 89.1% of rural Moroccan women are illiterate. A conclusion of a study conducted by Fatima Mernissi (1987) shows that

Women's education disturbs the traditional sexual identity reference points and sex roles in Muslim countries, which are obsessed with virginity and childbearing (p:xxvi)

So they become obsessed with her clothes.

Never before has the Women's question in Morocco become the topical one, though it is increasingly seen as an old-fashioned subject according to the so-called 'post-feminists' and 'post-modernists' of the West. It becomes my students' favourite subject and my ordeal; for how is it possible to maintain a neutral role? My Western clothes betray me and align me -though appearance is sometimes misleading -with those who are eager for a change. To convince the fundamentalist students -who have the lead in the university of Fez- that I am not their enemy, I am constantly forced to improvise a neutral discourse, a veil of protection that helps me remain faithful to my role as 'their lecturer' and not a non-veiled Western-educated woman who is longing for a change of the political, social, and cultural situations of Moroccan women. I felt that I was a performer who had to please all the tastes of her audience in order to maintain peace in the class-room. This has not always been easy.

The row the Plan has been engendering confirms that the Women's question is as a thorny subject in the beginning of this new Millennium as it was in the Greek period. Why was this so? Margot Badran (1994) seems to have an interesting opinion:
The why was the beginning of an analysis of patriarchy—that is, the power men had accorded themselves, irrespective of class, to make rules and impose their rules on women to keep them subordinate (p:3).

History repeats itself. The new century in Morocco starts as the previous one in Egypt,18 and the question of the Muslim women has emerged to the surface once again. Moroccan women have never enflamed as many passions as these days. In a short time (since the end of 1999, the time of the publication of the Plan) women have been pushed to the front Moroccan scene, exacerbating a debate that has divided the country into two halves: fierce defenders and tenacious detractors. As never before, the Women's question has become the subject of all the national media, of Friday religious ceremonies, the theme of national and international conferences, and a big issue within the parliament. Is the question of women very lucrative for the media? Why is this sudden attention to Moroccan women, to liberate or veil them? Isn't it a clever way to bring back women as objects of the male's debates and texts? Why is this division between those who claim more cultural and spatial freedom to Moroccan women's performances, and those who advocate their veiling and their relegation to the domestic life? This question is one which is asked by Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It had even obliged the Moroccan government to change the minister, the founder of the Plan, to freeze the Plan, and to ask the king for intervention to stop this clash between the secularists and the traditionalists.
b. The Origins of the Muslim Veil/ *Hijab*

Let us start from the basics. The word "*hijab*" comes from the Arabic word "*hajaba*" meaning to hide from view or conceal, to cover, veil, protect, screen, seclude or shelter. So the word, "*hijab*" is a noun meaning, "screen, cover, wrap, curtain, etc...". Fatima Mernissi (1991) succinctly defines the concept of *hijab* along three important dimensions:

The concept of the word *hijab* is three-dimensional, and the three dimensions often blend into one another. The first dimension is a visual one: to hide something from sight. The root of the verb *hajaba* means "to hide". The second dimension is spatial: to separate, to mark a border, to establish a threshold. And finally, the third dimension is ethical: it belongs to the realm of the forbidden (p:93).

Before tackling these three dimensions, it is appropriate to state at this juncture that *hijab* was not known to the Arab society at the beginning of Islam. It seems that in Islamic Arabia, woman was not veiled, not even during the beginning of Islamic period. The Prophet's followers accepted his teachings which brought about a revolution in their social attitudes towards women. They stopped considering women as mere chattel, and started to view them as an integral part of society. For the first time, women were given the right to have a share in inheritance. In the new social climate, women rediscovered themselves and became highly active members of society, rendering useful service during the wars which the pagan Arabs forced on the emerging Muslim *umma*. Muslim women carried provisions for the soldiers, nursed them, and even fought alongside them when it was necessary. They helped their husbands in the fields, carried on trade and business independently, and went out of their
homes to assert themselves in the public space.

Islamic history offers modern feminist role models; this is the case of Khadija, the Prophet's first wife, was known for her economic independence, 'A'isha, his most beloved wife, was very famous for her political and military skills and religious knowledge, and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, symbolised morality and strength. It was not until the end of the Fifth year of Hegir -Islamic year- that the Qur'a'n alluded to the veil. So, it is in Islamic precepts that we should look for the basics of the hijab tradition.

- The Veil as a Spatial Dimension

Hijab -the veil- in Islam first meant a division in the Prophet's household: his intimate place, where he lived with his close family, and the public place, the mosque, where he could meet his followers to discuss religious and political matters. This was meant to control the free access to the Prophet's household, and to protect him, and his family against the gaze of his entourage.

O ye who believe! Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted to you. But if ye are invited, enter, and, when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. Lo! That would cause annoyance to the Prophet, and he would be shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of the truth. And when ye ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a hijab (a curtain). That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts (verse 53 of Sura 33, which was revealed during year 5 of the Hejir (AD 627).

The veil also separated men and women during the congregational prayers, the Prophet said: "The best rows of men are their first and their worst are their last, and the best rows of women are their last and their worst are
their first". He also reserved special entrances for women and asked them not to mix with men on their way out of the mosque area. Since then, a clear cut division between public space, which is the male's realm, and the domestic space, which is the female's, was made visible. Thus, the notion of sexual power was closely connected to this notion of positionality through a consideration of distinctions based on gender and class. The material world, such as the Muslim house and city, reflects the dominant representations of the veiled woman. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) remarks, when depicting an Algerian house, that the relationship between the space and its inhabitants describes the different positions of women and men with regard to dominant discourses and social relations:

One or the other of the two systems of oppositions which define the house....is brought to the foreground, depending on whether the house is considered from the male point of view or the female point of view: whereas for the man, the house is not so much a place he enters as a place he comes out of, movement inward properly befits the woman (p: 91).

According to Bourdieu (1990), an understanding of the sexual politics is not complete without a close analysis of the structure of the space female and male inhabit, because it has a great affinity with their bodies and dominant cultural values.
Figure 4. Invisible in her white *haïk*, a Moroccan veiled woman is crossing the streets of Essaouira (above). Veiled within its white bleak façade, and its small windows, the traditional Moroccan house (below) shares with its mistress the right to see and not to be seen.
The house has not only its own poetics as Bachelard\textsuperscript{20} theorises, but it has a close relationship with its dwellers. It is a mirror that reflects their lives, souls, and bodies. If we look at it intimately, the house can be the visual representation of its dwellers. The veil, as the door or the window of this traditional building, therefore, serves as the key for understanding the whole question of limit and transgression, of openness and exclusion. Both the veil and the traditional house represent how separating and connecting are two sides of the same coin. Through their very form, they transcend the separation between the private and the public. They allow for a communication between the veiled and the non-veiled.

Figure 5. A veiled woman is making sure that she is completely invisible before leaving her house. In a complete harmony with its female dweller, the humble façade of the house veils its beauty to strangers. Isn’t the comparison staggering?
In a typical alley running from the medina, the oldest part of Fez city, a tourist is doubtlessly struck by not apparently seeing a single "house". What, this tourist may wonder, is the difference between a surrounding wall and the façade of a Moroccan traditional house? Not much at first glance. Height perhaps, and the fact that the wall constructed of bricks or stones or clay contains a well hidden door, and small windows. Moroccan traditional houses, are by nature hidden away, secretive, veiled. They are as austere, rugged, closed off, wrapped as veiled women in their haik. Who believes it should be easier to enter the Gates of Heaven than seeing the body behind the veil? It is unlikely for a Westerner, who is accustomed to well designed and impressive façades or to buildings where one can clearly differentiate the social hierarchy of an era, to imagine what this austere façade seeks to hide.

Figure 6. The Moroccan traditional house's austere exterior always contrasts greatly with the sumptuously decorated interior. With its marble basin that offers a reassuring sound of water, its paradisiac garden, and its splendid traditional furniture, the traditional house unveils its beauty to its dwellers.
A feminist reading of the architecture of the Moroccan traditional house confirms that architecture is not only political (Foucault: 1997), but sexual, social and ethnographic too. Space is never an empty space, but as Foucault observes, it is always 'saturated' with qualities. Nor the eye of the architect, as Lefebvre (1997) reminds us, is never innocent. The house allows us to trace the history of its dwellers, it even sheds light on understanding their cultural, political, sexual and social identities.
Figure 7. Behind the blind walls of the façade, there is all the cozy beauty of the interior of Moroccan traditional houses in Fez. The windows generally open on the courtyard, wells of light around which the whole family life is organized. The house tries amorously to make its female dwellers feel more at ease in their own space.

House, patch of meadow, oh evening light
Suddenly you acquire an almost human face
You are very near us, embracing and embraced.

Rainer Maria Rilke.
For the same tourist, the veil worn by some Moroccan women is immediately noticed, since the way people clothe themselves, as Frantz Fanon (1989) theorises, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness:

It is by their apparel that types of society first become known, whether through written accounts and photographic records or motion pictures. Thus, there are civilisations without neckties, civilisations with loin-cloths, and others without hats. The fact of belonging to a given cultural group is usually revealed by clothing traditions. In the Arab world, for example, the veil worn by women is at once noticed by the tourist. One may remain for a long time unaware of the fact that a Moslem does not eat pork or that he denies himself daily sexual relations during the month of Ramadan, but the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterise Arab society (p: 35).

An immediate analogy between the traditional house and the veil could be made. A Moroccan traditional house, as the pictures show, offers a puzzling contradiction between its outside, which is just a long bleak wall with very small windows, and its wide, open, beautiful, and nearly magical space inside. As its mistress's body which is inside, it does not display its beauty to the public.
Figure 8. Wrapped up in her *ha'ik*, the veiled woman uncovers only one eye to see the world. Her eye is like the patio of her house (the right picture) that serves the function of both circulating air and bringing in sunshine to the whole house. This "well" -as the right picture shows- diffuses the light which stretches in diagonal swathes down to the rooms on the ground floor.
The beauty of the house is mainly reserved to its dwellers and forbidden to the envious eye of the gazer; it is not to make a spectacle of itself. Veiled within its walls as the female body within its veil, the house represents the woman's boundary that she dreams to trespass to the public space one day. Inside these walls is her only stage where she is free to play the role she likes, because outside is not hers but the male's. It is obvious that the woman inside these walls has devised her own forms of expression, to prove her existence first, and to voice the silence that surrounds her within these walls next. Why has Muslim woman been veiled from the public? Is it because of these long years of seclusion, or is it out of fear of the outside? Is it out of free choice, or has she been trapped into it?

Secluding Muslim women and forbidding them the public space was never considered by the Muslims in the beginning of Islam as Mona Mikhail (1979) argues:

The Muslims of the first century of the Islamic era did not practice seclusion of women; the two sexes exchanged visits, moved indiscriminately through the streets and prayed together in the mosque. When the son of a prominent companion of the Prophet, Mus'ab Ibn al Zubair, asked his wife to veil her face, she answered: "Since the Almighty hath put me the stamp of beauty, it is my wish that the public should view that beauty and thereby recognize His grace unto them." It was only in the second century that the harem system and the veil took form, first among the powerful and the rich as a status symbol and later among the less affluent through emulation (p:3).

As more nations -Byzantine, Persian, and Indian- embraced Islam, practices of veiling and seclusion became widespread. This has encouraged Muslim traditionalists to advocate the harem and forbid women the public space. The
term *Mahjouba* - the hidden- the invisible from the male's gaze is concurrent with this. *Mahjouba* is not allowed to go out except to three places; the *Hammam* (the public hot steam, bath) to purify her body, to her husband's house as a new bride, and to the grave when she dies.

As time moved on from the Prophet's period, the Muslim women became more and more dissuaded from participating in the public space. The separation of male and female was well-established, and, thus, an opaque veil split the two sexes; each occupying a different sphere, and not understanding the other. This prevailed to the present time as Fatima Mernissi (1998) states in this respect:

> Men do not understand women, and women do not understand men, and it all starts when little girls are separated from little boys in the *hammam*. Then a cosmic frontier splits the planet in two halves. The frontier indicates the line of power because wherever there is a frontier, there are two kinds of creatures walking on Allah's earth, the powerful on one side, and the powerless on the other. If you can't get out, you are on the powerless side (p:242).

Thus, veiling started to differentiate the *Shrifat*, the descendants of the Prophet -saints- from the rest, and started to construct a new meaning: a symbol of chastity and nobility. Since these women served as models to be followed by other upper and middle class women, the seclusion at home became a symbol of piety and chastity. The more woman stayed at home, the more pious she was considered. The *Shrifat* became the icons that all Muslim women craved to look like and imitate; hence the practice of veiling started to prevail in the whole Muslim world. Gradually, the Muslim woman sentenced herself to her seclusion from the public space, and to her confinement to the domestic with the applause of the Muslim man. She was not conscious, at that time, that what she chose as an ideal image of a noble class would be inserted
in the cultural sphere, and acquire a new meaning. To what extent is the veil imposed, and to what extent is it chosen? When does the choice become a trap? How does it change from empowerment to disempowerment? As a result of her choice, that has become an obligation afterwards, the public space turned to be alien to her. It is very curious to follow Moroccan woman's performances in the streets; she feels rambling, bewildered, and insecure whenever she ventures to go out, a fact which incites her to hurry her pace back home; back to her own space and kingdom: her secure cocoon.

With the expansion of the Islamic World, new traditions and customs came to enforce women's seclusion and veiling. Muslim women of the middle and upper classes experienced more pressure to perpetuate the institution of veiling and seclusion because these were deemed Islamic religious requirements. This explains the outrage and the fierce attack directed at Qassim Amin's books *The Liberation of the Woman* (1899), and *The New Woman* (1900), which demonstrated that veiling and seclusion were not Islamic prescriptions. In the words of Leila Ahmed (1992):

The anger and passion Amin's work provoked become intelligible only when one considers not the substantive reforms for women that he advocated but rather, first, the symbolic reform - the abolition of the veil - that he passionately urged and, second, the reforms, indeed the fundamental changes in culture and society, that he urged upon society as a whole and that he contended it was essential for the Egyptian nation, and Muslim countries generally, to make (p:145).

Changing customs involving women's behaviour, and abolishing the veil made many men and women defend these customs. Underneath this attack on veiling and seclusion lies an attack on a traditional prop of patriarchy in Arab Muslim mainstream culture. Margot Badran (1994) made an interesting
The domestic seclusion of women prevailed in the urban upper and middle classes, and among the rural gentry, while gender segregation was observed, in varying degrees, by all classes. Upper and middle class men had the economic means to keep "their" women in domestic seclusion. Men of the urban poor and the peasantry did not; moreover, the labor of "their" women was needed outside the house. Urban women of all classes and women of the rural gentry veiled their faces if and when they went outside. Peasant women did not veil because the custom was incompatible with their work in the fields, although bedouin women who tended flocks covered their faces. Confining women to the home, rendering them invisible, and segregating them from all men except close relatives were hall-marks of Muslim harem culture (p:4).

The spatial dimension of the veil -the curtain- was the cause of the split of the Muslim space into two: the private space; household, and the public one; the outside. In examining the performance of Moroccan gender relations in society, the realisation of this society's split into 'private' and 'public' spheres surfaces. Muslim men are in control of official decision making. They clearly dominate all facets of the "outer" life including economics, politics, science and culture. Muslim women should have a clear position; however, this position must always remain in the shadow of the authoritative male, behind him not in front of him. The prevailing Arabic proverb sums up the situation very clearly: "Behind every great man is a woman". Women tend to have less education as well as less experience in the public realm than the majority of men. Even in the realm of the family, in a sphere where females play a significant role, males continue to dominate. It is men who primarily control marriage contracts, divorces and the acquisition of additional wives. Due to the belief that men are more capable leaders, their roles have primarily been in the
"public sphere". Simultaneously, women's position has continually been
directed towards the "private" sphere which includes the domain of family and
home. Things are changing now, and many women are crossing over into what
is often considered the man's realm. However, the large majority of the jobs
women acquire are in the fields of medicine, teaching, and social sciences.

When female bodies enter the economic sphere and step outside of their
"isolation" in the private sphere, they are affected in many ways. Along with
working outside of the home comes a social stigma. This causes many working
women to have less self-confidence than women who are unemployed. Also,
unfamiliarity with the work force often causes new female workers to be quite
self-conscious. This self-consciousness can many times be seen in a woman's
skirt which is a little too short or too long, or in an awkward headpiece, all of
which she employs in an attempt to "fit-in" and alleviate any discomfort she
may feel. Another effect of society's disapproval of female employment is a
heightened level of sexual harassment towards working women. Some women
are made to endure groping of their bodies and other such semi-sexual abuse.
The positive aspects of working, including the earning of salaries, are not
always enjoyed by employed women. For example, some husbands may take
complete control over their wives' paycheques, not allowing them to enjoy the
benefits of their labour. Another disadvantage which working women
experience is related to the dual nature of their labour. After finishing a full
day's work, women arrive home where their "real jobs" await them. Working
outside is still considered in Morocco as secondary, though it could be the main
source of the family's income. No matter how important her job is, woman is
considered first and foremost a wife, a mother, a sister, or a daughter. Her
household responsibilities do not disappear, on the contrary, she must clean, prepare meals, supervise the children, and perform all her domestic duties as any woman who does not have an outside employment.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite these drawbacks, the number of women, who work outside of the home, is increasing. One of the reasons for this is the rising economic need for women to work. Another justification is the fact that some women are beginning to view employment as a path towards independence, freedom, self-actualisation, equality, participation in society and responsible enfranchisement. Nowadays many women tend to stress the social and political rewards that may be acquired from employment, in addition to the benefits of the economic freedom working provides.

To limit women's invasion into the public, and to make them invisible, the fundamentalists extol women to wear the veil. The return to the veil is the only means to refrain women's will to invade the public. As already mentioned in relation to its significance in Islam, veiling also plays a crucial part in sustaining the separation of the distinct positions between men and women. Expanding on the ideal of separate realms for the sexes comes the notion of separate space. Many women veil themselves when they are outside of the home, in streets or shops; this is because they have entered the "male sphere", where they are not allowed to trespass certain boundaries materialised in politics, economics, science, and culture. They should use the veil to express their understanding that although they are in man's domain, they are "invisible" and therefore are not violating the separation of the sexes. Barbara Brook (1999) aptly states that woman uses her dress to cloak her body differences totally through a comprehensive clothing which in a sense creates a private
space, space-bubble, for her body to move within, even when 'in public' (p:112). This leads us to deal with the veil as a garment, as a visual dimension.

- The Veil as a Visual Dimension

Another meaning of *hijab* is the full covering of the body from the head to ankle, in such a way that the physique or "dimensions" are in no way exposed to *non-mahrams.* Why is this shift from a curtain to a cloak? Muslim women used to be harassed on the streets, and when the Prophet investigated the problem, men who practised *ta'arrud*—an Arabic word—which means to harass woman on the street and oblige her to fornicate—defended themselves by saying: "*We only practice ta'arrud with women we believe to be slaves*". So *Allah* revealed the verse 59 of *sura* 33, cited above (*Qur'an* 33:59). Fatima Mernissi (1991) proceeds to explain the main reasons that led to woman's veiling:

At this point the Prophet's problem was no longer freeing women from the chains of pre-Islamic violence, but simply assuring the safety of his own wives and those of other Muslims in a city that was hostile and out of control. In order to deal with the problem, he began by looking into the immediate causes of what was going on, employing his usual method of information gathering: he sent some emissaries to question those who were acting in this manner. They excuse themselves by claiming confusion about the identity of the women they approached. This was the reason *Allah* revealed verse 59 of *sura* 33, in which He advised the wives of the Prophet to make themselves recognized by pulling their jilbab over themselves. It was not a question of a new item of clothing, but of a new way of wearing a usual one, distinguishing themselves by an action. (2) According to the *Lisan al-'Arab* dictionary, jilbab is a rather vague concept. It can designate numerous pieces of clothing, ranging from a simple chemise to a cloak. One of the definitions in this dictionary describes jilbab as a very large piece of cloth worn by a women; another describes it as a piece of cloth that a women uses to cover her head and bosom (p:180).
Women were essentially perceived as sexual beings unlike men, who were only partly understood in terms of their sexuality. As women were, and still are, believed to be endowed with a fatal sexual attraction, women had to be hidden and separated from men so that the males could be spared to be overpowered by feminine sexual appeal. Women, in whose every soul lies a temptress, ought to be modestly dressed, a fact which evolved into the tradition of veiling. In addition to protecting her, the veil became a symbol of female virtue and obedience to Allah, as well as an integral part of the larger Islamic code stressing sexual segregation. Women were held to possess a more powerful sexual drive than men, posing a threat to society because of the chaos or fitna they could unleash. It was popularly believed that the mere proximity of a woman to a man would lead to sexual relations. To make matters still more threatening, women's sexual purity was linked to their own honour not to that of their men and family. Restricting women to their homes and camouflaging them if they went out was deemed necessary to the preservation of their purity and with it the honour of their men and families. Nawal Al Saadawy (1982) shows how society is responsible for shackling women by inventing words such as "virtue" and "honour":

Men as the rulers of society have forced women to abide by the values of honour and virtue to insure their subjugation-while they continue to enjoy and delve into all the pleasures they have denied women (p:12).

As there are no details concerning the veil as a garment, this has opened the door wide for Muslim male theologians to be designers and devise the
Muslim woman the ideal veil, which should not display her beauty and adornment except for "that which must ordinarily appear of it". It is this expression from the Qura'\textacuten that serves as an excuse for many scholars' definitions of the veil. Some scholars interpreted the apparent adornment that could be displayed such as the woman's face and hands while others interpreted it as the apparent clothes and said that the woman's face and hands must also be covered unless the woman is too old to seek marriage. The scholars who said the woman's face and hands might be uncovered added that the face and hands needed to be free of all forms of artificial beauty (such as make-up). The head-cover should be drawn over the neck slit, so as to cover not only the hair, but also the neck and the bosom. It is also required that the Islamic hijab should be loose enough so as not to reveal the shape of a woman's body. It should be thick enough so as not to show the colour of the skin it covers, or the shape of the body which it is supposed to hide. And finally, since the hijab's requirements are presented for the purpose of hiding adornment, the hijab should not be designed (type of fabric, colour...etc.) in such a way that it attracts men's eyes to women. All Muslim women are asked to beautify themselves with their veils of honour, dignity, chastity, purity and integrity (Qur'an 33:59). They were warned not to display their charms or expose their physical attractions in front of strangers (all men except those mentioned earlier in verse (Qur'an 24:31) and not to mix with them.

*Hijab* is as fluid as women; it has many meanings, and a wide spectrum of shapes and colours. Each woman has her own veil, according to her country, her religion, and her social class. Though Muslim futaha (theologians) tried to delineate the veil as a loose, thick dress that does not resemble man's clothes,
The return to the veil or what I call 'the post modern veil' is an innovative construction that was first worn in the mid-1970s by activists in Iran, in Egypt, and in late 1980s in Morocco. It does not represent a return to the traditional 'haik' nor to 'djellaba w lham' and has no tangible precedent in Moroccan history. In the beginning, it was based on a plain, very modest and dark-coloured fabric (that is known as Afghanestanese). It was made by the veiled women themselves in their homes as there was no industry behind it in Morocco - not one shop had such an outfit. They relied on an idealised vision of Islam in devising the Muslim veil as a revival of the purest Islamic period.

There is a gradation in the veil of the eighties and the nineties; there are the 'Muhtajibat' - veiled women with a long and large dress in austere colours and rigid thick fabric, and a plain scarf that covers the hair and extends low to the forehead, and covers the neck. There are the Munaggabat'-veiled women wearing black rigid niqab with a hood that covers the face except for the eyes, with black gloves and opaque socks, and they are the least common in the Moroccan public space, and the most extremist. There are more moderate veils that range from very glamorous, richly coloured long dresses, djellabas, or large suits and scarves worn by rich, educated and young women to Tchadour (Afghanistanese, plain, dark-coloured dress with a dark scarf) worn by low classes women all over the Islamic world. There are various specific terms for the piece of cloth, such as Burqa and the Turkish Yashmak. With the return to the veil in the eighties, hijab does not refer to hiding the face but simply to covering the head, while the less common cloth covering the face is called a...
I have the impression while trying to make these photographs of veiled women, especially, the one of the *Niqab*, that they defy the eye of the camera. As if this veiled body is challenging the eye of the camera: "you cannot catch hold of my body". The veil empowers, protects the veiled body, and enables it to resist the photographer's gaze. It reminds the camera that the body is private and not public, even though it is on the street. So the photographer is frustrated, instead of gazing, he/she feels gazed at, and the veiled body moves in the public space triumphantly because it can see everything without being seen. Instead of being the spectacle, the veiled body becomes the spectator. The veil
becomes a mask that the veiled body wears to transgress the private to the public; to be incognito. Another adventure is to photograph a woman in a haik for the whiteness of the veil becomes as Malek Alloula (1987) beautifully depicts:

The symbolic equivalent of blindness: a leukoma, a white speck on the eye of the photographer and on his viewfinder. Whiteness is the absence of a photo, a veiled photograph, a whiteout, in technical terms. From its background nothing emerges except some vague contours, anonymous in their repeated resemblance. Nothing distinguishes one veiled woman from another (p:7).

Isn’t that empowering the veiled woman?

In Morocco, the traditional veil changes in form and colour from one region to another. The Moroccan haik (see the middle picture: figure 9) is, generally, a long piece of white cloth -3 to 5 metres- that covers a woman's body except for one eye, but it could be blue or black in the South of Morocco. It is evident that this type of cloth is not appropriate for the daily life outside the house. This led woman to adopt the djellaba, a long dress with a hood that covers the whole body accompanied by a thin face veil that hides woman's face but does not hinder her from breathing -litham (See the right and the left pictures: figure 9). The djellaba has become the traditional and national costume for the majority of Moroccan women except for some regions such as the East and the South of Morocco where the haik remains obligatory. The tradition of wearing the djellaba and litham started to change in 1947, when King Mohamed V introduced his daughter, Princess Lalla Aicha, to make a public speech in Tangier, wearing a long dress and just a scarf over her head.
Since then, stripping off the *litham* was a nationalist sign against colonialism. To show their nationalism, all the nationalists imitated this act, and stripped off their daughters' and wives' veils.

Figure 10. Princess Lalla Aicha was the first Moroccan woman to strip off the veil while making a speech in 1947, in Tangier. This brave act was the beginning of a new era for Moroccan women.

This is one image of the politics of the veil. Another historical incident (which my mother recalls and tells me) that deserves to be remembered because it illustrates the politics of the veil was in the course of Moroccans' fight against French colonization. In the big cities such as Fez, Rabat, Casablanca, Tetuan, Moroccan women replaced their white veil with a black one, to express their refusal of colonization and their loyalty to their king, Mohamed V, who was exiled at the time. They even hid weapons behind their
veils to bring them to the resisters (their fathers, brothers, or husbands),
outside the walls of the city. Thus, the veil at the colonial period was an icon
of contestation and resistance. Frantz Fanon (1989), who worked with the
French army as a doctor in Algeria, claims that the French colonizer was
aware of the strength of this icon:

This enabled the colonial administration to define a precise political doctrine:" If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance,
we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses when the men keep them out of sight" (p: 38).

The return to the veil in the Seventies in the Middle East -with the
success of the Iranian Revolution- confirmed the theory of the politics of the
veil; when the fundamentalists wanted to spread their ideology, they converted
women first to it, in order to guarantee the success of their regime. By focusing
on the transitional step that these women have made in their dress, historically,
from non-veiling to veiling, I would like first, to locate the women who adopt
the veil in terms of class. In the eighties, these women tend to belong to the
urban lower and middle classes. Professionally, they work as civil servants,
schoolteachers, secretaries in public enterprises, nurses, and university
students. Recently -in the mid-nineties- veiling has been adopted by rich house-
wives, generally not highly educated, either young in their twenties and early
thirties, or middle-aged. It is becoming a booming fashion within this class as
their repeated journeys to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage, which is quickly
imitated by friends, and other members of the family. It has even become
common these last years for women from high and middle-classes, professional
or housewives, to form groups and invite a religious speaker to teach them
about the veil, and discuss religious subjects.

In the late eighties, and the beginning of the nineties, the majority of these women walked the streets of the Moroccan cities wearing Western attire: short skirts and dresses below the knee, high heels, sleeves that covered the upper arms in summer, tight jeans; their hair was usually exposed, and they wore make-up. They were convinced that the Western dress was the sign of their emancipation. They differed from their mothers, who usually wore a *djellaba* and covered their hair with a scarf when they were in public, but only in a liberal rather than a rigid way; a good proportion of their hair showed underneath the scarf in contrast to the scarf of the fundamentalist dress which showed nothing, as this picture of Malika El Fassi, the only woman who signed the Independence Manifesto in 1944, shows.

![Figure 11. Malika El Fassi's, the foremother of the modern Moroccan women's movement, style of wearing a *djellaba* and covering her head with a scarf had been followed by almost all the women of her generation.](image-url)
In an attempt to understand the women's relationship to their bodies, since the sixties, one would find it multilayered and highly complex. In a way, the bodies seemed to be a battlefield where the cultural struggles of postcolonial societies were waged. On the one hand, the Western dress carries with it the "capitalist" construction of the female body: one that is sexualized, objectified, thingified. But because capitalism never won the day in our postcolonial social formations, these women's bodies were also simultaneously constructed 'traditionally': 'chattlezied', 'propertized', 'terrorized' as trustees of family honour. There is still this dichotomous relation with the Moroccan female bodies; Western attire in public and traditional Moroccan clothes; Kaftan or Kmiss at home. Despite all the debates, the social classes, and the variations that it may undergo under the pressure of modern life, traditional clothing still constitutes the basic wardrobe of Moroccan women from all social classes. One needs only go to a wedding or any religious ceremony to realise the extent Moroccan women and men remain faithful to their clothing traditions. These two distinct, yet daily, roles are constantly performed.

The cohabitation in the female body of this double construction is experienced by women as highly conflictual. The former role pushes women to be seductive, sexy and sexual, the latter one, to be prudish, conservative and asexual. Whereas the former role is supported by the attraction of the market (consumption of western commodities, fashions and top models) the latter is supported by the threat of violence (Muslim women are severely sanctioned, sometimes by death, if they risk the family's sexual honour). Does the veil
resolve the ambivalence that these women feel about their bodies? Is their veiled appearance no more the object of family debate? Is it going to discipline their bodies' performance in the public space and, thus, protect them from the male gaze? Or does it make a new spectacle of their body whenever in public? This will be clarified by the analysis of the findings of the questionnaire conducted for this purpose in the second chapter.

To stop the dilemma of being the 'attractive prude' or the 'seductive asexual', veiled women chose 'to complete' the covering of their bodies, and 'consumate' their separation from men. I deliberately use the words 'complete' and 'consumate' because the veil is only the concealment of an already ambivalently covered body, rather than the radical transition from 'revealment' to 'concealment'. Likewise, the veil is only the completion of an already ambivalent separation between the sexes, that is, the veil of taboos and customs; the veil of honour, shame (pudeur), chastity, and virtue that have regulated the Muslim female body so far. An important characteristic of the veil is that it turns a public space into a private one. It enables the veiled women to enjoy privacy in public. El Guindi (1999) sums up this idea as follows: "The paradigm public/private, and its corollary honor-shame, is the one most commonly imposed on Arab and Islamic cultural space to describe the division between the sexes" (p:48). This leads us to deal with the ethical dimension of the veil; the morally, socially, and culturally banned. Why are there certain places, acts, and genres considered manly par excellence? Why the banned and the forbidden are always associated to women and not to men?
-The Veil as an Ethical Dimension

Besides the visual veil there is an other type of veils; hijab-i' iffat (veil of chastity), this veil is not a garment, a simple scarf that covers the female body, but it is more complex and abstract. It is a veil to be acquired through religious upbringing, as some internal quality of self, to discipline the female body, obscure its sexuality, and obliterates its public performance. It is what the veil evokes rather than what it is in appearance, what the veil stands for rather than how it appears. It is not a signifier but a signified, this will be dealt with in more details in the next chapter.

Islam stresses the collective enforcement of public morality. To protect society from "indecency" and "temptation", Islam prohibits certain acts pertaining to recreation and sex. Among these are all sexual relations outside wedlock and all public manners of talking, walking, looking and dressing that may instigate temptation, arouse desire, stir suspicion or indicate immodesty and indecency. "And those who guard their private parts (against illegal sexual acts), except for their wives or concubines, they are free from blame" (Qur'an, 23:5-7), and (Qur'an, 24:30-31) cited above.

The concept of honour plays a crucial role in the lives of both men and women in Morocco. Moroccan society revolves around the concept of public morality. At the end of the twentieth century, Moroccan women have to face rigid sexual segregation. Apart from a few women who, because of their contact with the public space, have been able, despite terrible obstacles, to create a situation that is more or less comfortable within their own environment, the vast majority of women are at loggerheads with what seems
to be an insurmountable problem. Indeed, how can one make claims to one's own sexuality and break through this threshold, without opening a Pandora's box within one's own environment and without being labelled as an "easy woman"? Moroccan women, therefore, have no right over their bodies and are prohibited from even thinking that they are their own. Soumaya Naamane-Guessous (1987), threw a pebble into still waters by disturbing the long silence surrounding the sexuality of Moroccan women. According to Naamane-Guessous, *Hchouma* (shame) conditions and permeates the world of female sexuality to such an extent that women simply cannot make decisions without analyzing them in terms of shame. Shame is lived as one of the key values of Moroccan society. On the other hand, *Hchouma* is never a male concern. How could a man, the representative of power, who overcomes all the obstacles in his path, ever be concerned by shame? Naamane-Guessous has unveiled a contemporary society that is torn apart and where widespread, ill-defined shame blurs the underlying essential issue, that is to say, the psychosomatic balance, not only of women, but also, to a certain extent, of men. Shame takes its roots mainly in an intrinsic fear of the opinion of the community: in the eyes of some, the "what-will-people-say" aspect plays an important role in the life of women who are brought up to believe that their public behaviour is their only means of keeping their dignity and earning the respect of the community. At the bottom line, the female body must bear the entire burden. It is first placed under the obsession of virginity prized all else, and it must later be trained to accept the impossible reality of repressed sexuality. In such a context, honour is of supreme importance. Fear of scandal is a constant reminder in the daily lives of many Moroccans and Arabs in general. Upholding the honour of the
family and protecting it from dishonour is a vital responsibility of women. In this regard, Naamane-Guessous speculates about the need for men to be "dominant" during sex and to throw their female partners into a sea of frustration. Where do the origins of this basic imbalance lie? In shame? In lack of sex education? It is a combination of both, I presume.

The concept of honour, as well as the traditional concept of women, combine to formulate the male perception of womanhood. Most men see it as their responsibility to protect female sexuality by strictly controlling women's actions. Men deem this necessary due to their view that women are easily led by their emotions and unable to manage their desires. Many men express progressive views concerning the position of women in society as long as it does not alter this ingrained position. Those who have the loudest voice when it comes to fighting for women's rights are often reactionary when the issue hits close to home. Not infrequently, some Moroccan newspapers carry stories structured along the crimes of honour: Mr X killed his sister, or his daughter, or his wife for engaging in, or being suspected of engaging in, sexual practices before or outside marriage.

The social function of crimes of honour changed from being merely the punishment of vice to becoming a means of constructing gender relations within society. The way the girl dresses and how she behaves have heavy sexual signification. She is continuously subject to the test of 'honour' and reputation, that she never really passes once and for all. Her sense of disempowerment stems from the terror exercised over her body, death is not an infrequent extreme. As a result, women are still viewed as morally corruptible and in need of supervision. Veiling may be seen as a symbol of female virtue.
and obedience to Allah, as well as an integral part of the larger Islamic code stressing sexual segregation. Due to cultural pressures to dress "decently", even women who do not believe in the justification behind the veil feel compelled to wear one. This social practice reinforces the perception of women as purely sexual beings who need to be controlled, as it is proved by the findings of the analysis of questionnaire in the next chapter. In order to safeguard the family's honour, male kin believe they must keep a close watch on their female relatives, Fatima Mernissi (1987) argues that: "a respectable man is not simply someone who acquires some degree of economic power, but who also controls the sexual behaviour of his wife, daughters, and sisters" (p:149). So the father, the brother, or the husband controls the women's movements, acts, and restricts their space. She cannot travel alone, unless she has his permission. She cannot divorce even though she no longer stands her marital life, whereas, he is not only able to divorce without the wife's knowing but can marry two, three, or more wives. Since the veil is a shield against the decline and decadence of moral values and against the uneasiness of men, it translates a social crisis. It also unveils the fact that more efforts are needed to incite men and women to learn how to live together in mutual respect, in a world where women are not obliged to be veiled in order not to be denuded.

In the past, this was facilitated by the seclusion of women and the restricted nature of activities outside the household. However, the post-independence change with its modern trends have led more women to work outside home, presenting a fundamental problem for men. Women are placed in a public atmosphere where they are more exposed to attacks on their honour, which are direct attacks on the honour of all men within their families.
Obsession by this leads most men to carefully and strictly monitor their women’s activities outside home, and push them, directly or indirectly, to veil whenever they are performing their daily public activities. In the light of this, the return to the veil is a return to a mask that enables women more freedom while performing in public, as it is a reinforcement of the fact that the veil is not static but dynamic. It changes from one place to another, from one woman to another, and from one performance to another.

The wearing of the hijab in Morocco is increasing and popular in all classes, among all women; educated or illiterate. Is this increase only a symbol of cultural separateness from the West, or does it hide social, political and sexual boundaries that these women try to cross behind the 'hijab'? To answer some of the questions raised in this chapter about the real veil, the Muslim veil, or the 'hijab', I deemed it interesting to devise a questionnaire (See Appendix 1), and undertake the study described below.
2. The Real Veil: A Fieldwork Study

An attempt is made in this chapter to examine the different meanings of the 'Muslim veils', the different definitions given to the concept, and the reasons behind this return to the veil. In order to achieve this goal, and to complement the personal observation, the interviews, the photographs, I judged it necessary to add another data-collection instrument, a self-completed questionnaire (see appendix 1). I undertook the study analysed below with third and fourth year female students from the English Department at the university of Fez. What does motivate my choice of female students, and the university as the space for this research?

As concerns the sampling procedure, convenience sampling was limited to female students only. To better understand the return to the veil or hijab, I would rather try to understand it from where it started first in the Moroccan society, and hear the voices of its pioneers. This was not done at random, it is the outcome of the general social and religious beliefs that the veil is for women only -though, I am fully aware that, if we analyse the Moroccan traditional clothes, as you can notice in the images (see figure 1), men are also 'veiled' by wearing a djellaba with a fez or a burnoose on their heads, as you can notice in the images (see figure 1). El Guindi (1999) tries to pinpoint the neglect of this subject:

A crucial neglect and overlooked fact about veiling is the clear evidence that men in Arab society veil. More productive is to examine the head -or head/face-covers for both sexes, rather than to look at the veil as a unique or isolated woman's phenomenon, which misdirects analysis (p: 117).
This was backed up by the answers of the respondents to the following question: "Is there a relation between the veil and gender?". 98% of the respondents claimed that the veil is for women only and that men are only required to wear correct clothes. For the basic requirement of the Muslim's dress -modesty- should be applied both to the Muslim woman's and man's clothing with the difference being mainly in degree. Modesty requires that men should cover the area between the navel and the knee in front of all people except the wife. The clothing of men should not be like the dress of women, nor should it be tight or provocative. A Muslim man should dress to show his identity as a Muslim. Men are not allowed to wear gold or silk, for instance. However, both are permitted for women. For both men and women, clothing requirements are not meant to be a restriction but rather a way in which society will function in a proper Islamic manner.

The university was taken as the space for this study because, first, it is a space that allows me as a lecturer and a researcher to meet daily with the veiled bodies, to speak with them, to witness the development of the veil –especially, Fez university is not unfamiliar to me, for I did all my high studies in this university, and I have been a lecturer there since 1987. Second, Fez university is the appropriate place in which such an academic research on the growth of the veil, its various interpretations, its sexual/ political dynamics, and its relationship with Moroccan women's future roles in society could be carried out, since it is considered as one of the major nests of fundamentalists in Morocco. Third, besides its cultural, and educational roles, the university presents, in my view, a political space; it is the present space that enlightens the future, because it is the Moroccan students' site of resistance and
contestation, par excellence. Finally, university, as an institution, has always been the starting point of any social, political, or cultural movement. As in the late sixties, and the beginning of the seventies, Moroccan students made of the Westernized look (long hair and jeans for boys, and mini-skirts and make-up for girls) the model to be followed in order to strip off the veil, they are now preaching the return to the veil and beards.

In the 1990s (after the Gulf War), the appeal of the hijab appeared to be most prominent among university students, although, their parents were often reluctant to see them take up the hijab, and their mothers did not wear it. Since then, the Moroccan university has become the cradle of the rebirth of Islamic precepts, especially Fez university, as the ground is slipping under the "comrades'" feet to the Muslim brothers. So, the 'Islamic dress' started to spread with an escalating speed, first among the female students -48% of the English department female students now are veiled, whereas this can double in Arabic or Islamic departments- and second, among their relatives and friends. Thanks to their voluntary sermons, the students became the first missionaries who promoted the veil inside and outside the university; in public baths, social gatherings.... El Guindi (1999) described a similar phenomenon in Egypt in the seventies:

There is no doubt that as an Islamic movement it (the veil) began after the 1973 Ramadan war. Youth and college students began to dress differently in public from the majority of urban rising middle and even upper-class Egyptians, who since the 1930s had worn modern Western clothing (p: 134).

The veil became the sign of a search for an ideal Islamic identity. No overt pressure or force was exerted on the non-veiled bodies, only perhaps the
indirect influence of a change in public moral climate in which some female and male students became activist symbols of an "Islamic model" of behaviour, clothing, and ideology. In general, they used no violence to make others join them, their sole weapon was their gift of the gab, their respected dress, and their idealised demeanour. They started small in number but strong in presence, and they became living models to emulate.

a. Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to one hundred female students - thirty from the fourth year (B.A.), and seventy from the third year- randomly sampled. The return was highly positive (100%) with all the one-hundred questionnaires completed and returned. The questionnaire includes sixteen questions: in addition to three close questions concerned with eliciting background information related to age, educational level, and social life. There are thirteen main questions - ranging from forced-choice questions, filter questions, to multiple questions, and one open-ended question. These thirteen main questions, although seemingly discrete, are in reality closely related as they revolve around the same idea: what are the different meanings of the veil? All the one hundred filled questionnaires were included in the analysis. Relevant quotes are sometimes mentioned to support the analysis.

- Findings and Discussion

A majority of respondents were aged between 20 and 30. The highest percentages were recorded for respondents between 20 and 25 (90%), those between 25 and 30 constituted (8%), whereas the lowest percentage was obtained for those aged under 20 (2%) only. These figures are somehow consistent with the average age of third and fourth year students at Moroccan
The aim of the third question: "Do you live with your family, relative, friend, or alone (in the campus, or outside it)?" is to spot the relationship that exists between the wearing of the veil and the oppression exercised by the family over these women. Despite the rather important number of respondents (60%) who live with their families, 40% live alone; either on campus or outside the university. It may be surprising to notice that the relatively high rate of the respondents who live alone, that is far from their families, are veiled, 80%. This accounts for their relatively high rate of the respondents who are veiled which emanates from their feeling that the veil replaces their families' protection.

-Veiling / Non-Veiling

An interesting finding is that, in this sample 48 are veiled, and 52 are non-veiled. The analysis of the data elicited through the questionnaire item: "Are you veiled?" justifies, what I have claimed above, that the number of veiled students is highly increasing, especially with 'the Plan of Integration' and the unfinished debate it has been entailing if compared to two or three years ago. Additionally, 90% of the non-veiled respondents expressed their eagerness to put on the veil soon. There is obviously the psychological pressure whereby, if an increasing number of women begin wearing the veil, which carries the message of being a better Muslim than those who do not wear the veil, it becomes more comfortable and more secure to follow suit.

Despite these explanations, it is important not to overlook the fact that the veil is worn by these women out of sincere religious beliefs rather than by political radicalism and anti-Westernism. However, the potential of the veil to
symbolise a political stand is very high, as the findings of the two tables below show. In the first table, I try to collect the 48 veiled respondents’ reasons of veiling, whereas the second table illustrates the 52 non-veiled respondents’ reasons for non-veiling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Veiling</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Religion</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Muslim Identity</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>93.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Empowerment</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Freedom</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Modesty</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Invisibility</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Protection</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Respect</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Difference</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Seclusion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Reasons for Veiling
### Reasons for Non-Veiling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Non-Veiling</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anonymity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oppression</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Imprisonment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>48.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Restriction</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>96.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Celibacy</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>76.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No good job</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>76.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Reasons for non-veiling

It should be pointed out here that some respondents did not restrict their answers to one category, but expressed views which belonged to other categories as well, so that there were substantial intersecting between the categories in the answers. As the two above tables reveal, the veil provides a framework within which women are "oppressed" or "liberated". It is striking to notice that over 80% of the veiled respondents value veiling as a source of their empowerment. However, 57.69% of the non-veiled respondents express their views that veiling is sine qua non to oppression. Clearly, these findings encourage me to believe that the Moroccan society is cleaved into two halves those who think that the veil is empowering and those who believe it to be oppressing.
b. The Muslim Veil: Oppression or Empowerment?

Neither domestic confinement nor veiling the face was ordained by Islam, although both had been imposed on Muslim women in the name of religion. Different interpretations of the Qur'a'n vouch that the veil as a clothing practice has been recommended and not imposed in the dawn of Islam. It was a practice meant to distinguish the Muslims from non-Muslims, and slaves from prostitutes as it was previously discussed in the first chapter of this part. It was an affirmation of the Muslim identity as 93% of the veiled respondents still maintain. It was a means to protect Muslim women during the building of Islamic structures when non-believers looked for any means to reach the Muslim women's dignity and reputation; 83,3% of the veiled respondents think that the veil provides them with protection, and the same number 83,3% add that they feel respected in the public space.

Since the Iranian Revolution (1979), the veil has caused an ambivalent reaction among Muslim and non Muslim women: it is either a form of freedom for those who have adopted it to show their support to the movement, or of oppression to those who reject it (57% of the non-veiled respondents see the veil as oppressive) and to Western feminists. Among Muslim women, the debate about the hijab takes many forms. Many believe that the veil is a way to secure personal freedom in a world that objectifies women. Several women have argued that the hijab allows them freedom of movement and of control over their bodies. Understood in such terms, the hijab protects women from the male gaze and allows them to become free agents. Others have argued that the veil only provides the illusion of protection and serves to absolve men of the
responsibility of controlling their behaviour, and mainly their bodies. 96.15% of the non-veiled respondents reject veiling because it is an icon of restriction, and 76.92% believe that it hinders them from having a good job, especially in the private sector.

These reactions are expressions of a society in crisis. After a century of fighting for women's rights led by Muslim women, men, intellectuals, politicians, and thinkers, the end of the tunnel is still invisible. There are some women who prefer to fight behind this shield of protection and peace, the veil. Thus, they have established a link with the traditional code and, hence, oblige men to cover the ground that they lost before and reinforce, the patriarchal system, submission, obedience, and oppression. This reaction could be translated as a physical cry of a sheer pessimism, and a revolution against all the shackles. In reveiling other women use the veil as a mask, a pretence that allows them a "visa" to move freely within the public space, and to have peace as 52% of the veiled respondents answer to the questionnaire item: "How do you feel in public?"

The subject of the return to the veil is a very complex one and is still engendering various reactions. The political and the economic changes of Muslim modern societies, and the loss of stable values and references have endowed the veil with new meanings. We hear of the veil as a recovery of the Muslim identity (93.75%), the veil as a self-affirmation, the veil as a mask of misery, the veil as concession, the veil as empowerment 83%, the veil as imprisonment 48.07%, the veil as a separation of spheres....The fundamentalists impose it on Muslim women as the first precept of their Islam. The modernists reject it as the shackle that restricts women's freedom, and
confine them to the household. Both positions assert that Islam is not responsible for sexism. In fact, the Qur'an supports the notion of gender equality. In Islam there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship to Allah is concerned, as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. The Qur'an says: "And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women" (2:226).

The Qur'an, in addressing the believers, often uses the expression, 'believing men and women' to emphasise the equality of men and women in regard to their respective duties, rights, virtues and merits. It says:

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward (33:35)

As scholar Fatima Mernissi (1987) puts it "the existing inequality does not rest on an ideological or biological theory of women's inferiority, but the outcome of specific social institutions designed to restrain her power" (p:xvi). Mernissi views the recent rise of women's repression in some Muslim countries as a rejection of colonial influence:

The fact that Western colonisers took over the paternalistic defence of the Muslim woman's lot characterised any changes in her condition as concessions to the coloniser. Since the external aspects of women's liberation, for example, the neglect of the veil for Western dress, were often emulations of Western women, women's liberation was readily identified as succumbing to foreign influences (Ibid, vii).
work sheds light on more recent events like the reinstatement of mandatory veiling by Afghanistan's Taliban regime. Islam is not to be blamed for the backwardness of the Muslim women's situation but the 'male elite' as Fatima Mernissi (1991) boldly claims:

When I finished writing this book I had come to understand one thing: if women's rights are a problem for some modern Muslim men, it is neither because of the Qur'an nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of a male elite. The elite faction is trying to convince us that their egotistic, highly subjective, and mediocre view of culture and society has a sacred basis (p:ix).

The above findings do not contradict what some Moroccan writers found out. The results of their investigations, however, have yielded a different picture to that in popular Western perception. 74.2% of women see the veil as a religious obligation, according to a thorough study conducted by Abdessamad Dialmy (1995). Belhassan's (1979) investigations in the field show that some of the veiled women accept the veil as a deliverance, refuge, to hide her physical ugliness and misery." Hind Taarji (1992) sees the veil as desexualizing the woman, and negating the particularity and the beauty of the female body. Fatima Mernissi (1991) attacks the practice of women's segregation by the conservatives as the institutionalisation of male authoritarianism achieved by way of manipulating the sacred texts.

Other studies of the veil, conducted in the Middle East, reach similar conclusions. Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot (1997) bases her argument on the position of women in a historical survey of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. She shows that woman's position and veiling are determined not so much by the principles of Islam as by social practices, and traditions. She considers that
the principles of Islam as by social practices, and traditions. She considers that
the veil expresses the female need to be protected. She also points out that it is
too late for those high-profile working women whose grandmothers
participated in the Egyptian nationalist movement to choose to veil themselves.
Furthermore, the veil cannot necessarily be considered Islamic as it is not
known what Muslim women wore in the time of the Prophet.

Haleh Afshar (1993)\textsuperscript{33} in her studies of women in contemporary Iran
approaches the veil from a different angle. Under the Iranian Islamic
government, this garment has gained a liberating dimension, freeing women
from the fashion industry, as well as allowing the veiled body to become an
observer and not one of the observed, thus overcoming sexual harassment and
gaining respect. Since the veil is compulsory in Iran, accepting it represents
one of the compromises made to reach political and economic power but more
than that, it has itself become a feminist tool.

A similar opinion about the veil is presented by Maha Azzam (1991),\textsuperscript{34}
who looks at the economic practicalities and the moral superiority that the veil
offers young Egyptian women. The veil in Egypt is worn by Islamist women
out of choice. It gives them membership of an Islamic club offering a
framework of hope in times of political, social, and economic decline. The
\textit{hijab} is central to this Islamist movement. In general, women who choose to
wear it are aware of its social and economic advantages. These range from
more possibilities for getting married (since men prefer \textit{muhajjabat}) to
economic practicalities (low cost dress, for instance).

Munira Fakhro's (1994)\textsuperscript{35} also addresses the issue of the veil. She both
questions the attire of women and the concept of decency in dress for women
in Islam, and believes it to be a matter of social circumstances rather than *Qur'anic* injunctions.

Jean Said Makdisi (1991) focuses on women in Lebanon and examines a number of issues that are of vital importance to women generally (Christian and Muslim) in the Middle East and to women in Islamic countries. According to her, the concept of the veil has been over simplified both in its ethnic context and its political or religious significance by Western media. She criticises the preconceived ideas of the veil that classify people as "modern" versus "traditional" on the basis of costume and argues that a woman who wears the veil out of choice is not necessarily submissive or less modern.

Mai Yamani (1997) discusses the reaction of the Saudi feminists to the compulsory wearing of the veil. The only way that these feminists, who use Islam to empower themselves in Saudi Society, have to demand more rights in the country, was by wearing a strict modification of the veil. Veiling in this manner (thereby symbolising Islamic piety), becomes a way of achieving their goals. Mai Yamani eloquently explains the Saudi women's ruse to escape patriarchal authority:

> In Saudi Arabia during the 1980s "some women" are using the existing framework of Islamic law to challenge or even question their own status in Saudi society. These women act, not in an overtly political way, but more subtly, from "behind the veil". Since the 1980s, religion has become the platform on which the power game is played (p: 5).

Recently, Fadwa El Guindi (1999) explores the anthropology of the veil as a dress. Her main argument is that veiling in contemporary Arab culture is largely about identity, privacy of space and body, and resistance.

Finally, it is worth noting that in Algeria, as Malek Alloula (1987)
claims, during the struggle for independence, the veil became synonymous of Algerian patriotism, and an instrument of their resistance to French domination. Thus, the veil becomes not only that Muslim garment, but it has become a body language that translates many interpretations according to the performance that each veiled woman acts in public.

c. The Muslim Veil as Body Language

Another interesting definition of the veil that emerged from this study, is body language (98% of the respondents chose this category of answers). This is very significant in itself, because it serves to check the dynamism of the veil as a concept, and its various definitions. The veil as a body language vehicles a discourse; a symbolic one, a metaphoric one, and a spiritual one. Its meaning can be decoded by the motivations, the manners of wearing the veil, the nature of its cloth, and its colour. For all these various elements participate in forming its symbol, its logic, and its meaning -show me the veil you wear, I tell you who you are. What are the other synonyms of the real veil to the sample of one hundred –veiled and non-veiled- respondents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synonyms of the Real Veil</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dress</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Muslim Garment</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mask</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Body Language</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Space Division</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Discourse</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Synonyms of the Real Veil
The figures in Table 3 indicate that a significant number among the respondents (98%) underline body language as the synonym of the real veil. The history of the veil is associated with the body, as a bearer of many symbols. Pierre Bourdieu (1997) states that "Bodies take metaphors seriously" (p:71). We all live our lives through actions performed in structured space and time. The material world that surrounds us is one in which we use our living bodies to give substance the social distinctions and differences that underpin social relations, symbolic systems, forms of labour and daily intimacies. The language of the veil is allusive, suggestive, and seductive. It is a clothing that isolates and hides the body but it does not erase it. Veiling the woman's body is trying to mute all its active, attractive, and desired sources: procreation, pleasure, love, and creativity in the artistic sense; yet, it remains an unspoken practice that is loaded with many meanings. These sources, highlight the socio-cultural dimension of the veil which represents the taboos and the forbidden. As the female body carries all the taboos of the society, it must be veiled, suppressed, silenced.

We can confirm from the findings of table 3 that the Muslim, female or male, body has become, like any body, the object of intense cultural, philosophical and feminist fascination within a remarkably short period of time. The body and its transformation into various shapes and forms was always an important part of traditional cultural performances. It seems as though the 1980s culture exploded around a celebration of the body: the gym, body piercing, dance culture, henné, body tattooing, body building, body modifying, and body veiling. A more amenable body, is more malleable and more subordinate to mind or will than ever before. "Just pick the body you
want and it can be yours for a price", as Elizabeth Grosz (1995:1) states. Grosz (1994:143) argues that there is no "natural" norm; there are only cultural forms of body, which do or do not conform to social norms. The body, thus, becomes the canvas incarnate which, correlate to its sex, is saturated, marked and encoded with the cultural and linguistic codes and presuppositions of gender and sexuality and the body would therefore become the space of subversion of gender, and often of sex and sexuality. For the body is not only a text of culture, it is also, as Bourdieu (1990) and Foucault (1997) have argued, a practical, direct locus of social control, what Foucault (1997b) calls the "docile body", regulated by the norms of cultural life.

The female body has always been a support of language and a source of expression; as it has always been desired and sacred at the same time. Each culture has its own image, definition, representation and interpretation of the body. The body is a means of communication with the other and at the same time the mirror of its identity and being. The Moroccan woman's body is very closely linked to her existence, it is modelled by traditions, enslaved by rules, fettered by cultural, historical and material constraints, imprisoned by familiar and imaginary links. This body remains veiled, masked, seen through social representations exulting only in a dance, trance, or in a mental illness.

Biologically, the female body is limited by two zones; sex and matrix. As if it is its destiny to have a dual definition; on the one hand, it is synonymous to beauty, seduction, and provocation; hence, it must be framed, muffled up, and imprisoned inside four walls with a sunny courtyard. On the other hand, it is synonymous to creation, life, and birth so it is venerated because it is exposed to the suffering of pregnancy and labour. This suffering that inhibits this body
and checks its desire and lets woman live in anguish. The Moroccan female body is overprotected by the family, especially by the mother who looks after her daughter's virginity and, thus, preserves her from any sexual relationship before marriage. Virginity is an obsession for Moroccan girls; for the Moroccan man still thinks that virginity is the symbol of his wife's chastity and purity. This satisfies his crave to be the first male in her life.

Socio-culturally, the body has two dimensions: the imaginary and the realistic. It is fascinating to note the great the difference between the imaginary and the realistic as far as woman's sexuality and body are concerned. The Arab imaginary has very erotic-sexual connotations of the female body which have prevailed in books and poems since pre-Islamic poetry; *El Moua'ilaka't*, and *The Thousand and one Nights*. However, the language of the veil remains ambivalent and very strong; it hides the body, and attracts the eye that becomes curious to penetrate it. The veil hides the body and makes its shape sexless; yet it gives free rein to the imagination. It incites the viewer to ask: what is behind this veil?

The relation between woman and her body is very important and this is shown by the importance given to the body’s treatment. For the woman's maintenance of her body, as the male body too, is multiple. It is the maintenance of health, prevention from illness, and beauty, seduction and attraction. The female body is a social product moulded by culture and whose image haunts our affection and our collective representations. The image of the female body is part of our imaginary. It exults the body as an enchanted, desired, loved, and even transcended entity, but at the same time it is the language of seduction and temptation, so it should be veiled, muffled,
cloistered in closed female spaces such as the house and the hot steam (a place where the female bodies touch each other, speak to each other through words, gestures, smells, and colours; it is a place where woman intimately looks after her body to make it more beautiful, perfumed, purified, and desired).

The access of women to the public space has allowed woman, in general, to show her body and dress it differently, to control its procreation. Considered as temptation itself Fitna or Awra, the veil has been imposed to blur this body, or to make it incognito. Does it really hide this body, desexualise it, or is it just another performativity, a body language?

As discussed above, the veiled body is not monolithic. Veiled sexuality, it seems to me, reveals a multiplicity that is beyond expectations. Hence, there are veiled bodies expressing veiled languages. As each woman has her own veil she gives it her own definition. In the one hundred questionnaires I have analysed, and the casual conversations that I have had with other Moroccan veiled women, all the respondents answered my blunt question: "Why are you veiled? Is it imposed on you, or is it out of your own choice?" that "the veil is God's obligation and we should obey him". They are convinced that for Muslim women covering the head is not a sign of degradation and oppression. This answer shows a consensus to obey God's will. But during the course of the interview, other answers emerge. They are as various as these veiled bodies are. For some, the veil is an immunity from the male's gaze and the key to mingle in the public space without being touched. For those who live in the West it is a symbol of their Muslim identity. For old women this is a preparation for the approaching death. For a widow or a divorced woman, it is
a shield against the potential accusation of the society, and from the male guardianship, because whatever her age is she is considered as legally minor. Hence there are veiled bodies expressing various veiled languages.

True, there are those who can be described as 'ideology incarnate'. Their relationship with their body replicates ideology so well that a shift in this construction looks almost hopeless. They are the leaders, the preachers, the passionate believers, the puritans. The majority of this category are university students. They are the ones whose public veiled self takes over, even when they are in the private quarters of women. Their bodies seem to adopt the daily rituals of the veil, where they come to look, for the more worldly. It is the body of the committed, the politically engaged.

There are also those in the community of the veiled who are tentative and wavering. Once secure in the company of women, they reveal bodies that are more colourful, lively and sexual. One is surprised at the shift their bodies make when they take the veil off - I am always stunned by the paradox between their public and domestic performances. The bland face becomes colourful with creative make up. The loose dress of the veil, once taken off, reveals underneath fashionable clothing, making a more individual and personal statement than the collective public one of the veil. Their sexuality appears to be more forthcoming, assertive and joyful. Once together, their interaction with each other is not devoid of seductiveness and flirtation. Their language becomes more erotic than mine - a non-veiled woman - can dare to utter. Their private bodies are almost unrelated to their public ones; they remind me of R.L. Stevenson, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, glimpses of these performances you will witness later in the third part of this thesis; more exactly, in the cassette video
of The Harem.

There are also those whose private more colourful bodies, shyly but daringly, are pushed to become more public. They wear make-up with the veil. They are more creative, fashion-conscious in public, constantly attempting to subvert the blandness of the veil. They invent a million ways to tie the scarf on their heads, which itself becomes more varied in colours than the more standard white or black. The loose dress of the veil suddenly becomes slightly tighter, more colourful, more daring in emulating Western fashions, even if it does not explicitly reveal parts of the female body. One also notices them in the streets conversing with men, strolling with them, subverting the segregation that the veil imposes on the sexes. It is, what I call, the post-modern veil; mingling modernity with religion. To this category, the veil is a mask of chastity, a shield of protection, which helps them escape the family's censorship. Generally, this type of veil is undertaken by secondary school and some university students; young girls in their twenties.

There are those who use their bodies and dress as a statement of opposition. They differentiate themselves in their environment by wearing the veil, and using it as a reaction against female subordination in non-fundamentalist Moroccan households in which they find themselves. Wearing the veil allows this category of women to have a singular and individual voice: "You are all not wearing the veil, but I AM. I am powerful enough to do it, and this is how I carve myself a space that you cannot reach. I disapprove of what you are, who you are, and what you think!" The veil, in this case, becomes the signifier of the Muslim identity; a sense of belonging, and a self protection against committing sins, as some respondents specify in the last open-ended
question. This is one of the infinite numbers of the discourses of the veil; it is
the fundamentalist construction of the veil, as it is circulated ideologically. A
woman who decides to wear the veil is usually subjected to a certain
ideological indoctrination, about how every Muslim woman needs to cover
her body so as not to seduce men, and in doing this she obeys the word of
Allah (as 80% of the respondents write in their additional comment).
Otherwise, she would face His wrath on the day of Judgement. It is a sign of
courage over all the temptation of fashion, beauty, and desire. It is a new brand
of feminism; an Islamic one. Hence the return to the veil is the creation of a
new body language that differs from one veiled body to another, and a symbol
of a new performance of the female body in public activities. It is a sign of a
social crisis of Moroccan post-independent society.

Leaving the harem to the school and work, the modern Muslim women spend part of their daily lives walking the streets, using public transport, and mingling with men in every public activity. This public exposure has never been welcomed or forgiven by the majority of Muslim men, so they do all their best to remind women that it is not their space or that they have transgressed the normal fixed boundaries. Women are stared at, whistled at, rubbed against, pinched... Comments by men such as, "what nice breasts you have", or "how beautiful ...you must be", or something more subtle in tone such as, "what a blessed day this is that I have seen you", are not infrequent.

A tragic event happened near Fez University campus just on 12th May 2001, when a non-veiled student ventured to go out alone at 9 o'clock with tight jeans and a top. She was attacked by some soldiers. This broke out a violent fight between them and some male students, who came to her rescue,
when they heard her screaming for help. The police intervened, and one student was killed, others were severely injured, and some were imprisoned. When some of the authorities were asked by the press about the main reason that triggered off that tragic incident, the answer was that some students wanted to break into the army quarters. The real cause was completely veiled from the public, because sexual harassment is still a taboo in Moroccan society, and making the girl's name public will harm her honour which is the honour of all the family. This could entail her death by her father, or brother, which would be registered as a crime of honour.

I feel denuded whenever I cross a café, which is predominantly a male space, especially that the last decades have seen a blossoming of cafés; they grow as mushrooms everywhere in Moroccan cities -between one café and the other there is another café. It is so embarrassing to be conscious of being looked at your back. So, either you haste your pace as a thief, or change your way to avoid the male's gaze. The female enters the public (masculine) space, as Barbara Brook (1999) adequately argues:

as a potentially disruptive, transgressive body and it is her position as spectacle (making a spectacle of herself) under the view of the masculine eye, that disciplines her back into line, returns her into a docile body (p:112).

In such conditions, the female body has to acquire a multitude of ways to discipline and regulate itself when being in public space; since women are fully aware that in the public sphere they are mainly considered as irreducibly sexualised object of the male gaze. Ordinarily, Moroccan women avoid any kind of direct verbal exchange with men when they are so approached. They either give the man a look of disapproval or simply look ahead dismayed, and
continue their way. Exceptionally, a woman might engage in a verbal exchange with the man, if he is insistent in his attempts. This will incite an ambivalent reaction. He will either take her talking back as an encouragement and he will persist in approaching her -for in Morocco when woman says 'no' it is understood as 'yes' -or the male passers-by will chide the woman for not dressing properly, for an example, the length of her dress is not appropriate to a Muslim woman, implying that if she dressed properly, such kind of harassment would not have occurred. Women, then, should always "watch themselves" while in public; and not forget that the moment they step outside their homes they are actually making a spectacle of their bodies and, thus, should be disciplined bodies. Contrary to the non-veiled body, a veiled body, generally, has a different language. It is not a sexy body so it is rarely exposed to male's intrusions, and if it is, the woman is more likely to confront the man with self-righteousness because the public reaction will be more sympathetic to her. The men nearby will generally make comments such as: "Muslim women should not be annoyed". Her sense of the 'untouchability' of her body is usually very strong in contrast to the non-veiled body. The veil then becomes a liberation, it is an alibi for protection. Thanks to the veil, the veiled body has family peace: no blames and no reprisals; who could dare accuse a chaste veiled girl? Even her parents feel reassured and calm; the veil represents protection from the dangers of the streets, and sexual harassment toward their daughters. \(^{42}\) Public sexual harassment seems to reinforce the non-veiled woman's ambivalence about her body, making her powerless in the face of unwelcome intrusions, as 67.3% of the respondents confirm. Whereas veiled bodies seem free from this ambivalence, and this is the source of self-
confidence in the public.

As a free comment to the last open-ended question of the questionnaire, many veiled respondents write: "with the hijab men do not harass us in the streets, and our fathers, brothers, and husbands do not annoy us and do respect us". These women are convinced that they are evaluated for their intelligence and skills instead of looks and sexuality. They passionately continued, "We want to stop men from treating us like sex objects, as they have always done. We want them to ignore our appearance and to be attentive to our personalities and minds. We want them to take us seriously and treat us as equals and not just chase us around for our bodies and physical looks." A Muslim woman who covers her head is making a statement about her identity. Anyone who sees her will know that she is a Muslim and has a good moral character. Many Muslim women who veil themselves are filled with dignity and self esteem; they are pleased to be identified as Muslim women. As chaste, modest, pure women, they do not want their sexuality to enter into interactions with men in the smallest degree. A woman who covers herself is concealing her sexuality but allowing her femininity to be brought out.

According to these veiled respondents, the veil main reason is modesty, which may be viewed as not wishing to receive unnecessary attention from men, such as admiration and flattery, envy, or, most importantly, sexual attention.

For the rest of the questionnaire categories, the claims made in the beginning were reiterated in the last comment, so that there was clear insistence on: religion, Muslim identity, peace, freedom.... Veiling, along with the general segregation of the sexes, works to desexualise women, allowing
them greater freedom and mobility. It has transcended from a clothing practice to a body language.

The newly produced women, with veiled languages, disciplined bodies, and scientific sensibilities, can claim a place in the public space providing they do not threaten the social and cultural order. The veiled body could be imagined as a citizen with a public presence. Her sexually neutralised words could be printed and read by the new reading public. Bodily parts, most often imagined as sites of female sexuality, or rather as the foci of male eroticism, once renamed, could now be displayed from under the veil, be looked at as if not only linguistically but also anatomically desexed. The veil, as a body language, vehicles a symbolic and spiritual discourse. The meaning of this discourse can be decoded by the manners of wearing the veil, the nature of its cloth, and its colour. All these elements participate in its symbolic, logic, and meaning.

-Conclusion

To conclude this study, the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire came to complement and support the results found by the other data-collection cited above. The 'real veil'; the 'Muslim veil', or the 'hijab', comes as the Muslim female 'choice' to deviate the numerous hurdles that she encounters whenever she crosses to the public. The findings have revealed that for women in Morocco the return to the veil is a religious duty that they should fulfil in order to be rewarded in the after-life. Furthermore, the views expressed by the respondents in this study did not include any extremist demands concerning using coercion to impose the veil on all Moroccan women. Though a recent incident has incited many feminists—male and female—to bring back to
the surface women’s emancipation, and the male dominance in this country\textsuperscript{43}.

For them it is "\textit{God’s bless that He gives to the woman He loves}".\textsuperscript{44} They rather reveal a moderate attitude in which veiling means the answer to God's will, a step towards a revival of an ideal Islamic community; like the previous one that led Islamic world to its golden age, and a general expression of a political, social, and sexual dissatisfaction. The overall stand of Moroccan veiled women in this context seems to illustrate what Haideh Moghissi (1999) described in the following quote:

The revival veil is linked to the failure of over a century of capitalist modernisation to secure palpable improvements in women's lives or change in cultural and religious patriarchal values and practices (p: 44).

With the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Question of the veil became the subject of many Islamic movements discussions over the world (it is not particular only to the Muslim countries as there are Muslim women in non-Muslim countries; the example of France and Belgium where the issue of the veil is very burning these last years). Among the first decisions that Iranian Islamists have made to mark their new era is, ironically, woman's issue -this leads me to ask these questions; is this an implicit recognition of the role of women in testing any political and social movement? Or have women been taken as scapegoats -because of their vulnerability?

Is the veil only Muslim, real, or is it more universal and subtle than that? Isn't the return to the veil in the last decades of the twentieth century a pretence, a mask, a literary and theatrical discourse that modern women attempt in order to cross all the patriarchal red lines that are devised to cripple their movements, and limit their means of expression? The veil is plural, fluid,
and changeable; each performance space has its own veils, as each woman has her own veil, that some want to preserve, others crave to strip off. It is the cloak that covers the Muslim woman's body, as it could be a barrier that divides the space into private and public; into female and male. It is the traditions and the shackles that tie woman's body, and the rules and authorities that make her invisible in the canon, in theatre, in parliament, in government, and in other dominantly patriarchal spaces. The veil is the writing of the Muslim veiled bodies; a writing which is different from Cixous’ "écriture féminine", but it is a feminine discourse that enable women to speak their voices and perform their bodies.

It could be a political, religious or cultural taboo that women are trying to dismantle, as it could be a metaphoric veil that women theorists, and women playwrights hide behind to write their bodies and voices. A "masquerade", a corporeal style, which is both intentional and performative? I use "performative" to stress the idea of the daily performances of the female body as opposed to the professional performances on the stage for entertainment. Since these performances remain the most important, to my mind, because of the scarcity, if not the lack, of real women theatre in Morocco. It suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.

I tried, in this part, to redescribe these transformations —veiling, unveiling, and reveiling— in the late decades, not as absence made into presence but as a rescripting of Moroccan women's performance which produces a sexually demarcated or veiled language of women's body and bodily presentations in public. This language is striving to produce a disciplined, chaste body, veiling its sexually marked messages, expressing sexuality
otherwise. Contesting notions about these concepts, produced both by women and men of the time, created a diverse spectrum of discourses, geared at one extreme to a traditionalist discourse that claimed the Moroccan Muslim self and projected its protection as the political task of the day.

At the other pole, the veiled bodies become like Cixous' and the British women playwrights who devised their own veils: "écriture féminine" women’s theatre, as the terrain for rewriting themselves. In the theatre, women playwrights as the performers could say, "this is just a play", and de-realize the performance, make acting into something quite different from the real. For the various theatrical conventions which announce that "this is just theatre" become a veil to be drawn between the text and performance, and the real life of women playwrights, or performers. Thus women’s theatre and "écriture féminine" protect the women playwrights and Cixous, and enable them to speak themselves behind the protection of the veil. On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if the female body is unveiled, because there are no theatrical conventions to protect her. On the street or in the bus, there is no presumption that the act is different from the reality. The most secure mask is that of the veil.

Hegel speaks of "the prose of the world," that is how the everyday behaviour is constituted of performances, and the fact that the taken-for-granted world is invisible except under special conditions -when poesis problematises the ordinary, the taken-for-granted into question.

A close reading of the real veil in its performance space, the street, has shown this space as a site of struggle of the various physical, social, and psychic forces in society. Here we can make an analogy between the Moroccan
colonial and postcolonial women's site-specific performances —this will be analysed in the third part of the thesis— and the British feminist theatre as sites of intense sexual political theatre where performance and space are of particular significance in the development of the conflict. According to Alan Read (1993):

> Everyday life is the meeting ground for all activities associated with being human—work, play, friendship, and the need to communicate, which includes the expressions of theatre. Everyday life is thus full of potential—it is the 'everyday' which habitually dulls sense of life's possibilities. Theatre, when it is good, enables us to know the everyday in order better to live everyday life. 47

Both the Muslim veil in its everyday performance, and the British women's theatre, each according to its cultural environment, take their performance space as a site of resistance and contestation against marginalization, subordination, and invisibility. This leads us to inquire about other meanings of the veil; the veil as a vehicle of liberating women's creativities, bodies, and voices. This veil, that Cixous has labelled 'écriture féminine', subverts the phallocentric discourse and constructs the feminine one. It enables women writers, for the first time, to create their own space where they can write unveiled without recurring to pseudonyms, and to free them from invisibility and repression. It could be a dramatic style; an argument that Moroccan women playwrights have not mastered its Western rules yet—in a predominantly traditional society, more of women site-specific performances is expected —whereas French feminists and British women playwrights, for instance, have been devising for decades now, and behind which they voice the unspeakable —this is the core of the second chapter of this part.
PART II:
THIS VEIL WHICH IS NOT ONE

Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard. Hélène Cixous "The Laugh of the Medusa"

If I go to the theatre now, it must be a political gesture, with a view to changing, with the help of other women, its means of production and expression. It is high time that women gave back to the theatre its fortunate position, its raison d'être and what makes it different - the fact that there it is possible to get across the living, breathing, speaking body....Hélène Cixous, "Aller à la mer".

1. The Metaphoric Veil: Cixous' "écriture féminine"

2. The Metaphoric Veil: British Women's Theatre/ Herstories
As a follow up to what is said previously, that the veil is plural and not one, and each woman has her own veil, in this part, I attempt to examine Cixous’ “écriture féminine” and British women’s theatre: “herstories”, for instance, as metaphoric veils. I argue that Cixous and British women playwrights enter the male dominant literary canon thanks to these metaphoric veils. I underline how these veils enable them to use the literary discourse to set up their own canon and aesthetics. Likewise, I seek to reconsider, in the first chapter of this part, Cixous’s ‘écriture féminine’ that ignores another form of women’s writing; the performing of her body in her everyday women’s-only-spaces.

In the second chapter of this part, I will attempt to unveil British women’s theatre to Moroccan audience, trying to depict my own reception, my students’ and the academics’ of Moroccan universities of this 'new' kind of ‘écriture féminine’, and how it is affected by Cixous’s theory and at the same time how it deconstructs it. To this purpose, I provide a video of the performance of Lear's Daughters played by my students and directed by me as a case-study that shows how British women playwrights, following Cixous, use the text and performance as a veil, a pretence to rewrite ‘herstories’ to speak their own voices and at the same time deconstruct the “écriture” by hybridizing it with the oral.

This part purports conceptually and empirically to shed some light on how Cixous' theory "écriture féminine" and British women's theatre could be metaphoric veils; masks that both Cixous and British women playwrights have devised as sites of resistance to "empower" their stance as female bodies first, and as women writers/ playwrights next.
1. The Metaphoric Veil: Cixous' "écriture féminine"

Women have never stopped writing even in male's fiction. Homer created Penelope, but he did not deprive her the right to write her own fate and not the one that the society wanted to impose on her, by spinning. Weaving and unweaving Laertes' shroud was not only a waste of time that separated Penelope from her husband, Odysseus, but it was her shield of protection, a veil that hid her from the lustful envy of her suitors, and an excuse to postpone their proposals, and a challenge even to the male writer, Homer. She succeeded in imposing her "écriture féminine" within a male realm.

Shahrazad, another male creation, and "the female spinner of tales in The Thousand and One Nights, and queen of narrators East and West, has long been the symbol of storytelling, and even provoked the envy of male writers from Edgar Allen Poe to John Barth" as Fedwa Malti-Douglas (1991) states. Shahrazad's will of survival led her to spin stories to Shahrayar in order to escape the fate of her predecessors: rape and death. So her life and the life of other women depended on her success behind the veil of an excellent storyteller. Her power in using words and her perceived ability to control discourse tamed the wilderness within Shahrayar who was so enchanted by her voice that he wished the night would last forever. For in the word of Fedwa Malti-Douglas (1991):

A woman is more than a physiological faculty. It is the narrative instrument that permits her to be a literary medium, to vie with the male in the process of textual creation. To control the narrative process, however, is no small task. Shahrazad demonstrates to her literary cousins and descendants that an intimate relationship must be created.
between writing and the body. The mistress of the word is a mistress of the ruse as well (p:56).

If women have always known writing why were they veiled from the canon for so long? This will be answered in the next chapter of this part.

Feminine writing is a double veil; the veil of the feminine and the veil of writing. In writing, women are stripping the veil off all the shackles and the barriers that have checked their bodies and voices. They are claiming the right—which was forbidden to them—to write their own stories. In this sense, this labelling could be oppressive because they unveil themselves to the public, and become easy targets to patriarchal criticism. "Here I am, I am a woman writer". This explains why so many women writers refuse this label. Caryl Churchill (1988) was asked: "Do you think of yourself not just as a writer, but as a woman writer"? and to this she replied:

Sometimes. Originally, not. I think it's one of those things that you can feel completely differently about depending on the context. I remember way back somebody writing about one of my radio plays, and saying that you wouldn't know it had been written by a woman. The writer clearly meant this as praise, and that gave me pause. Most of the time I didn't think about it, but there were little moments of realisation. If, for example, a critic refers to you as one of the best women writers, and you feel there's any possibility that he thinks of that as a lesser category, you resent the use of it as a term. If it means women themselves thinking about things that they haven't thought about before, then you can actually feel very positive about the idea of being a woman writer, and obviously this is attractive and powerful. Most of the time I don't think about it either way, really. 3

As Caryl Churchill brilliantly depicted, feminine writing does not mean only oppression but it may be freedom and empowerment as well. The woman writer takes the act of writing as a weapon with which she strips off all
the veils that have made her voice mute, and her body invisible. As I have argued in the introduction of this part, writing for woman could be that metaphoric veil that offers her a mask behind which she feels free to speak the unspeakable. It gives freedom to her tongue that has been tied in public for centuries. It writes her body that was represented by male. It allows her a public space of her own where she exposes her own view of the world. In Mc Ferran’s interview (1977), when Churchill was questioned about her writing as a woman, she answered:

For years and years I thought of myself as a writer before I thought of myself as a woman, but recently I’ve found that I would say I was a feminist writer as opposed to other people saying I was. I’ve found that as I go out more into the world and get into situations which involve women what I feel is quite strongly a feminist position and that inevitably comes into what I write.⁴

There are still women writers who feel reticent about the use of this appellation; Pam Gems expresses well this state of mind when she was asked by Lizbeth Goodman (1996): “Are you aware of writing as a woman?”

Well I would have said 'absolutely' once, but I'm not so sure now, perhaps because I'm getting older...(p:25).

Why is it so difficult for women writers in general and women playwrights in particular to claim openly that they adopt the labelling of woman writer?

Since 1970s, the process of defining feminine writing has become the focus of feminist criticism. Elaine Showalter (1982) asserts that:

Feminist criticism has gradually shifted its center from revisionary readings to a sustained investigation of literature by women. The second mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as writers, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and
the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. No English term exists for such a specialized critical discourse, and so I have invented the term "gynocritics" (p: 14).

The ways in which patriarchal language veils women - if women were included in the traditional canon at all- have been extensively discussed by feminists from a number of theoretical perspectives. Debates continue on such topics whether men and women use language differently, whether they think differently from one another, the role does language in perpetuating the popular belief that men are from Mars and women from Venus. These are popular topics in "écriture féminine", a challenge to the binary oppositions by which patriarchal discourse functions, though it is not all true because it engenders a new opposition between writing and oral, as this chapter argues.

While Anglo-American feminist critics advocate the seeking of the lost female history to define woman⁵, "French feminists"--it is an Anglo-American terminology referring to Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva--define woman by looking at her language. These feminist theorists and others are interested in theorizing female subjectivity in all its diversity and multiplicity in reaction to phallocentric constructions that depict subjectivity as masculine and female consciousness as lack. Cixous (1976) thinks that in order to escape the male centred discourse, woman must begin to write her body. According to Cixous, woman's sexuality and the language in which she communicates are inextricably linked; to free one means freedom for the other. Her motto is: "Write yourself. your body must be heard". Cixous, by inciting women to have their own writing; "écriture féminine", provides them with a women's-only space where they could liberate themselves from all the shackles
that have hindered their creation, mind, and imagination, and relegate them to
the domestic sphere. Speaking the self is linked in important ways to speaking
the experience of female embodiment. Xavière Gauthier states:

As long as women remain silent, they will be outside the
historical process. But, if they begin to speak and write as
men do, they will enter history subdued and alienated; it is a
history, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt. 7

What French feminists are trying to do is answer these questions: why have
women’s voices been muted in the traditional canon? Is the cause simply due to
their ignorance? Or, is it because they have a different way of thinking,
speaking and writing, in other words, their own discourse?

At the door of the new millennium, these issues are still important and far
from being resolved, so we must ask ourselves what lessons are to be learned
from the critical swings of the past twenty years. Can we say that French
feminists are outdated, or can we say that what they have come to is still
adequate, and will still have a great impact on contemporary women
playwrights? Why does this label "écriture féminine" still stir a lot of
discussion both in academia and the literary canon? Couldn’t it be a metaphoric
veil—be it oppressive or liberating—behind which women writers hide to enter
the canon?

I will concentrate in this chapter on Hélène Cixous. First, she is among
the pioneers in the feminist theory who is interested in theorising the formation
and function of the feminist discourse; women should have their own writing,
and use it to express themselves. Second, Cixous provides me with the
cultural theoretical framework that could serve as a model of the metaphoric
veil, a veil that allows Cixous to write her own body; her own texts, and make
the world hear her voice and read her behind her veil: "écriture féminine". Third, Cixous’ writings do not only constitute part of my basic research, but her theory "écriture féminine" and her personality constitute a bridge that enables me to move easily between the British women’s textual expression (drama) in theatre and the Moroccan women’s site-specific daily performances and oral traditional enactments. Cixous provides me with the cultural theoretical framework which permits me entries to the Western feminist thought without a visa. In addition to the fact that "écriture féminine" has raised different arguments, regarding whether there exist any reading strategies to cope with Cixous’ incomprehensible, sometimes, untranslatable and subversive texts. I will be touching on several lines of investigation, namely the definition of "écriture féminine", its use as a metaphoric veil and as a means of expression to view the performance and the theatrical written text, and its impact on women’s theatre as well as its limitations - mainly its focus on écriture/ writing and its exclusion of the oralité féminine /feminine orality.

Cixous opposes two layers of discourse: the writing and the orality. Ironically, she adopts the same opposition that she pledges to deconstruct. To my mind, she excludes "the dark continent" ("The Laugh of Medusa", 1975); Moroccan women’s oral theatrical culture. Borrowing Cixous’s own words, with which she subverts the phallocentric discourse, I, in my turn, challenge her stance to show that Moroccan women’s oral culture is neither dark nor unexplicable. It is unexplored only because we’ve been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent (the male theatrical writing), with its monuments to lack. And we believed ("The Laugh", 1975)
It is high time that this part of the Moroccan women's discourse to be unveiled. If “écriture féminine” unshackles women's voices and bodies, it should not veil her other forms of 'écriture'; her everyday life performances: her weaving, spinning, narrating, embroidering, knitting, henné tattooing, lulling, singing, dancing...all that constitutes the richness of women's repertoire which is engrained in the Moroccan culture, and which Moroccan women have been performing in silence since Eve –this will be discussed in more details in Part three. The question to pose is therefore: how can women speak their own voices and unveil all the taboos that hinder their freedom within a patriarchal discourse? Is the politics of gender possible this way, or have they to set up a feminine discourse; an “écriture féminine”? 

I will, in this chapter, examine one of the most influential female aesthetic theory writers as a spokesperson for its foundational aspects, Hélène Cixous. I will attempt to analyse the main components of her “écriture féminine”, argue how Cixous uses the theory of “écriture féminine” as a metaphoric veil, a mask for women empowerment and resistance. I will also try to reconsider it to embrace Moroccan women's orality as another form of women's “écriture féminine”; it is different, but not alien.

The data on which this chapter is based has been gathered from Cixous' theoretical texts that deal with “écriture féminine”. They constitute the solid ground on which the researcher can rely on as specimen of a metaphoric veil. I have also overviewed the different reactions this theory has triggered - I focus mainly on the reactions of post-modern materialist feminism advocated by theorists such as Judith Butler (1990 &1993), Jill Dolan (1988), Elin Diamond (1997. Though these feminist critics are opposed to Cixous's theory “écriture
feminine" because it assumes an essential womanhood, I will argue that since the body is the primary site of false gender construction, it is very hard to be disassociated from the body and the cultural symbols it perpetuates.

Finally, I need to mention that although the analysis is within this theoretical framework, it is also affected by personal experiences and observations in the field, mainly when I interrogate "écriture féminine" in the end of this chapter. By exploring an other form of women's writing, Moroccan women oral culture as daily performed in their only spaces such as the hammam, the fitness gym and the Moroccan salon (see the third part of the thesis), which likewise subvert the same oppressive system, "écriture féminine" has to be not one, but plural.

Who is Hélène Cixous? What is this "écriture féminine" which is not one? What is its impact on women's theatrical theory and practice? Where is it applied and where is it subverted? Is it a metaphoric veil that liberates women or oppresses them? These are the main questions that the following sections attempt to answer.

a. "Who are I?: Cixous and Her Metaphoric Veil(s)

I begin this section with this citation by Cixous:

This is why I never ask myself "who am I?" (qui suis-je?) I ask myself "who are I?" (qui sont-je?) -an untranslatable phrase - who can say who I are, how many I are, which I is the most of my I's? (Cixous, 1994: preface).

Cixous's most eloquent metaphorical veil is her playing with words in a witty and new way that stimulates and challenges Cixous's readers. Her voice is polyphonic and her body is as profuse as the head of her "Medusa". She writes in almost all literary genres: she is a poet, a novelist, a playwright (she
has written more than thirty-six novels and plays), a theorist, a philosopher, an essayist, a lecturer, a radical feminist, and a literary scholar, to just name a few of her interest. Because of her versatile and multiple veils, it is difficult to place Cixous in a particular scholarly category. The particular facet of her that I am interested in is her position as the precursor of "écriture féminine", though I am fully conscious that it is just one "I" of her many "I's", or one veil of her many metaphorical veils, and it needs all CixousS to make one Cixous as she, herself, states:

In France, I am mainly known through my seminars, and most especially through my theatrical works. My plays have been performed at the "Théâtre du Soleil" before 150,000 spectators. Now the theatre public may be totally unaware that in other spheres I am the author of things which are not theatrical. Inversely, in the U.S.A, Canada, Japan ... people are unaware that I am an author for the theatre, and I am often classed, sometimes even exclusively, in the category of theoreticians. This is how I appear on contemporary scenes as if I were a quarter of myself. Yet it is the whole that makes sense (Cixous, 1994: preface).

It is this plurality of Cixous's personality and the fluidity of her nationality and culture that attracts and bewilders me. Sometimes she gives me the impression that she is so near to me and my culture, that she could be Algerian. Another time she is nearer to Western's ways of thinking; she could be French, British, or American. Being aware of this herself, Cixous explains:

My way of thinking was born with the thought I could have been born elsewhere, in one of the twenty-countries where a living fragment of my maternal family had landed after it blew upon the Nazi mine field (p:153).

She personifies diaspora in her identity as in her literary character. Even her name is "an impossible name" (p:158) as she says:
A non-French name. A bizarre, and unknown name. Without origin. Neither French, nor even Jewish....One day someone tells me: Cixous is an Arab name. Berbers say: Cixous is the name of a Berber tribe (p:158).

In "Mon Algériance" that Cixous (1998) dedicated to her dead father - Doctor Pierre Cixous- she poetically and playfully evokes her origins. She belongs everywhere and nowhere. She is cosmic and intercultural; transgressing all the frontiers:

Neither France, nor Germany nor Algeria. No regrets. It is good fortune. Freedom, an inconvenient, intolerable freedom, a freedom that obliges one to let go, to rise above, to beat one's wings. To weave a flying carpet. I felt perfectly at home, nowhere (p:155).

This fluidity of Cixous's character makes her close to the fluidity of the veil - as it is discussed in the previous chapter- she constantly puts a new veil that allows her more freedom of space and movement. For the fascinating thing with the veil is to see without being seen and to gaze without being gazed at.

As the veil and the female body, Cixous is plural and not one.

Hélène Cixous was born in Oran, Algeria in 1937, from a French-speaking father, a German-speaking mother within an Arab geographic and cultural context. She received her aggregation in English in 1959, and her Doctorat Es Lettres on "The Exile of James Joyce" in 1968. She has been a lecturer at many different universities throughout France. She founded Women's Studies Centre at the University of Vincennes in Paris in 1975. She was the spokeswoman for the feminist group "Psychanalyse et Politique", popularly known as "Psych & Po", and was a prolific writer of novels, plays and critical texts for their publishing house Des Femmes. In the 1970s she
became involved in exploring the relationship between sexuality and writing, the interest that made Anglo-American critics group her with Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and others under the label, "French Feminists". What is peculiar about this group? Why is Cixous always mentioned under this label? Is it another metaphoric veil of hers; an "I" among her "I's"?

- 'New French Feminists' and the Feminine Language

Dealing with "French Feminists", Mary Jacobus (1986) (one of the most prominent American feminist critics) asserts:

It became clear to me that the significant break for many critics, and certainly for myself, occurred as a result of the intellectual and political influence of French feminist thinking from the mid-1970s on. As in criticism generally, French theory (structuralist, post-structuralist, deconstructive, and psychoanalytic) has infiltrated and often polarized feminist literary criticism (Preface).

It is no doubt that Anglo-American feminism has been invigorated and often transformed by its encounter with the French feminists. In the words of Mary Jacobus (1986):

It is scarcely possible to write feminist literary criticism in the 1980s without acknowledging the influence of critics, theorists, and mediators such as these -Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Their work, it seems to me, has significantly changed the scope, method, and assumptions of Anglo-American criticism since its first new waves over a decade ago (Preface).

This impact of French feminists on Anglo-American feminists is the subject of many books. This group of French Feminists has challenged phallogocentrism - a strong belief that language is a male artefact that was shaped to meet his needs and where woman is the ‘Other’ - and shared the common interest of creating a feminine language which is able to initiate a
change. Many French feminists advocate a revolutionary linguism, a language of their own that marks their difference from the patriarchal language. Annie Leclerc, in *Parole de Femme* - Woman's Parole-, incites women "to invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that does not leave speechless but that loosens the tongue".11 Chantal Chawaf, in her essay "La chair linguistique"- "The linguistic skin" connects woman’s body and linguism and underlines that woman’s language expresses her body.12 This stress on feminine language has engendered many critical reactions on the part of Anglo-American feminists who, on the contrary, focus on changing some oppressive expressions, such as, "mankind" to "humanity" "everyman" to "everyperson" etc.13 Let us overview very briefly the basic concepts of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray -whose writings offer a helpful context for advocating a feminine writing / the Other writing - before returning to Cixous’s "écriture féminine".

Kristeva is a Bulgarian linguist who arrived in Paris in 1966 and made France her home ever since. In recognition of her contribution to French intellectual culture, she was honoured by the French government in 1990 and made a "chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres." She is known as a novelist, a semiotician, a cultural critic, and also a practician psychoanalyst. In both her books, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) and *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1977), Kristeva argues that women are not fundamentally different from men, but the semiotic mode14 is more dominant in the female psyche than in the male psyche. Kristeva’s theory is mostly concerned with the developments in the pre-Oedipal phase where sexual difference does not exist. In discussing this situation, Kristeva points out
that since the semiotic is pre-Oedipal, it is linked to the mother, whereas the symbolic\textsuperscript{15} is dominated by the Law of the Father. Consequently, little girls must make a decision when transiting from the semiotic to the symbolic; they identify with their mother /other or they raise themselves to the symbolic stature of their father/the patriarchal. Though Kristeva takes a different direction from both Irigaray and Cixous, she shares with them the search of a feminine language that shatters the phallocentric oppressive system.

The main argument of Luce Irigaray -a Belgian linguist- a philosopher, and a Professor in Lacan's\textsuperscript{16} department of psychoanalysis at university of Vincennes in Paris- is that women are unable to express their desire through the language that is imposed upon them when they enter the symbolic order. In \textit{Speculum de l'autre femme} (1974)\textsuperscript{17} she analyses the history of Western discourse from Plato to Hegel through Freud. Irigaray observes that woman has been defined as "\textit{nothing other than the complement, the other side of the masculine.}"(Irigaray, 1985:63). In \textit{Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un} (1977) Irigaray attributes this to the fact that woman is seen in the phallocentric system as other because she is sexually different. Woman, for Irigaray, is not one sex but plural. She suggests that woman should learn to reformulate an alternative symbolic of her own, which should be based on the feminine multiple and plural "jouissance".\textsuperscript{18} The female language should reflect the multiplicity of her desire for "\textit{the otherness of female sexuality has been repressed by patriarchy which seeks to theorize it within masculine parameters}"(1985b:84).

Though each one of the three French scholars group comes from a different background, and is displaced from her country of origin, their voices overlap, speak the same language, and have the same aim: to uplift the
phallocentric oppression through the innovation of the feminine language.\textsuperscript{19}

The common point that legitimates their label "French Feminists" as Ann Jones points out is their:

\begin{quote}
analysis of Western culture as fundamentally oppressive, as phallocentric. \textit{I am the unified, self-controlled centre of the Universe} the white, European and ruling class man has claimed. \textit{The rest of the world, which I define as the other, has meaning only in relation to me, as man/father, possessor of the phallus} (Jones, 1999: 357).
\end{quote}

To disrupt the male's hegemony and deconstruct its repressive phallocentric culture, the French feminists urge women to create their own language that writes their own bodies, and not remain silent.

To woman, speech has often been defined as silver and silence as gold, as the Arabic proverb says. This explains why the two words 'speech' and 'silence' are powerful metaphors in feminist discourse, used to represent the ways in which women are refused the right to express themselves spontaneously. The reasons that explain woman's silence are various and rooted in the socialization process, starting from the upbringing and the education the little girl receives within her family, following the androcentric textbooks and methods she learns in schools, and experiencing subordination at work outside home. All these constraints oblige her to "turn her tongue seven times before speaking", especially when she leaves, her own private world to enter the public, that is, the male world. To be a member of the latter world, she has to be careful about not making mistakes, for if she does, she will not be forgiven. Silence could be understood, then, as a self-defence technique - a veil - used by women against men's oppression. The claim that women are silent or silenced cannot mean that they are always and everywhere literally.
silent, nor that they cannot speak. It cannot even mean that there are no linguistic activities associated more with women and not with men, for in fact, there are many: in the culture I belong to, gossip, ludic discourse, the "parler femme" in Moroccan women’s-only-spaces such as public baths, fitness gyms, for example, are considered to be "women's speech", or women's genres. But this listing of genres associated with women gives a clue to one possible meaning of women's silence: all of them are oral and unauthorised, and not prestigious. Gossip, for instance, is actually disparaged. These genres remain private uses of language, confined to the space of home, family and the harem. Within this patriarchal discourse that represses the feminine, women are asked to subvert it and refuse to be reduced by it, and learn how to turn it to their advantage. As Cixous (1997) argues:

That is our privilege in language. To think that we have at our disposal the biggest thing in the universe, and that it is language. What one can do with language is . . . infinite. What one can do with the smallest sign!... This may be why so many people do not write: because it is terrifying. And conversely, it is what makes certain people write: because it's intoxicating (p: 22).

Along with the work of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, Cixous' work draws on the writings of Jacques Lacan. The Lacanian model finds root in the work of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and the French structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. The importance of these two theorists is an interest in connecting language, psyche and sexuality. While Saussure's import to the French feminists resides in the provision of analytical tools of analysing language, lacan provides them with a ground of analysis and a site for critique. Lacan's theory centres around the notion of the development of the (male) ego
from Pre-Oedipal (non-linguistic) imaginary to the symbolic via the castration complex which is both a sexual and linguistic model. The Imaginary is fashioned as a feminine space (connected to the body, the mother, the breast). The Symbolic is associated with the Law of the Father and follows language acquisition and sexual difference. Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous have found this model both rich and frustrating. Cixous is perhaps the most optimistic about the possibilities for the Pre-Oedipal or Imaginary phase, which is where she locates feminine writing, “écriture féminine” She rejects the notion of a feminine Imaginary which is non-signifying or outside language. She suggests, instead, that the feminine is a way of signifying that calls into question or disrupts the Law of the Father. The Pre-Oedipal is a time before the creation of oppositional binaries, it is therefore located prior to the imposition of the categories of male and female. At the same time, this is the period associated with the mother's body. In this way, Cixous' s notion of "écriture féminine" can be both feminine and non-essentialist- (although this latter assertion is a matter of considerable debate amongst Cixous' s critics as it will be discussed in more details at the end of this chapter). “And here, the body also has a thing or two to say. It is very tiring to write. It is a high speed exercise” (Cixous, 1997:41).

The major interest of the French feminists is practising female subjectivity in all its diversity and multiplicity in answer to phallocentric constructions that continue to figure subjectivity as masculine and female consciousness as lack. Cixous, therefore, has called for an "écriture féminine", a female aesthetics that revolutionises inherited traditions of the subject matter, formal structure, syntax, and grammar, a writing that uses the body as its essential reference point. By writing their body, women invent their own
language that enables them to enter the symbolic realm:

If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is for her to dislocate this "within", to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. And you'll see with what ease she will spring forth from that "within" - the "within" where once she so drowsily crouched - to overflow at the lips she will cover the foam ("The Laugh":1975).

Thus, writing should be that metaphoric veil that liberates women's unrestrained, and unlimited bodies by using language, which is a mere translation of their bodies:

Language is a translation. It speaks through the body. Each time we translate what we are in the process of thinking, it necessarily passes through our bodies (Cixous,1975: 151-152).

It is through language that women's bodies should express their drives, impulses, stresses, anxieties, joys, and 'jouissance'. The notion of the "écriture féminine" is useless without a prior realisation that writing is deeply masculine. It is for, about and by a masculine voice, regardless of the sex of the writer. This body of male-dominated writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural - hence political, typically masculine - economy [and] this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously" ("The Laugh", 1975).

Women have been historically silenced due to the masculine cultural hegemony and this explains the fact that language is by definition male. It is possible to identify the female voice through the barriers of this repression. However, Cixous's female aesthetic can never be truly embraced and identified
until it is fully extricated from the male language. "Woman has never [had] her
turn to speak and because of this, she has not had time to develop her own
literary history based on a female language" ("The laugh", 1975). Cixous
proposes that "woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into
history - by her own movement" ("The laugh", 1975), and thereby equates the
act of writing with the acquisition of agency. This writing must stem from
woman's own personal experience, an experience which is most likely sexual
but necessarily rooted in the body. From here comes one of the landmarks of
Cixous' s"écriture féminine"; it is her manifesto:

- "Write yourself. Your body must be heard"

This is a very powerful statement for various reasons. First, it is behind
Cixous's fame as a feminist critic as she touches on a too much taken-for-
granted issue, and it also sheds some light on the definition of "écriture
féminine" as a metaphoric veil; it is behind this veil- this motto- that Cixous
manages to impose her own name as a famous woman writer and as a feminist
theorist. Second, it has engendered long discussions among feminist critics;
those who accuse her of essentialism, and those who defend her (this is dealt
with in more details later in this chapter). Last, it has revolutionised the
theatrical text and practice by inciting women playwrights and practitioners to
celebrate their bodies, and to get rid of their representations.

Note that, in reading Cixous's main theoretical texts 20, "écriture
féminine/Feminine writing" encompasses three major axes: the writing of the
body, the disruption of the linearity, and the deconstruction of the oppositions.
In what follows I discuss these three elements which converge to define
Cixous's "écriture féminine".

111
Because Cixous's writing is very poetic and complex way of writing, her "écriture féminine" is not an exception to this rule: "What is most true is poetic" (*Rootprints*, 1997: 1). We - readers- need to constantly bear in mind that she is a theorist via poetic writing. When we separate an idea from its roots and treat it as a concept divorced from the real material of language, then we lose her point. Resisting traditional categories, being subversive and disruptive of patriarchal thought, her "écriture féminine" exists as an entity on its own, different from the previously defined limits. Cixous warns us against imposing any of the conventional definitions on this "écriture féminine":

At the present time, defining a feminine practice of writing is impossible with an impossibility that will continue; for this practice will never be able to be theorised, enclosed, coded, which does not mean it does not exist. But it will always exceed the discourse governing the phallocentric system; it takes place and will take place somewhere other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination (1975:92).

This parallels Virginia Woolf's words:

A woman's writing is always feminine, it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine (1929: 11).

Faced with Cixous' reluctance of defining "écriture féminine", I opt for defining it relying on the writing style of her theoretical texts. To my mind, these texts remain the best illustration of "écriture féminine". A feeling that I share with Susan Sellers when she expresses the difficulty every reader of Cixous might face:

One of the difficulties I have been confronted with in this study is the discrepancy between Cixous' insistence on the impossibility of theorizing écriture féminine and the powerful and detailed descriptions of this she is able to give (Susan Sellers,1996:5).
From Cixous's first articles, the reader can observe that the words "write your body" and "writing" are continuously repeated to the extent that they become, in my view, the focal point around which her texts evolve. In "The Laugh of Medusa" (1975), which is one of her most influential and often-cited works, Cixous incites woman to write herself for two reasons:

a) Individually. By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display....Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write your self. Your body must be heard. To write. An act which will not only "realize" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty....

b) An act that will also be marked by woman's seizing the occasion to speak, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her suppression. To write and thus to forge for herself the antilogos for herself the antilogos weapon. To become at will the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process ("The Laugh", 1975).

The repetition of the words "write " and "writing" in Cixous's major theoretical texts becomes an obsession with her:

Having never been without writing, having writing in my body, at my throat, on my lips. Is it an illness, a supplement, a second blood? (1994, Preface)

It is a form of freedom, a window on the visible. It is an act of healing, a therapy:

Writing is the passage way, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me - the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but disturbs me, changes
me, who? A feminine one, a masculine one, some? - several, some unknown which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars (1975:89).

It is writing -the metaphoric veil- that allows Cixous, as the real veil allows the Muslim woman, a licence to cross the public space and be visible. In urging women to write their bodies, Cixous insists on breaking all the chains that fettered women's bodies and made them subjects of shame and guilt:

Why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't before the age of twenty -seven). Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it is reversed for "great men" and it is silly ("The Laugh", 1975).

In directing the woman writer to her own body as a source of inspiration to her female voice, Cixous implies that the female body is isolated from the male construction of language and literature and consequently, it can liberate woman. Put in other words, this idea implies that the male language, that which represses women, is written with the male body, that this male body has become universalized as "(hu)man's" body. Comparing herself to Joyce, Virginia Woolf, for instance, noted the differences between their source of expression:

Now men are shocked if a woman says what she feels (as Joyce does). Yet literature which is always pulling down blinds is not literature. All that we have ought to be expressed mind and body -a process of incredible difficulty and danger ( p: 164).

Like Cixous, Woolf focuses on woman's body and mind to enlarge her linguistic range, and to liberate her from the phallocentric oppression and take her from invisibility to visibility. This was of tremendous importance to woman at that time, bearing in mind the political climate of the 60s; when
writing was associated with man and the negative form of speaking—gossip, for instance, with woman.

-Disrupting the linearity: Writing the feminine in

Pamela Banting (1992) states the following on the meaning of "writing the feminine in":

Deploying the body as pictogram, Cixous invents a writing practice modelled upon the classical hysterics' intersemiotic translation between language and flesh. Because Cixous' corporeal and gendered grammatology begins to make it possible to translate between bodies and texts, it circumvents (even though it cannot totally elude) the mechanisms of representation and "allows her therefore not to write 'in the feminine' but rather the feminine in (p:240).

Along these lines, when a woman refers to her body as a means of writing her experience, she is no longer exclusive to her own sex. Operating from outside of the traditional and historical paradigm, she writes in a language that is inherently and purely female, one which identifies with her own body. This writing becomes feminine, open, fluid, and disrupting the linearity, that is why, Cixous stipulates a feminine text that cannot fail to be subversive:

It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her - she, it is in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter ("The Laugh", 1975).

This subversive stance is echoed in feminist theatre, for instance, -this is developed in the next chapter. It is a feminine writing which is illustrated in Cixous's texts -Cixous's singularity is to envision and illustrate "écriture feminine" in her texts. The movement of her style is more fluid than direct, and more experimental than argumentative. She models for herself a language
which is free to deviate from conventions of linear structure. It is like her body, profuse, poetic and musical: "women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible"("The Laugh",1975).

Her theory, like her writing have two aims: to break up, to destroy the phallocentric, and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project the energetic and the eloquent as the moving and living snakes on the Medusa's head. To associate "écriture féminine" with Medusa, Cixous reconsiders the significance of Medusa as it has been explained traditionally; silent and passive. She becomes, instead, the symbol of the feminine, the maternal force, procreative and nourishing rather than exclusively jelly-fish. Reading Cixous's texts in their original French version is more effective than in reading them in the English version, because of her play on words that she handles so well. This justifies Jacques Derrida's (1994) opinion of her language:

Hélène has a genius for making the language speak, down to the most familiar idiom, the place where it seems to be crawling with secrets which give way to thought. She knows how to make it say what it keeps in reserve, which in the process also makes it come out of its reserve (Foreward).

Cixous plays with words and uses them both literally and metaphorically - readers of Cixous are often troubled by her assertions when they understand her metaphors too literally. For example, La Jeune Née can mean Là - je n'est; "there I am not", thus reflects the text's insistence that woman is not where the masculine desires her to be. It can also mean, Là je naiss; there I am born, I am newly born, I refuse what I used to be. Jeune can mean; je - une "I-feminine" to stress the feminine self which is similarly worked on in the text. This skilful manipulation of language allows other possibilities that disrupt and extend the
signifying procedure. This is an important component of Cixous's vision of "écriture féminine" and her own style of writing. Thus, she invites the reader to her imagination by not sticking to surface structure in her texts. By so doing Cixous succeeds to give us an illustration of "écriture féminine": "write yourself "; even if you break up the rules, you are going to be read and appreciated for what you are and the way you write. The breaking of syntactic, lexical and grammatical rules makes the reader suspicious of Cixous's writing and style; yet it does not make it illogical or nonsense. On the contrary, Cixous knows what she aims at by adopting this subversive writing; her metaphorical veil. "The movement of her text should follow her body; non linear, moving in all directions" (Cixous,1975). "Her libido is cosmic, just like her unconscious is world wide" ("The Laugh",1975). By associating “écriture féminine” with Medusa, Cixous wants to emphasise the female's diversity and excessiveness as a sign of richness which encompasses the other sex as represented by the combination of the Medusa's female head and the phallic locks which adorn it. She is not one but plural as Luce Irigaray advocates:

But woman has sex organs more or less everywhere. She finds pleasure almost everywhere. Even if we refrain from invoking the hysterization of her entire body, the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined— in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness (Irigary, 1985b: 28).

Thus Cixous's writing is non-linear, open and without closure. This has had a tremendous impact on British women's theatre to the extent that it represents a common feature of their plays.

For Cixous, "écriture féminine" comes to circumvent and shatter the
binary oppositions embedded in the patriarchal discourse, whereby whatever is pointed as different, inferior, and subaltern should be veiled and marginalized. To disrupt and unveil the conventional modes of perception and representation, woman should herald into existence a new schema to replace the existing hegemony. This leads us to tackle the opposition of feminine /masculine.

-Deconstructing feminity and masculinity

Cixous asserts that the human thought has always worked through oppositions. She opens her essay "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays" (1975) by highlighting this opposition, and by asking:

Where is she?
Activity/passivity
Sun/Moon
Culture/Nature
Day/Night
Father/Mother
Head/Heart
Intelligible/Palpable
Logos/Pathos
Man
Woman (p:63).

For Cixous, then, the logical structure of the phallocentric discourse protects those who occupy the privileged position in dichotomous terms, by creating hierarchy and making it seem natural. The above dichotomies show that woman is associated with the right row; the negative marked side of the opposition. She is associated with heart, nature, passivity, whereas man is associated with logos, mind.... For centuries, woman has been represented in this way in the patriarchal discourse; in its literature, philosophy, criticism, myths, legends, etc (this is very apparent in classic theatre where even woman's body was represented by a boy actor). This position has epitomised
woman as the other, the different, and the weak.

Cixous uses Jacques Derrida's theory of binary oppositions with the purpose of appropriating it to the feminist criticism. But she goes beyond Derrida's theory by destroying both the oppositions and the other:

And the movement whereby each opposition is set up to make sense is the movement through which the couple is destroyed. A universal battlefield, each time, a war let loose. Death is always at work ("Sorties", 1975).

This means that it is only through the destruction of the other that one makes meaning. This "universal battlefield" ends with the eternal male victory and female subordination, for "passivity is partly bound up with death" ("Sorties", 1975). Refusing this feminine tragic ending, her marginalization from the canon, she stipulates "écriture féminine" as an alternative. "Écriture féminine" comes to challenge the basic binaries of the all powerful father, and the passive mother. The challenge of feminine discourse shakes the rigid assumptions of the hierarchy; it announces the unveiling of the oppressed body by devising her liberating veil; the écriture féminine.

According to Cixous feminine/masculine terms are merely markers and should be deconstructed and redefined. In "Extreme Fidelity" (1988) she explains:

What I call 'feminine' and 'masculine' is the relationship to pleasure, the relationship to spending, because we are born into language, and I cannot do otherwise than to find myself before words; we cannot get rid of them, they are there. We could change them, we could put signs in their place, but they would become just as closed, just as immobile and petrifying as the words 'masculine' and 'feminine' and would lay down the law to us. So there is nothing to be done, except to shake them...all the time (p:15 ).
The specificity of the relationship of a woman's language to her body implies a feminisation of language, or some kind of assimilation between the female body and the female text. If a text does not coincide with Cixous's "female voice" then it necessarily falls to the other side, representing the male experience and the male body. In this way, Cixous reinforces the differences that exist between men and women. Yet, this feminine writing is not specific to women alone but could be the product of some men, who according to Cixous, possess feminine qualities such as Jean Genet, James Joyce, and "who are not afraid of femininity". ("The Laugh", 1975) They are bisexual in Cixous's sense of "the other bisexuality":

[...] that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the non-exclusion of difference or of a sex, and starting with this "permission" one gives oneself, the multiplication of the effects of desire's inscription on every part of the body and the other body (The Newly Born Woman, 1996:85).

Cixous's notion of bisexuality, owed as much to Jacques Derrida as Lacan, is situated in post-structuralist concepts (employing the deconstruction of binaries) of feminist analysis of sexual difference. Cixous argues that language, which is based on oppositions (male/female, presence/absence, penis/vagina) reproduces a patriarchal order which places the feminine in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the masculine. This aligns Cixous with critics of concepts such as logocentrism or phallogocentrism. The poststructuralist framework sets up a definition of bisexuality which is not about the combination of sexualities (androgyny) but the displacement of the terms "masculinity" and "femininity." Bisexuality goes beyond dualism to posit a
multiple subject. Cixous privileges women in achieving this bisexuality because historically and culturally, women are more open or accustomed to accepting different forms of subjectivity. As a reader, Cixous is able to imagine herself "bisexually" and to identify with both male and female characters. The resisting reader in Cixous, refuses to be Dido, the victim. She prefers the sexual ambiguity of a character such as Achilles. Cixous goes further in her distinction between femininity and masculinity by reversing the opposition when she says "writing is women's " and feminine texts are texts that "work on the difference", while male texts are under the authority of the "Phallic monosexuality". Since men claim "the primacy of the phallus", and therefore, do not allow the "permeability" that characterises feminine texts. Thus, femininity is not a passive aspect or a defect -as it is delineated in the phallocentric opposition-, it becomes a power, non-closure, which frees women, and undoes "death's work by willing the togetherness of one -another". Femininity is like Medusa's head with its phallic locks, silent but with a voice; her laughter. Medusa becomes the symbol of the feminine, the maternal force. It is the figure of "la mer"; "the sea", and "la mere"; "the mother" who gives birth and love.

- M/Other: the first voice of love

Drawing on Saussure and Lacan, but rejecting their binary systems of analysis that silence women, Cixous revises the Freudian model which defines "woman as lack" and instead celebrates "woman as excess" using Dora, the hysteric, as an example of a woman who speaks her body and threatens patriarchy. She appropriates the Freudian psychoanalytic model wherein the Law of the Father is ruled by the fear of castration. Her definition of
"jouissance" is that which operates outside of patriarchy, in the realm of the feminine Imaginary. Jouissance is a crucial concept in Cixous' works; it is the source of women's writing and of "blowing up" the Law of the Father. Nonetheless, critics wondered how can Dora, the hysteric, be a model for women? How can this figure help women to express their bodies? To understand Cixous' use of Dora, we have to assume that Dora, like Medusa, is a mythological figure who constantly haunts patriarchy. She constantly blows up the Law of the Father. Both Dora and Medusa have a voice and are not silent as the patriarchal discourse made them to be understood. For Cixous, "voice " is not associated with the Father but rather with the Mother. She refuses to confine "mother" to patriarchal or biological femininity. "Mother, as a noun-name and as a source of goods, is she who initializes and forever textualizes one's body". It is she who:

Touches you, the equivoice that affects you, fills your breast with an urge to come to language and launches your force: the rhythm that laughs you; the intimate recipient who makes all metaphors possible and desirable; body (body ?bodies?), no more describable than god, the soul, or the other, that part of you that leaves a space between the soul, or the other, that part of you that leaves a space between yourself and urges you to inscribe in language your woman's style ("The Laugh", 1975).

In addition, women's writing is also described in terms of childbirth; a metaphor for the vast resources of feminine creativity. By extension, women's writing is described using imagery such as the mother's voice/body/milk.

It is as if -what is imperative for me, without my formulating it- it is as if I were writing on the inside of myself. It is as if the page were really inside. The least outside possible. As close as possible to the body. As if my body enveloped my own paper (Rootprints,1997: 105).
The origin of feminine writing is linked with the maternal relationship woman has with her mother's voice and body. It is the "first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink"("The Laugh", 1975).

By linking woman's writing to her voice and body, Cixous celebrates woman's body as complete and whole, not fragmented, whose parts work together and complement each other. A body without a voice is "dumb, blind, can't possibly be a good fighter"("The Laugh", 1975). Cixous expresses her poetic voice delineating the plurality of woman's body in the following words:

Listen to woman speak in a gathering (if she is not painfully out of breath). She doesn't "speak", she throws her trembling body into the air, she lets herself go, she flies, she goes completely into her voice, she vitally defends the 'logic' of her discourse with her body; her flesh speaks true. She exposes herself. Really she makes what she thinks materialize carnally, she conveys meaning with her body. She inscribes what she is saying because she does not deny unconscious drives the unmanageable part they play in speech (The Newly Born Woman, 1996: 92).

There is affinity between this quote and Joan's in Caryl Churchill's Top Girls (1982) when the latter was asked to make a speech after being chosen as Pope:

Huge crowds came to hear me. The day after they made me cardinal I fell ill and lay two weeks without speaking, full of terror and regret/ (Top Girls: 66).

Why does woman feel all this fear while she starts speaking in public?

Cixous describes this fear as:

Every woman has known the torture of beginning to speak aloud, heart beating as if to break aloud, occasionally falling into loss of language, ground and language sleeping out from under, because for woman speaking -even just opening her
mouth-in public is something rash, a transgression (The Newly Born Woman, 1996:92).

Caryl Churchill's Joan has the answer. She is not born to speak and that is why God does not help her; he knows that she is just a woman: "I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman" (Top Girls, 1982:68)

Woman's voice is the voice that sings from a time before law, before the symbolic took one's breath and reappropriated it into language under its authority of separation. For her voice requires a bursting, a violent breaking up of the symbolic order, which denies women their voice and their identity:

Voice -cry -Agony- 'the spoken' word exploded, blown to bits by suffering and anger, demolishing discourse: this is how she has always been heard before, ever since the time the masculine society began to push her offstage, explaining her, plundering her. Ever since Medea, ever since Electra (The Newly Born Woman, 1996: 94).

Voice is the cry and torture of a mother giving birth. It is a moment when the body tries to tie up again the bond with the voice that has been silenced for so many years of estrangement. It is like Joan, who hears, for the first time, the female's voice within her 'masculine 'veiled body: "I wasn't used to having a woman's body ....Great waves of pressure were going through my body I heard sounds like cow lowing. They came out of my mouth" (Top Girls: 17). According to Cixous, the childbirth metaphor and literary creativity are not sundered, she describes it as "the gestation drive" as "just like the desire to write: a desire to live self within, a desire for a swollen belly, for language, for blood" ("The Laugh", 1975). Women have subverted the regressive birth
metaphor and transformed it into a sign representing their own delivery in writing through procreativity.

b. Writing/ Performing the Body

I have tried to show how the focus on advocating the writing of the body and voice, disrupting the linearity, linking woman with her m/other, and postulating the child-birth metaphor, have organized Cixous's writing and, eventually, led to an elaboration of her "écriture féminine" as a metaphoric veil. Foregrounding these elements in writing feminine, and postulating it as an empowering metaphoric veil, Cixous has undeniably exerted a major impact on feminist theatre theorists and women's theatrical texts, as it has fostered a big debate. If the stage is a place where as Cixous has claimed: "it is possible to get across the living, breathing and speaking body" ("Aller à la mer", 1984: 547), so her theory is very relevant to a discussion of theatrical expression. For theatre is the reign of the plural and changeable. It is the ideal place where illusion and reality converge: the illusion of the text interweaves with the reality of the place. The imaginary actors'/actresses' roles within the text touch the real presence of their bodies - flesh and blood, voice, shape, gestures - on the stage. The importance of the corporeal on the stage sends us back to Cixous' "écriture féminine".

"Écriture féminine" as insistence on women to write their bodies has drawn feminist theatre critics' attention to stages in theatre history where women bodies were veiled, non-existent, and replaced by transvestite bodies. Sue-Ellen Case (1988) affirms (as will be dealt later in the next section) that the early English stages did not only ban women from the public space, such as the public offices of the Church, and denied them access to vocal training, the
study of rhetoric and the written language, but excluded even their corporeal representations of sexuality to alleviate the sexual danger inherent in the female gender by:

The male assimilation of female roles. In Shakespeare's theatre, the representation of the fiction of the female gender (and its concomitant sexuality) was assigned to boys. In fact, this period seemed to assign most theatrical performance to boys: it began with plays by choirboys and school boys, evolved into companies such as Shakespeare's, which employed both boys and men, and ended with the re-emergence of all-boy companies. Embedded in this intense theatrical focus on boys were certain solutions to the problem of the female-sexuality equation (p:21).21

The celebration of the female body has revolutionized the theatre. It has obliged the practitioners to get rid of representation: "if the stage is woman, it will mean ridding this space of theatricality" (Cixous,1984:547). When performing a woman's theatrical text, the woman also performs the other; the other that has now a body and a voice on the stage practice. Feminist critical analysis has revealed that women are represented in the signifying system of a patriarchal society as absent. Woman on stage, as in society, becomes an indeterminate force which accrues meaning and significance only by warrant of not being male; by opposition to the gender which bears meaning within the order of the father. Cixous ' "écriture féminine" incites women to find their own ways to free their bodies from being victimized objects within the phallocentric system:

How, as women, can we go to the theatre without lending our complicity to the sadism directed against women, or being asked to assume, in the patriarchal family structure, that the theatre reproduces ad infinitum the position of victim? (Cixous,1984:546)

Sue-Ellen Case (1988) depicts how this claim of the body has influenced
the 1970s American theatrical company, “It’s All Right to be Woman”, which opened its productions with a woman touching various parts of her body, reclaiming them from patriarchal colonisation. The troupe and audience would chant, "our faces belong to our bodies, our bodies belong to our lives" (Ibid, p:66). Speaking the body becomes a dominant element of contemporary women’s performance art where the female body clashes with the patriarchal text where it misrepresents its real self and represents the male’s image of it; where the female body is divorced from the mind. Woman has been either mind, as the sine qua non of evil, inhuman, unnatural and abnormal (there is a wide range of this type within British theatrical tradition such as Lady Macbeth, for instance), or just body swinging between being a goddess, Venus, or a prostitute. The question that arises here: how is this speaking body going to perceive and perform its gender?

This leads me to address another issue that is peculiar to women's theatre and may also be seen in the light of Cixous’s "écriture feminine": the collective work and collective identity. The aim of Cixous as she explains many times is: "to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project" ("The Laugh", 1975). She deconstructs phallocentricism to reconstruct a women's collective identity. She sees collective womanhood as enlarging woman's horizons not limiting them:

If she is a whole, it is a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble ("The Laugh", 1975).

Rather than disguising themselves, women performers, presenting their own texts, do not only free their voices but even their bodies when presenting
their own texts since they perform their own lives, themselves. They are agents not objects, as Nina Rapi explains: "The spaces we build are of us, about us and for us. When you perform your words, you touch the innermost part of yourself." In addition to this, feminist theatre has a collective structure where woman performer is not subordinate since there is the absence of a leader or director. Elaine Aston sums up this idea by stating that:

The collaborative style of discussion, devising, scripting, and work-shopping, etc., meant that the dominant mode of theatrical presentation was an ensemble style which promoted the idea of a group of performers rather than a star performer (1995:62).

This need of collective experience of the 70s underlined a stronger need for women to create their own space. This explains their eagerness to form women's theatrical groups. Elaine Aston (1999) develops this idea more:

In the beginning we had a strong sense of wanting to create a space for women in which they could have a go at doing drama in a safe environment. It was important to signal our focus on women. Men don't have to flag up men's theatre because theatre is that anyway (p:23).

Working in women groups is an experience that the majority of British women playwrights have gone through, enjoyed and benefited from. The outcome of this is the largest number of plays to have ever been written. This will be discussed in the next section on British women playwrights. In the mid-70s there was the emergence of many of these groups such as: the Women's Theatre Group and Monstrous Regiment which Hanna succinctly presents in the following terms:

We realised that we had never worked in an all-women, as opposed to women-dominated, environment and we wanted to explore that. We found that it gave us a different kind of
freedom to anything we had experienced before and we enjoyed it (1991:lxi).

Matching her theory with practice, Cixous decided in the 70s to write her own theatre which was, as she describes it, emblematic of the desire for women to exit from the Symbolic Order of the theatrical frame. It is not a mere coincidence that Cixous began to move into theatre just as she formulated her "écriture féminine". The move clarifies this affinity that exists between the theorist and the playwright writer, as she explains in her interview with Kathleen O'Grady:

For me, theory does not come before, to inspire, it does not precede, does not dictate, but rather it is a consequence of my text, which is at its origin philosophico-poetical, and it is a consequence in the form of compromise or urgent necessity. Each time I have written or that I write a so-called "theoretical" text - in quotations because in reality my theoretical texts are also carried off by a poetic rhythm - it has been to respond to a moment of tension in cultural current events, where the ambient state of discourse - academic discourse, for example, or journalistic or political discourse - has pushed me to go back over things, to stop my journey and take the time to emphasize, to display in a didactic manner the thinking movement which for me was indissociable from my poetic movement, but which seemed to me to be entirely misunderstood, forgotten or repressed indeed by the topical scene. So all that is called "theoretical" in my work is in reality simply a kind of halt in the movement that I execute in order to underline in a broad way what I have written or what has been possible to read for a long time in my fictional texts. Never has a theory inspired my poetic texts. It is my poetic text that sits down from time to time on a bench or else at a café table - that's what I am in the process of doing at this moment by the way - to make itself heard in univocal, more immediately audible terms. In other words, it is always a last resort for me. So no, it does not provide an additional ethico-political structure; it is the concession a poet makes in accepting pedagogic responsibility (From Women’s education des femmes (12,4) Winter 1996-7: 6-10).

*Portrait de Dora* (1976), centres on another icon of the patriarchal
discourse, Freud, to deconstruct his analysis of Dora as the 'hysterical woman', and to challenge the orthodoxies of patriarchy. This marked the beginning of her theatrical career. Known mainly as a theorist, Cixous has become more and more involved in theatre. She is a member of "Le Théâtre du Soleil" directed by the famous director, Ariane Mnouchkine with whom she produced many of her plays. "Ecriture féminine" and its emphasis on transformation, profusion, and its reference to the body and voice, provides Cixous with a clarifying perspective through which to view performance and the relationship between performance and the written theatrical text. In "Aller à la mer" (1984), Cixous considers the historical relationship between women and theatre: a space in which women's bodies were invisible, or manly represented, oppressed, and objectified; citing, Electra, Cordelia, and Ophelia as examples. Being fully aware of the importance of theatre as a cultural form and space, Cixous urges women to make their own ways to transgress all the veils and write their bodies in theatre:

If I go to the theatre now it must be a political gesture, with a view to changing, with the help of other women, its means of production and expression ("Aller à la mer", 1984: 547).

This echoes Cixous' emphasis on the urgent need for women to have their own theatre as she explains in 'Le Lieu du Crime, Le Lieu du Pardon':

I believe that today more than ever we need our own theatre, the theatre whose stage is our heart, on which our destiny and our mystery are acted out, and whose curtain we see so rarely rise (L'Indiade ou l'Inde de leurs rêves, 1987: 264).

Cixous discovers theatre as a site of resistance that enables women to free their bodies and voices, a metaphoric veil behind which they can express their cry of utter freedom when they enter this space that had been forbidden to
them for centuries:

What a relief when, entering this place, the lies which are our daily politeness stop, and we begin to hear the dialogue of hearts! We would cry from it. And we rejoice that it's not forbidden, in this marvellous country, to utter cries, to strike blows, to translate the suffering that comes from being a human inhabitant of our epoch into breath, sweat, song (pp: 254-5).

-Cixous and "Gender Trouble"

By placing herself within her text, the female body finds its voice and urges other women to unveil all the barriers that oblige them to remain Other. By fixing the female body as metonym centre-stage, occupying the signifying space of the stage, feminist theatre challenges the notion of female absence as body and as voice. Yet the body's role in theatrical representation raises some particularly complex issues for feminists because, despite the extent to which 'gender' and 'character' may be social, the reality of the actor's biological sex always re-inscribes the performer with the cultural codes associated with his/her gender. In The feminist spectator as critic, Jill Dolan (1988) notes that the female body is not reducible to a sign free of connotations. Women always bear the mark and meaning of their sex, which inscribes them within a cultural hierarchy. At the same time, it is at the moment of entry into the theatrical discourse that the body speaks as well, especially that the female body is polyvocal (voice simultaneously bodied and textual). Cixous's way of looking at the female body is in many ways liberating and positive. However, there are many aspects which can point to show the limitations of Cixous's ideas.

Though most of the contemporary feminist theorists are inspired by Cixous's ideas, many have moved away from her brand of feminism, which is
said to be based on an assumption of an essential womanhood. Post-modern materialist feminism advocated by theorists such as Jill Dolan, Judith Butler and others criticise Cixous's celebration of the woman's body because it reifies sex difference. Instead, they argue for a blurring of gender identity. They blame Cixous for reducing "women to an essence... and thus negating the possibility of the very change which she seeks to promote" (Morag Shiach, 1991:17). Cixous's critics have difficulty with her reclaiming of the maternal, as a starting place for her engagement with the politics of sexual difference. They fear that reclaiming the naturalness of motherhood, which historically oppressed women, will be more detrimental to women. Butler argues that women should not be identified in terms of their sex. If, for instance, we see women as capable of giving birth, this immediately excludes a large number of women who are unable or unwilling to procreate from this category:

There are female infants and children who cannot be impregnated, there are older women who cannot be impregnated.... What the question does is try to make the problematic of reproduction central to the sexing of the body. But I am not sure that is, or ought to be, what is absolutely salient or primary in the sexing of the body (Butler, quoted in Osborne & Segal, 1994: 4).

Butler claims, therefore, that since women are so diverse we cannot define them as a unified group: "The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms "(Butler,1990:1). Butler begins her book Gender Trouble (1990) by looking at the problems of defining 'woman', arguing that one cannot see women as a unified homogenous group since every woman is a unique individual. Women are not a united group because there are a great many divisive differences between them, such as those of
class, race and ethnicity. Butler says: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results." (Gender Trouble: 25). In other words, gender is a performance; it is what you do at particular times, rather than a universal who you are. Butler argues that we all continuously put on a gender performance, whether traditional or not, so it is not a question of whether to do a gender performance, but what form that performance will take. By choosing to be different, we might work to change gender norms and the binary understanding of masculinity and femininity. This idea of identity as free-floating, and not connected to an 'essence', but instead a performance, is one of the key ideas in queer theory. Seen in this way, our identities, gendered and otherwise, do not express some authentic inner "core" self but are the dramatic effect (rather than the cause) of our performances. Butler suggests that we should think of gender as free-floating and fluid rather than fixed:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine male body as easily as a female one (Butler, 1990:6).

I think that this idea is not in a radical opposition with what Cixous labels as "the other bisexuality". Whilst Butler suggests that gender should be viewed as free-floating, the fact remains that most men develop predominantly masculine characteristics and most women develop feminine characteristics. Homosexual people remain in the minority. The heterosexual matrix that Butler criticises is still maintained, a fact which gives some credence to the Freudian perspective of how gender identities are formed. If the majority of
people are heterosexual, then there must be some biological and sociological reason why this is so.

Butler advocates 'gender trouble' as a way of challenging traditional notions of gender identities. Her main metaphor for this is drag. By dressing up as a member of the opposite sex, drag artists are subverting ideas of gender norms, challenging the "constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity" (Butler, 1990:148).

Although Butler does not offer any other concrete example of how people might go about subverting gender roles, this could be more appropriate on stage than in reality, or in the show-biz where some stars, like Boy George for instance, allow themselves certain licence to exhibit some of their fantasies. Such antics may seem radical and unrealistic to the average person -especially within the Moroccan socio-cultural context. By expressing ideas like these, Butler may well isolate herself from the majority of women, though, there are signs that attitudes towards gender may be changing. If we want to change the way society operates, change needs to be made from within that culture, not outside it.

Following nearly the same trend of thought as Butler, Jill Dolan (1988) sees theatre as a proper place to explore gender ambiguity, not to cathartically expunge it from society, but to play with, confound and deconstruct gender categories. According to Dolan, "if we stop considering the stage as a mirror of reality, we can use it as a laboratory in which to reconstruct new, non-genderized identities". Women always bear the mark and meaning of their sex, which inscribes them within a cultural hierarchy. Rather than focusing on the importance of "positive" or "negative" representations of women, Dolan
(1988) advocates a radical restructuring of the dramatic medium in order to unveil a multiplicity of subjectivities within the category of "woman". Realism, she argues, is largely responsible for perpetuating a social reality that subjugates and marginalizes women. As far as theatre is concerned, these ideas can have an echo, by providing it with a new range of characters to be performed on the stage, but they remain very limiting to all women. The issue for the materialist feminist critics such as Butler and Dolan, is the banishment of terms such as 'body', 'woman' and 'women' as determined signifiers within Cixous's writing. In a witty style Pamela Banting (1992), humorously sums up the anti-essentialist stance against Cixous's "écriture féminine" in the following words:

Together with the substitution of Other for mother, ant-essentialists are scrupulous about changing the 'a' of 'woman' to the 'e' of 'women' and about politicising and pluralizing their critical practice by adding an 's' to words such as 'body', 'feminism', 'gender', and 'history'. These English language moves are, ostensibly, much easier to execute than the Fancy French manoeuvres of crossing out, placing under erasure, deconstructing, feminising language, hystericizing discourse, and so on (p:226).

Adding 's' to the 'essentialist words' does not unfortunately eradicate or displace essentialism, but just spell it differently, and instead of having 'essentialism', we have 'essentialisms'. Can we really divorce ourselves from our bodies while writing or speaking? Why do we need to wear veils? When Cixous urges women to write their bodies her aim is to force the spectator, the reader to confront women without their cultural masks. What is left of woman after these veils are removed is an important site of conflict among theorists. How are we going to encourage the spectator to watch us differently? Aston
For example, where many of the 1970's women performance artists appeared naked in a reclamation of their bodies, for themselves, and for other women, there was no guarantee that the naked body in this 'woman -identified model' would subvert the sign of the 'feminine' in dominant systems of gender representation (p:9).

But this reclamation of women's bodies has been attacked by materialist feminists such as Dolan, by bringing another dimension to front, it is the spectator. She asks: "How to make the male spectator look differently" (Dolan,1988:83). Dolan advocates acting as a presentation, a deliberate performance which breaks the illusionist mould of realism and forces the spectator to acknowledge the conscious construction of identity rather than empathising with the character as a natural entity. Dolan posits lesbian theatre as one example of effective materialist feminism, because it inevitably stands outside the constructs of male desire. But how many women are lesbian? How can we retain the body's name without being labelled essentialists? In other words, how can women's theatre demonstrate the problematic nature of women's social invisibility and stage the female body without the risk of the negative essentialism? This is going to run more ink, and will be the crux of many debates among theatre theorists and playwrights. Deborah Geis (1990) sums up this argument by:

Theoretical discussions about staging the female body, however, return repeatedly to the question of whether privileging the 'textual' body is a reductive strategy that risks biological essentialism. The body's role in theoretical representation poses some particularly complex issues for feminists despite the extent to which 'gender' and 'character' may be social and for theatrical constructions, the facticity of the actor's biological sex always inscribes the performer with the cultural codes associated with his/ her gender.29
An awareness of these subtle theoretical conflicts has been central to the creation of an effective feminist theatre although some of these playwrights - such as Churchill, want to ignore its existence, because the "écriture féminine" is not one but plural and diverse.\(^{30}\)

c. Ecriture/ Orality

To make her voice heard, and strip off the invisibility that the phallocentric discourse imposes on her, Cixous, as women writers in general, take writing as a metaphoric veil, a veil of empowerment, and a refusal of marginalisation and subordination. However, the question that arises here is: Does Cixous's preaching of writing mean that she should exclude all the other feminine forms of expression? For how to express herself if she is faced with illiteracy because she is a woman? She should work either in the field, or as a maid to help the family, to allow her brother to go to school, because he is male, and she has done no harm in her life except that she was born a woman. What could she do to transgress the barrier of publication: her writing will never be published because she has no money, she has no money because she is not famous, and she is not well-known because she is just a woman? What to do when you are a member of a patriarchal society where woman is still gazed at only as the object of the male desire? To express themselves, Moroccan women have invented their own discourse, and space: orality, the daily life performance, and the performative in their only spaces.

It is not my point here, perhaps in another occasion, to speak about those illiterate Moroccan women who have been deprived from learning, who have not been allowed to go to school, because it is not their space, it is their
brothers'. In *Charazad n'est pas Marocaine: Autrement, elle serait salariée*, Fatima Mernissi (1987)\textsuperscript{31}-ironically answers a man who asks her "why do you want to read and write":

> For me, Mister, reading and writing are not a past-time only, they are a question of survival and at the same time a pleasure that has been forbidden for centuries for poor, women and farmers (p:17).

I speak about, what I label the precursors of Moroccan feminists, *Shikha, Neggafa*, or *Tayaba*. *Shikha*, a label given to a woman, who belongs to a folkloric musical mixed group of men and women, sings about daring subjects, dances and plays on the Moroccan drum. Her social situation is very contradictory: she is venerated, desired, and sought after in darkness and in private, but marginalised, rejected, ignored in public (see the third part for more details) *Neggafa*, the bride's hair and body dresser, known for her boldness, works generally at night and she is not afraid to express her opinion freely without any embarrassment. In her turn, she is denigrated by the society, marginalized (see the third part for more analysis). *Ashaba*-herbalist who sells herbs in the market place - shares the same bawdy language, the same courage to be in a public place which has been peculiar to man, and the same destiny. *Tayyaba-* is the woman who takes care of other women in the hammam, the Moroccan public hot steam, bringing them hot and cold water, making them massage, she represents power in the hammam; she fixes the time of opening and closing the door of the hammam to the public, she is the one who decides when to open and when to close the tab of cold and hot water. She is mainly known for her blatant voice which is not ashamed of anyone, and of her special sexual songs that make women laugh. The common element that unites
all these women is that they were the first Moroccan women who worked outside the domestic sphere. I call them the first Moroccan emancipated women because of their courage to transgress the boundaries of the Harem, though, the price is very expensive. They are equated to whores and prostitutes because they have stripped off their veils, deconstructed all the taboos, and perform their bodies and speak their voices. So what are we going to call this écriture, not feminine because it is not writing?

Being a dramatist herself, and knowing that writing the text is just an element among others in theatre, Cixous's insistence on writing only, puzzles me and urges me to interrogate her écriture féminine. I back up Susan Sellers' (1996) idea by arguing that:

The adoption of traditional dramatic form, where considerations of staging curtail the extent to which the writer may allow the components of writing their own generation, appears at odds with Cixous 'delineation of écriture féminine. Similarly, theatre's dependence on characters and the nature of spoken exchanges seem incompatible with a view of writing in which the multifarious possibilities produced by the signifying operation are to be reinscribed (p:74).

But, far from simply applying the Cixousian model on British women's theatre and Moroccan site-specific-performances, I try to go beyond Cixous' implicit adoption of the binary: writing/ speaking to performing. Indeed her focus on writing is bewildering; she is neither unfamiliar to women's performances in theatre, nor in the women's-only-spaces such as the hammam.

Commenting on the implication of Cixous's theory of "écriture féminine", materialist feminist critics underline her binary opposition: writing/ Speaking. As seen in the previous part, by performing the body, the veil as a body language does not only deflate Cixous's theory, but fosters another
women's writing, which is writing the body: performing gender. Cixous's "écriture féminine" is tested on Moroccan women's only-spaces, and their orality in see the third part of this thesis.

My aim, here, is to point to an other category of the "repressed of their culture" ("The Laugh", 1975) that Cixous, the spokesperson of the repressed, has not mentioned. In "Sorties" (1984), her autobiographical essay, which stresses her own sense of not belonging -of being the outside of many different cultures - Cixous associates the unconscious with the repressed and, thus, with the feminine as well as other colonized places, such as Africa, reminding us of her own position as Jewish-French-Algerian. She focuses on all the forms of otherness, and therefore, her theory of "feminine writing" should provide an escape from systems of cultural, religious, sexual and linguistic oppression. She even visualised the future of all the repressed:

> when the 'repressed' of their culture and their society returns, it is an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions. For when the Phallic period comes to an end, women will have been either annihilated or borne up to the highest and most violent incandescence ("The Laugh", 1975).

Cixous's "écriture féminine" is somewhat exclusive and self-defeating, and needs to be expanded upon and re-interpreted, while studying Moroccan women's theatrical oral tradition and site-specific performances in the third part of the thesis. This interpretation will allow such daily life performances in public and in women's only-spaces, - as veiled bodies or non-veiled ones - to be considered as a different "écriture féminine" that does in fact perform other women bodies and speak their voices. One which uses the structure of "écriture féminine" in order to evaluate a critical estimation of a discourse, and
of a genre -women's drama- thereby revising, feminising and subverting the place -theatre- and at the same time expanding the feminine writing itself.

To my mind, "écriture féminine" could, as Irigaray (1985b) defines feminine language, have a similar form, or rather formlessness to the female sexual morphology: plural, ambiguous; playing with itself, diffuse and polymorphous. Given free rein, it would subvert the dominant writing discourse, which is based on a privileging of the phallus, as single, unified, visible, and definable. The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution. To be this "écriture féminine" which is not one but plural, it is necessary to reinterpret it, to expand it, to embrace the oral and the daily performances of all women; including the subaltern as well- so as to correspond to women socio-political and cultural situations, and to their own creativity. For if feminine writing -as a metaphoric veil- comes to subvert and deconstruct the dominant ideology with its proper tool; writing, the pen, it should not subordinate the subaltern feminine forms of expression. It should include women's oral performances not only the white writing Western.

Through a revision of Cixous's theory, we can recognize an influence on a tradition of all female theatrical voices, both those that may have been stifled by their social political limitations and structures, as the repressed of the Moroccan culture, and those that have defied those limitations and are still destroying all its taboos, the British women playwrights - Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane, Timberlake Wertenbaker and others. Cixous' "écriture féminine", as discussed above, has directly or indirectly affected both the form and the
content of women's theatre, and inspired women playwrights and performers to question not only the content but the structural legitimacy of traditional forms. It has helped all women to exorcise the ghosts of repressed language, and to use writing as a veil of liberation that frees them from the censorship that cut off the access of their bodies to theatre, performance, and language. While Churchill - the most famous and canonised of all British women playwrights - claims her adherence to no theoretical movement but socialism, the analogy between Cixous's subversion of the conventional themes, myths, images, language and structure, and Caryl Churchill's dramatic structure that disrupts the conventional linear narrative to create a new space for reshaping women's history and experience, is staggering. Churchill's dramatic writing has inspired the next chapter of this part, because it truly explores Cixous's concepts of feminine writing as a subversive text - that questions cultural assumptions about history and social relations - has paved the way to the women playwrights to use theatre as another metaphoric veil that liberates their bodies and voices a step further and theatre's possibilities as representational art. Though some might argue that "écriture féminine" could be a ghetto inside which women are imprisoned. It remained a metaphoric veil behind which they cry out their problems, their preoccupations, a third space of resistance against all forms of oppression, and marginalisation. For Cixous has invited women writers in general, and playwrights in particular to dare intrude theatre and represent themselves on its stages. Having said that, I reiterate that Cixous's "écriture féminine" should be reconsidered to include the performing of women bodies whose culture is mainly oral as the Moroccan one, for instance.
In the next chapter I explore, another women’s metaphoric veil of resistance, a mask, and a literary discourse that enables women dramatists to write also their bodies, it is British women’s theatre and performance of ‘herstories’.
2. The Metaphoric Veil: British Women's Theatre/
Herstories

In my discussion of Cixous's "écriture féminine" as a metaphoric veil, I have stressed the impact of this theory on women's theatre in general, and on British women's theatre in particular. This veil offers both women playwrights and performers ample opportunities to go beyond the spoken to the unspoken. I recollect, here, a dialogue I had with Susan Croft, who is responsible for the archives at the Theatre Museum in London.

Sipping a cappuccino in a London café near the Theatre Museum on 21st September 1999 nice morning, I had a strange feeling. A feeling of crossing boundaries; for sitting peacefully in that public space with another woman, was an enchanting experience. Two women sitting together in a café; not gossiping, or speaking about fashion, or cooking, but were completely indulged in a serious discussion about "women's theatre". I still remember Susan Croft's surprise when I told her that I could not sit alone or with another woman in a café in my city, Fez, because it is not a women's space. Smiling she commented that "in Britain woman's question is no longer an issue. British women could be present everywhere". Bewildered, something prevented me from understanding, so I asked Susan: "How could you explain the small number of the video records of the performances of women plays available in the Theatre Museum, whereas there is at least five or six recordings of Shakespeare's King Lear alone?" Susan answered with a wry smile: "there was
no single woman play video record two years ago when I was first appointed to my function at the Theatre Museum". She continued that she was obliged to find an argument, to convince the director, such as "we need some of women's plays video records to complete the archive concerning British modern drama". Behind this metaphoric veil; pretence, Susan succeeded in including four videos that I had the pleasure to watch in the Theatre Museum study-room.

Two of these women plays records were Timberlake Wertenbaker's: Our Country's Good performance at The Young Vic Theatre on October 22nd 1998 which was directed by Max Stafford Clark, After Darwin performance at Hampstead Theatre on 21st August 1998 which was directed by Lindsay Posner. The third was Helen Edmundson's The Clearing performance at Bush Theatre on 14th January 1994 under the direction of Lynne Parker. The fourth was Shelagh Stephenson's An experiment with An Air-Pump performance at The Royal Exchange Theatre Company on 6th November 1998 that was directed by Mathew Lloyd.

Though I enjoyed the four records, I could not hide my surprise not to find a single record of Caryl Churchill's; the most notorious of British women playwrights. Diplomatically, Susan tried to find excuses for this neglect, or marginalization, which she summed up in these criteria established by the Theatre Museum to do the recordings. First, the play should have a good echo in newspapers. Second, it should be part of the educational syllabus. Third, it should deal with serious subjects. Finally, the recording of the play should
have a funding to pay the crew of cameramen and photographers. There are a number of questions one might raise about these statements: Are not these playwrights, whose plays were recorded, selected in accordance with a set of "a priori" criteria? What is meant by "serious subjects"? How could a play have a good echo in newspaper if it has not any funding to be performed? How could it be included in the syllabus if the playwright is not well known? Don't these commandments ring a bell and remind us of those established by the male writers of the classic anthologies and the literary canon?

**a. Redefining the Literary Canon**

Let us first attempt to define what is meant by canon and then try to overview some of the feminists' ideas about how to change the traditional canon. Is it by adding women writers to the canon, by abandoning the idea of the canon, or by providing a female canon? "Canon" descends from the Greek word, "kanon", meaning a reed or rod used as an instrument of measurement. But the nearest sense to the modern European meaning, to my mind, is the Arabic term "kanon" which means "rule" or "law". Later, the "canon" came to be used in a religious context where it was a list of the church approved texts. Those texts which did not follow "the law" were relegated to the apocrypha -of "dubious authenticity". In this context, "canon" suggests to its users a principle of selection by which some authors or texts are deemed worthier of preservation than others. Hence the literary canon is a name given to an accepted body of works by an author, for example, the "Shakespeare canon", or more generally works which are considered in some way superior, central, or
most worthy of study in a culture. So, the term "literary canon" refers to literature that is generally thought to be classic including those authors traditionally associated with literary genius such as: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, Pope, Hemingway, and Dickens.

In relatively recent times, to be included in the canon, one has to be dead, white, and male. However, in the last twenty years, and thanks to feminist scholarship\(^3\), there has been a movement to "open up" the canon to female writers and writers of colour. Some "additions" (bear in mind, there is no official entity overseeing the canon) to the canon include: Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Margaret Atwood, Mary Shelley, Caryl Churchill.... For the work of feminist theorists has been in large to expose how women and their experiences have been ignored or veiled in almost all aspects of intellectual, political, and social life. The traditional literary canon has often assumed that women are either irrelevant, or represent "the other" - the subject of discussion, not the speaker.

The issue of the literary canon and its formation is primarily one of power and control. For feminist critics, the canon is very problematic and should be clarified and redefined, so they have enacted and suggested a number of approaches as attempts to deconstruct the traditional canon: those who maintain that there is a veiled female tradition that needs to be uncovered (Moers 1978), those who try to explain how women have been oppressively represented by men in literature (Kate Millett 1977), those who encourage women to write their own literature (Elaine Showalter 1985), and

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, Cixous incited women not to be satisfied with criticising the images of women in male writings, but to create a counter-discourse and write themselves, thus she devised "écriture féminine" as a metaphoric veil behind which women writers can voice their own texts, and speak their own bodies. This had a tremendous impact on women playwrights. Following Cixous's theory, British women playwrights devised their own theatre. This is the topic of this chapter.

In recent years, feminists, in contrast to the conservatives who argue that the literary works that the canon consists of are of high art and intellectualism, have pointed out that the processes of creating a literary canon occur in accordance to dominant ideologies that have, in the past, been concurrently racist, patriarchal, imperialistic, ethnocentric, and marginalizing. Many feminist literary critics have become convinced that the selection of literary texts for "canonization" (the selection of what are conventionally called the "classics") operates in a way that resembles the formation of the biblical canon. They detect beneath the supposed objectivity of value judgements a political agenda: the exclusion of women, ethnic minorities, working classes, queer, and "popular" writers from representation in the literary canon. By the "literary canon," one could understand the collection of books which are published, and then self-consciously and publicly maintained (as in libraries or academic institutions) over time. This is perhaps the most widely assumed meaning. The
locus point for this activity is the literary critical institution. Of course, the critical institution is itself intertwined with the publishing industry, so that a separation of their activities can only be partial (this will be discussed in more details when women playwrights and the difficulty they still find in publishing their plays are dealt with).

The critical institution also lacks a certain cohesion, as we will see in this section. Nevertheless, the mission of the critical institution as arbiter of a culture or society's literary tradition makes it the archetypal canonising body. It censors and preserves texts through numerous means. And it alone has the role of assigning and maintaining the meaning of texts in the literary canon. The concept of a canon has come under review in recent years by the feminists, as it has become clear that cultural preconceptions have a profound influence on what is considered to be of literary value. For feminists the literary canon is a fluid construction that should be understood as a continuing process within the literary institution. They argue that the literary canon and academic curriculum in schools have traditionally been male and stagnant. Thus, in choosing what books to study and teach, the academic community has constructed a hierarchy which has all but excluded women (I have been teaching drama since 1987 and it was only in 1999 that I introduced British women playwrights to my students after a hard struggle with my colleagues, and after they witnessed the students' appeal to this 'genre' by their performance of Lear's Daughters, which is included in this section). The canonical work acts as the centre while works that do not belong are marginalized, uncharted and unknown, analogous to
lands yet to be colonised. So feminist theory, such as Cixous's "écriture féminine", represents a historical shift away from the centre of the dominant culture to its periphery in order to consider the centre critically, or rewrite it.

It is still a hard task to make conservatives within the academy understand the fact that the literary canon is not a stable construct. What is the use of having this increasing number of women's writings if they are not put in the canon, taught, and known by the general public? One can argue that the literary institution is too diffuse to establish a firm canon similar to most historical canons, and make use of large and small canons, depending on the task at hand. For this reason, it makes considerable sense to discuss, not the canon per se, but the process of canonisation, which is the only real constant. Women studies and feminist criticism, as many of us are aware, represent a certain kind of challenge to the accepted practices of knowledge-gathering within the academy. Those accepted practices are characterised primarily by an ongoing establishment of knowledge hierarchies, serious rankings of what counts and what does not, according to pre-established sets of standards. We call this defining the canon of academic knowledge and it is a very important part of what feminists do.

Nowadays, those who have placed their faith in protecting academic canons from cultural studies apparently feel they are under attack. They fear that their canons (what have been called the canons of Dead White European Males) will be replaced by new ones -those of living, non-white, non-Westerners, many of whom are not even male. And this is true. The old canons
are being replaced by new ones and the anxiety is palpable. My question refers not to this anxiety, which does not propel an ongoing war over what counts, but instead triggers the realisation that the literary canon is androcentric, and this has a profoundly damaging effect on the woman playwright more than her sister the poet or the novelist (still few women plays are canonised compared to the great effort that women are witnessing in writing plays).

For British woman playwright not to be outside the 'mainstream', to have her play record in the archive of an established space as the Theatre Museum, her play should fulfill the above cited criteria. This point is clearly explained by Lizbeth Goodman (1993) when she surveyed contemporary feminist theatres:

This non-recording of feminist theatre both reflects and reinforces the low-status; marginal placement of women as subjects in theatre 'history', and minimalizes public recognition of the extent to which women are, and have long been, actively involved in making theatre (p:39).

It is true that there is no real veil (the dress) imposed on British women, and British women's social, economical, cultural, political situations are far better than the Moroccan women's. The question of women is no longer a big issue (not the magazine) in the British social landscape -it is considered as depassé- yet British women still strive to find an argument whenever they want to speak about women's subordination in the public sphere, according to Susan Croft and many British women I have discussed this subject with. Doesn't this mean that British women should find a metaphoric veil to say what they want to say?
Many important questions can be asked here: Why is it still very difficult for woman to be active in the public world (work, welfare policies and political action) in spite of her continuous endeavours? Why has she to veil; either wear a *hijab* or a mask to hide behind in order to be visible and voice her own words? Why have British women writers in general and women playwrights in particular been veiled, or under-represented in the literary canon and the 'centre' venues for so long? Don't British women playwrights need to have their "*écriture féminine*" and "*performance féminine*" to exist? Such questions clearly enough reveal the drift of the argument in this section, which is to discuss theatre as women's new metaphoric veil; both as text and performance. Woman playwright's unveiling of the literary canon, her voicing of her silence, her 'playwriting' of her “herstories”, and the performance of her own bodies are the major challenges that she has been continuously fighting to defy.

The main issue was not just the women's playwrights' exclusion from the canon, but the suppression of their contribution in the recorded history. Woman in the classical theatre was doubly veiled; when she was absent from the stage as an actress and her role was relegated to boys, and when "Shakespeare's sisters" were hidden from the canon. How has woman been constructed as a man-made sign in her absence? Elaine Aston (1995) claims that two "classic" periods in the Western theatrical canon have been the object of feminist deconstructive activity of this kind: the Greek and the Elizabethan stages. She argues two main feminist's stands: Moore's (1994) point which explains the...
reasons behind the absence of a female theatrical tradition, even as an actress, and the other which claims that woman was excluded from theatre not because she had nothing to say in the field, but because she could not present the great classics as Shakespeare.

Numerous feminist revisions of Greek and Shakespeare drama are currently being published, unveiling the two basic prevalent types of women images: angelic or devilish. The problem with this approach, if relied upon exclusively, is that it does not address women's omission from the canon, an exclusion that leads to believe either that women did not write many works or that women's works were not "as good as" those of men. Is it sufficient to decry the androcentric canon for its depiction of women as either angels or witches? Or shall woman dig farther in history to discover her story that was veiled by the androcentric canon? Will this be enough, or should she celebrate her difference and, thus, rewrite the canon and change the old standards?

b. Writing Her Theatrical Canon

British and American feminist critics of the 1970s were preoccupied with the idea that women writers had been silenced and excluded from literary history. But the aim was not merely to integrate woman into the male-dominated canon, woman also wanted to write herstory -create the female canon to write herself, and to write her body as Cixous reiterated in all her theoretical texts as it was discussed in the previous chapter.

Despite all the divergences, Anglo-American criticism rests on the presumption that there definitely is a female tradition, buried like hidden
treasure in literary history. From this shift in emphasis has emanated a new trend in feminist criticism that has been labelled by Elaine Showalter as gynocriticism, that she defines as the study of women as writers, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. No English term exists for such a specialised critical discourse, and so she has invented the term "gynocritics". In the light of this definition, it becomes evident that "gynocriticism" will enable feminist critics to rewrite a new literary canon which will be definitely different from the androcentric one.

The desire to discover the lost work of women writers, to launch a favourable context for the establishment of a female canon and the strong wish to make the female's voice heard triggered a number of feminist books, essays, and articles. Patricia Meyer Spacks was the first critic who started this shift from an androcentric to a gynocentric feminist criticism with her book, *The Female Imagination* (1976), in which she advocated a serious study of women's writing. This was followed by Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1977), a study of major American, English, and French women novelists and poets; Elaine Showalter's *A literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977); Nina Baym's *Woman's Fiction* (1978); and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in The Attic* (1979), a psychological analysis of women writers of the nineteenth century.
Parallel investigations have been made in theatre studies, although woman's absence from the stage has been more problematic than from the other genres of literature such as fiction and poetry. There are many reasons that contributed to the veiling of women from the stage. The main reason is inherent in the nature of the theatre itself. Theatre belongs to the public sphere, that is, to the realm of the male, not the female, where woman was not allowed to enter. Elizabethan stages, for instance, were barren of women players. As a result, real women were suppressed from the stage, and the culture invented its own representation of gender. It was this fictional "woman" who appeared on the stage, representing the patriarchal values attached to gender construction while suppressing the experiences, emotions and dreams of actual women. Why did boys, and not women, first created the great female roles of Shakespeare? This is a riddle that still needs research. Only in the mime, and in no other type of ancient dramatic performance, were female roles played by performers who were actually women. In other words, person and persona fit perfectly.

In addition, theatre is a collective work; it is not only a playwright, but it includes a director, actors, a designer, and an audience. Theatre gives the woman playwright the opportunity not only to provide a text, her voice, but to control others and make them repeat and voice her own words, in contrast to the woman novelist who can write her novel privately in her room for a reader who can read it privately in her/his room too. Theatre is considered as the ideal place to make the public see her body and hear her voice. Such a control of a
multiple set of voices, and the public control of an imaginative world makes
the woman playwright a far greater threat than her sisters, the novelist and the
poet. This is the major reason why Moroccan women have been banished from
the stage till very lately. For both Islamic religion and Moroccan traditions
make women's access to theatre impossible since it stipulates that both her
body and her voice are unveiled in public, and this is blasphemous (this is
dealt with in the third part of this thesis).

Although the percentage of women playwrights is now higher than what
Itzin (1983) reported in the *British Alternative Theatre Directory*, in which the
representation of women playwrights was only 15%, British modern theatre is
still far from a male-female parity. A brief survey of *Time Out* (Summer
1999), the British Theatre Guide leaflet, shows that in 64 performances every
night, only one third of them were performances of women plays. This proves
that women's theatre is just in the middle of its thorny and long way to achieve
a clear recognition.

Despite many efforts, women playwrights still find it difficult to publish
their plays. Kathleen Betsko and Rashel Koenig (1987), in summarising the
key elements of veiling women playwrights, state that:

It should also be noted that the publication of plays, and
therefore their survival, is in this country entirely dependent
upon the successful production of the play during the
playwright's lifetime. In this sense, over-cautious literary
managers, as well as virulent reviewers, can prevent a play
from coming into existence as a piece of dramatic literature
to be evaluated and/or produced by future generations. Play
publication is the next and crucial step in the validation of
women's voices and while it may be an encouraging sign that
anthologies of interviews such as ours (as well as those which
examine women's theatre history) are now beginning to find publication, the reader should hold in mind the fact that these anthologies are not the plays, and that it is only through the publication and distribution of women's plays that the female voice in theatre will survive (p:12).

This statement highlights Michelene Wandor's (1984) early postulation, that among the reasons behind women's scanty representation as playwrights is that of publication:

Commercial success in performance is the yardstick by which to judge merit for publication. Since relatively few plays achieve commercial success, relatively few see the light of the printed page and thus disappear from history.36

Lizbeth Goodman (1994) adds another reason where she attempts to come into grips with the question: why are women's plays less visible on the stage than the male's?

The theatre is increasingly viewed as an "industry" rather than an "art". The harsh economic climate demands that vital time and energy are taken up with seeking sponsorship, at the expense of concentrating on the production of plays. As a result, many theatres shy away from new plays by living authors often resorting to the perennial revival of the "classic" in order to ensure economic survival.37

It is certain that financial problems in the world of theatre are not peculiar to women, but the latter are more affected than men, because among these "living authors" there are women who are producing plays which are neither famous nor performed in large theatres. However, this has not stopped women playwrights from 'playwriting', and their number from increasing in number.

Feminist theatre critics (some of whom are playwrights such as
Michelene Wandor) with new self-awareness and enthusiasm try to create their own theatre space—a women's-only space. To explore the reasons behind the absence of women playwrights, and what it means to be a woman in theatre, they look back in the hope of locating themselves in some female tradition that will help them understand their problems in the present as well as plan the future. The need to share experiences, to be visible, to publish women plays, and groups that perform them, was very urgent. In the feminist climate of the 1970s, especially with Cixous's urge of women to write their "écriture", British women playwrights felt the need to have their own theatre space. So they organized themselves into consciousness-raising groups as Sue-Ellen Case (1988) historizes:

The first task of CR [Consciousness Raising]Groups was to provide women with a voice. After centuries of silence, CR Groups provided a situation in which women could begin to articulate what it felt like to be a woman. The all-woman composition of the groups provided safety from the scrutiny and criticism of men and gave women an opportunity to enter into a dialogue with other women (p: 65).

In the mid-1970s Britain, there was the emergence of many of these groups such as: the Women's Theatre Group, Joint Stock Theatre Company, The Monstrous Regiment, the Gay Sweatshop, and Magdalena Project. Collaborative theatre-making has become for many years the sign of British feminist theatre, offering women a "women-only-space" to meet, and to investigate their creativity as women playwrights, directors, and performers. Hanna (1991) succinctly justifies the formation of these groups in the following terms:
We realised that we had never worked in an all-women, as opposed to women-dominated, environment and we wanted to explore that. We found that it gave us a different kind of freedom to anything we had experienced before and we enjoyed it (p.ixii).

Theatre, as an ephemeral art, has a peculiar difficulty about how to be a history. As mentioned above, only the commercially successful plays could be published, read, written about, translated to other languages, and repeatedly performed inside and outside their native countries. They could even enter both the canon and the academia. Struggling for survival, to establish 'a voice', and encourage an intellectually dynamic forum for the articulation of their anger and rage against the oppressive veils, these groups thought of anthologies of women plays; a women space that protects their plays from invisibility. So volumes of anthologies such as *Strike While The Iron Is Hot* (1980) started to be published. In this anthology, Michlene Wandor chose three plays belonging to three different women's groups that she introduced as follows:

The three groups in this book represent three strands of development in socialist/feminist/gay theatre. Their composition reflected different perspectives on sexual politics: Red Ladder's political base line was a socialist approach, which was then influenced by feminism. The Women's Theatre Group's base line was feminism, which was then influenced by socialism. Gay Sweatshop in its early stages consisted of a mixture of people -some with socialist/feminist awareness, some with a gay consciousness and some who were gay but had never previously dared to 'come out' in their theatre work (p:10).

Since then, the proliferation of such anthologies has been growing. Another example is *Plays By Women*, (the first volume of which was published in 1983). Michlene Wandor, who edited and introduced this volume, explains...
the reason behind this anthology of *Plays By Women*:

If one looks at the contents page of any play anthology, one is already halfway to the answer. Such books are largely anthologies of plays by men writers, though most people would not immediately pick that out as a distinguishing factor. We are so used to assuming that a writer is a male writer, that drawing attention to the gender of playwrights might appear at first to be a diversion. And yet it leads to other, very important questions. Why is that we know of so few women playwrights, when the novel, past and present, boasts so many women in its ranks? (p:7)

The need of women's groups to perform women plays grew, *Herstory*, another women plays anthology, was born. Its editors; Gabriele Griffin and Elaine Aston (1991), elucidated its objectives in these words:

*Herstory* is literally that, her story - woman's version of events of the past both factual and mythological, a version in which what women did, and their perspectives on the past, dominate- The *Herstory* volumes seek to place centre-stage women who, until the act of 'revisioning' became a demand of the Women's Liberation Movement, were 'hidden from view', whose work was lost and whose lives went unrecorded. The *Herstory* volumes themselves constitute an analogous project to the one inherent in the plays in that the editors undertook the task of gathering these volumes in an attempt to place on record the work of contemporary women's theatre groups, more specifically, that of the Women's Theatre Group (p: 8).

As can be deduced from the above statements, these women groups have another mission besides performing women's plays; it is to get some of them printed to make people aware of their existence. To this purpose Monstrous Regiment published *Monstrous Regiment: A collective Celebration* selected and compiled by Gillian Hanna (1991). Hanna writes in the introduction that:
The four plays in this volume cover fifteen years of Monstrous Regiment's existence....We are extremely glad to have the opportunity of getting some of the work we have performed into print. Because a major and crucial part of our existence is the creation and promotion of new writing (p: xii).

Endeavouring to continue writing and writing, as Cixous enjoys reiterating, another collection of women plays was born: *Second Wave Plays: Women at The Albany Empire* (1990). This collection takes as the ground base of its existence "the assumption that there is a vast pool of untapped writing talent which sympathetic conditions can release" as its editor Frances Gray (1990) presents it. She adds that:

Since 1986 Second Wave have held festivals for young women playwrights; the number of entries increases every year while the search for funding becomes more difficult. The levels of energy and commitment which they have succeeded in tapping can be seen in this collection of plays from the first two seasons. While they are all clearly plays by writers still testing out their own voices and skills what strikes you first about them is their variety and freshness (p:10).

It is thanks to another anthology: *Mythic Women/Real Women: Plays and Performance Pieces by Women* (1999), that I had access to Lear's *Daughters* (1987); the study and the performance of which will be discussed later in this section. Lizbeth Goodman, the editor of this collection, defines the aim of the anthology as follows:

This book includes eighteen works by a total of twenty-six authors, of whom twenty-five are female....The focus is on the positioning of women in culture move generally. Each pulls at the seams of what it means to be a woman, putting women centre stage in order to demonstrate the absurdity of
the attempt to confine and limit the notion of 'woman' with an easy definition, any single form of representation (p:vi).

Thus, these anthologies could be another metaphoric veil behind which feminist theatre critics struggle to empower the situation of women playwrights, and move them from the fringe to the centre. Yet many questions impose themselves here: are these anthologies empowering spaces or ghettos inside which women playwrights imprison themselves?

The plays in these anthologies help to create a women's-only-space, and strip the veil off plays written by women. This space unveils women's theatrical voice and body, and corrects the distorted image attributed to them by male playwrights, actors, and directors. Since men are still dominant in theatre, women's theatre will remain a space that enables women playwrights, performers, and directors to challenge the centre stage; it is a "to be or not to be" struggle. For consciously or unconsciously when women write about women, they are fighting to change all the stereotypes and the spurious labels stuck to women in theatre. Michelene Wandor (1983) sheds some light on this point:

The creation of a positive space for plays by women is inevitably a somewhat contradictory activity. It is essential to have such positive discrimination, since otherwise women's work will simply be swamped. It also enables women to work with one another, instead of always finding themselves in the minority as actresses in predominantly male casts, for example (p:viii).

Another of these women's groups' main concerns was the search of 'herstories' in the canonical male plays. This interest in 're-visioning', rewriting
their own stories, has been enlarged to include all the androcentric literary
heritage from which women have been veiled or misrepresented. So some
women playwrights have sought to 're-vision' Shakespeare from a woman's
perspective; the fringe theatre rewrites the centre as the following section
shows.

c. Re-visioning History/ Unveiling Herstory

Writing as 're-vision', or rewriting history with a new vision, a feminist
one, is as Adrienne Rich (1980) defines in "When We Dead Awaken":

The act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering
an old text from a new critical direction - is for women more
than a chapter in cultural history. It is an act of survival. Until
we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched
we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge,
for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our
refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated
society. . . . We need to know the writing of the past, and know
it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a
tradition but to break its hold over us (p:35).

This 're-vision' concept has not been restricted to Shakespeare, but
enlarged by women playwrights to include a mythological and literary heritage
from which women have been veiled, or misrepresented. The main question
that these women playwrights are continuously asking when they rewrite
herstories is: What would this female character would have said for herself if
she had been given the right to speak her own voice, and represent herself on
the stage?

It is no exaggeration to state that real women have been veiled from
Shakespeare's theatrical production. It is not an overstatement to maintain that
Shakespeare's women are men in disguise. It is possible for any critic, especially feminist, looking at Shakespeare's tragedies, to see misogyny, the male casts speak for a male playwright, and a predominantly male audience. Tragedy is revealed to be an ideological apparatus of masculine power based on the veiling of women as Sue-Ellen Case (1988) states:

Woman was played by male actors in drag, while real women were banned from the stage. This practice reveals the fictionality of the patriarchy's representation of the gender. Classical plays and theatrical conventions can now be regarded as allies in the project of suppressing real women and reflecting them with the masks of patriarchal production (p:7).

Feminist scholarship (see Sue-Ellen Case 1988 and Elaine Aston 1995) in particular, has been highly critical of Athenian culture as well as of the male-dominated scholarship that elevated its worth and drew inspiration from it. They have argued that theatre in its origins (assumed to be Greek) is male gender specific, anti-female, patriarchal, and hurtful to women. As women realised that history is empowering, they decided to reconstruct their own.

As a result, a number of women playwrights emerged, such as Sappho from ancient Greece (7th or 6th century B.C) who wrote dramatic lyrical poetry and was considered by Plato as "the tenth muse". Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim (also spelled Roswitha), a Benedictine nun writing in the 10th Century, is the first recorded female playwright, with six plays. She believed her talent to be from God, and used it to teach moral lessons. For years, scholars ignored Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim because of her position in the religious community. It is only recently that she is being "given her due". With this new interest, we
are coming to understand just how original and creative this woman was, and
to appreciate her in a new light. The first recorded woman playwright in
England was Katherine of Sutton, abbess of Barking Nunnery in the 14th
Century. Between 1363 and 1376, she rewrote liturgical plays into unusually
lively adaptations. Hildegard of Bingen also wrote Latin religious plays around
this time. Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, became the first
woman in England to have a play published with Antonie in 1592. She also
was the author of the first original dramatic verse written by a woman to appear
in print with "The not and Piers in Praise of Astraea" in the 1602 anthology, "A
Poetical Rhapsody." Elizabeth Tanfield Carey (later Viscountess Falkland) was
the first English woman to write and publish a full-length original play,
*Mariam*, in 1612. Many others followed, but Aphra Behn remains the most
outstanding woman playwright. Even working within the constraints of the
Restoration's male dominated society (17th century), Aphra Behn managed to
be the first professional woman playwright as she earned her living by writing
plays. She wrote throughout twenty plays over the course of her nineteen years
career. The most well-known female dramatist to follow her was Susanna
Centlivre, who wrote nineteen plays during her career, her first play was *The
Perjur'd Husband* (1700). Other women playwrights follow and others are
still coming up assuring the contemporary women of having a past, roots that
incite them to build their future. Yet, Shakespeare still occupies a privileged
position in the world drama courses in general, and in Morocco in particular.

The hegemony of the Shakespearean canon is in fact still in evidence in
all the syllabuses of Moroccan universities -Shakespeare is the drama for third and fourth year students- as manifested not only in the choice of drama material, but also through the ways in which such texts are taught or performed. Moroccan students in English departments have been and are still taught Shakespeare and examined on his texts.

Shakespeare's plays -especially his tragedies- are introduced by their drama teachers as the dramatic art, the uncontested icon of Western theatre. Within this regulatory system, no other playwright, let alone women playwrights, could replace him. Students of English departments at Moroccan universities, until my direction of Lear's Daughters in 1998, were invariably exhorted to study or to perform but Shakespeare's plays (mainly his tragedies) with other male plays such as Miller, Williams, and Shaw in order to prove their talents, and to be accepted by the academia. No other playwright can outweigh the greatness of Shakespeare, they are taught to believe.

It is in this cultural atmosphere that I introduced British women's theatre to the Moroccan university during the British Seminar held in Fez in 1998. So remarks such as "are you serious to introduce such a theatre to our students?" "Do you think our students are going to improve their English by reading such women texts?" "Are our students going to be examined on such texts?" "Please forget about it. Women's theatre is just a fashion it will be quickly outmoded"....The more disparaging criticism I heard, the more stubborn I became to introduce women's theatre to 'our' students. After fierce arguments with my colleagues, I at last convinced them to give themselves and 'their'
students a chance to see a performance of a women's play, and witness the students and academics' reaction before including it in the syllabus. I do not in any way want to imply that I do not value the work of male playwrights, on the opposite, but introducing women plays with almost all female casts in a patriarchal space as Moroccan universities was very stimulating and challenging indeed.

A feminist impulse then, produced in me the desire to introduce women's plays, especially Lear's Daughters to the Moroccan academia. This desire is the product of the pleasure that this kind of plays have given me, and also of my conviction that women plays are worth studying and performing.

d. My Story/ Herstory

On 12th December 1998, I first directed Elaine Feinstein's and The Women's Theatre Group's Lear's Daughters (1987) as my participation at the British Seminar held by The British Council of Morocco in Fez at Ibis hotel. Here, I invite you to see the cassette video of my very modest production of the performance of Lear's Daughters (This performance is far from being a professional one. It is the outcome of a lot of will, challenge, sacrifice, and an enthusiastic collaboration of the English department students, but made with very rudimentary and personal tools. This was the best we could do with no funding and no materialistic help whatever). As you can witness, the audience was mainly composed of academics. In the front, you can see Dr Lizbeth Goodman, Director of Performing Arts School at Surrey University, Dr Stephan Regan, John Hallaways London University, Mr John Shackelton, the
British Council director-assistant, Dr Ahmed Radi, Marrakech University, Dr Fatima Sadiqi, Fez University, Dr Najia El Alami, Al Akhawayne University, and other Moroccan academics coming from various Moroccan universities, some students, and some of the students' parents and relatives. As stated in the introduction of the performance, *Lear's Daughters* found me, when I was simply looking for a play, other than Shakespeare's, for my students to perform. I was, immediately, fascinated by the idea of re-visioning Shakespeare's *King Lear* from a feminist point of view.

My interest in the play became greater when I found myself in it. So my production of the play, based on a feminist reading, investigated the patriarchal upbringing and its negative effects on the daughters' future behaviour. In it, the daughters were the focal point of the play, whereas the father was made invisible, in order to give them a chance to voice, and explain the reasons behind their 'ingratitude' to their father in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. I grasped the opportunity of directing the play since I became aware that its production would be the metaphoric veil behind which I could say my opinion of Shakespeare's female representation in *King Lear*. For in a paper entitled: "The images of women in Shakespeare's tragedies", that I gave in a study day held in April 1997 at Fez university, I received a lot of criticism by some Moroccan male academics. I had no idea then how great the taboo was that I was breaking when I said that I did not identify with Shakespeare's tragic women.

In that paper, I expressed my feeling that Shakespeare's male tragic characters are at very least more interesting than his female tragic characters.
As a reader/spectator I would rather have been Hamlet than Ophelia or Gertrude, Caesar not Octavia....More significant, are the assessments made about Shakespeare's tragic heroines. I learned that power is unfeminine and the few powerful women characters as Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra... are literally, monstrous as Lee Edwards (1977) depicts them:

Bitches all, they must be eliminated, reformed, are at the very least condemned. Those rare women who are shown in drama as both powerful and in some sense admirable are such because their power is based if not on beauty, then at least on sexuality (p:226).

For me, the portrait of female characters in Elizabethan theatre actually betrays a cultural attitude deeply embedded in the patriarchal imaginary. Shakespeare, for instance, wrote the roles of his heroines with a boy actor in his mind. Both feminist critics and performers still try to understand what it means to play women's roles as women, when they had originally been written to be played by boys. A great Irish actress; Fiona Shaw's^39 personal challenge to reverse roles with Shakespeare's Richard II:

As it happened, no other character was cast in role reversal and the production was marked by the one brush stroke of, if not a female Richard, then a genderless one. The rehearsals were nearly impossible. When I dressed as a man I seemed like a woman in disguise, and for a few weeks I found a kimono was the most gender-effacing garment...(p: xxiv).

The gender of the playwright would affect the gender of the reader, of the performer, and of the spectator. Thus for the male reader/performer/spectator, the text serves as the meeting ground of the personal and the universal. The same text would affect a woman-reader/performer/spectator differently, as the
same situation would be produced different by a woman playwright. Judith Fetterley (1978) gives a very explicit theory about the dynamics of the woman reader's encounter with androcentric literature:

The cultural reality is not the emasculation of men by women, but the immasculation of women by men. As readers and teachers and scholars, women are taught to think as men, to identify as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values, one of whose central principals is misogyny (p: 14).

Thus, the re-reading of Shakespeare's plays was imposed heavily on feminist critics, playwrights, and performers. A number of Shakespeare's plays were rewritten, such as King Lear, and Hamlet, as a number of his male characters are now being performed by female performers. These female performers could not resist the temptation to inverse gender roles, of which Shakespeare was the inventor. Fiona Shaw describes her excitement to perform Richard II:

I had played a lot of the heroines in Shakespeare and so found it hard without repetition to find a new character built in verse. For a long time, Hamlet had been proposed and I had always resisted this temptation, fearing that it would be insipid as I believe the passionate access of this play lay in the relationship between mother and son and boyfriend and girlfriend. I didn't think a woman could bring anything to this role of male consciousness. But of all the roles in Shakespeare that seem to bypass gender, Richard II kept recurring... I had no sense that this experiment would work, but I knew that the idea excited me enough to go to the next stage (p:xxiii).

I think that Fiona has somehow undermined female performers' theatrical abilities when she states that she "didn't think a woman could bring anything
to this [Hamlet’s] role of male consciousness”. For I saw some extracts of another woman, Jane Prendergast, who experienced a feminist performance of Hamlet; 'I Hamlet' during a symposium on "Intensities: Praxis and the body" at Manchester Metropolitan University, September/October 2000. Jane Prendergast wonderfully succeeded in generating and 'rescripting' a 'new' performance praxis that inserted the woman's body; her body, into a Shakespeare's canon, Hamlet.

In directing Lear's Daughters, I wanted to exemplify to Moroccan male and female academics, how Elaine Feinstein and Women's Theatre Group rewrote Shakespeare's King Lear from their own point of view. By proposing a counter-discourse, a metaphorical veil, they afford Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia; Lear's daughters, a new chance to voice 'herstories'. Thus, they strip off all the veils that muffled them in Shakespeare's King Lear. Regan concludes Lear's Daughters by pulling away the veil of innocence, and preparing herself to play with Lear a new game 'which is not beautiful':

The veil was pulled away from my eyes and I could see what he had done to her, had done to me. And so I shall set my face to a new game which will not be beautiful, but there'll be a passion still I'll be there with it till the end, my end, carved out at her hands-and I would not have it any other way (Scene 14, pp: 68-69).

In presenting Lear's Daughters, I wanted to interrogate the nature of women's subordination in theatre. Instead of creating a drama that disparaged Goneril and Regan, or pitied Cordelia, I attempted to demonstrate how these sisters change their real skin in order to survive in their father's deceiving and
cruel world. For after being disappointed by their father's treatment of them, they decided to change their behaviours:

Cordelia: I shall be silent now, weighing these words and when I choose to speak, I shall choose the right one (Scene 14, p:69).

It becomes clear that these daughters decide to put on a mask to play the game. Regan and Goneril chooses to put on the veil of harshness and ingratitude, whereas Cordelia chooses "'yes', to please, 'no', to please myself, 'yes', I shall and 'no', I will not. 'yes' for you and 'no' for me"(p:69). This sheds light on Cordelia's enigmatic answer, 'Nothing' to Lear's question in Shakespeare: "What can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters?"(Act I, Sc1, ll: 84-85).

My production of Lear's Daughters, based on a feminist reception, sought the reasons behind the ungratefulness of Shakespeare's Lear's daughters: Goneril and Regan, and Cordelia's pathetic 'Nothing'. It is a feminist use of theatre to give a new chance to those women -the daughters to tell their own stories, to be their own subjects and not puppets in the hands of the male playwright. On the other hand, it is an opportunity for the female performers to conquer the stage, and not to be just a decor that ornamented the male's theatre. It is a chance for modern audiences, as well, to hear these women's voices, opinions, reasons, and visions of the world, and to see them representing themselves on the stage.

I attempted with an almost bare stage, to create a female atmosphere;
women in groups, without completely ignoring that each woman is an individual. The stage was completely devoid of furniture except for a carpet, a chair, and some of my children's toys. The emptiness of the stage was intended to add to the sense of emptiness of these daughters' lives, who spent their days waiting for their father's affection and generosity.

The text of _Lear's Daughters_ is an attempt to answer most of the answers to all the questions that the Moroccan female readers/spectators could ask after reading/watching Shakespeare's _King Lear_. My first step in this effort was to give the daughters an innocent, childish look, except for the ending, to erode the invisible cruelty of the father. I was fortunate to find these characteristics in my students performers, who incarnated them naturally, since they were aged between twenty and twenty five. This included the play's opening scene, which I interpreted to be a sort of a nursery, where three girls are playing a game of blind-man's buff with a fool who is the blind-fold, catching in turn each girl, and then addresses the audience.

Unlike in Shakespeare's _King Lear_, Cordelia speaks first. She chooses not to speak about her love for her father, but about her love of words:

_Cordelia_: I like words. Words are like stones, heavy and solid and every one different, you can feel their shape and their weight on your tongue. I like their roughness and their smoothness, and when I am silent, I am trying to get them right (Scene 1, p: 22).

_Regan_, number two, favours another form to express herself; her love of wood-carving:

_Regan_: I love the feel of wood, of bark cracked and mutilated by lighting or curves smooth and worn by wind and
rain....When I carve, it is as if there is a shape lying within the wood already, waiting to be released, moving my knife independent of the hand that holds it (Scene 1, p:23).

Goneril speaks last. As her sisters, she chooses her favourite method of expression; it is painting and colours.

Goneril: When I look the world breaks into colours, when I was small -finding paints and brushes in the chest, opening tiny pots and setting them out, taking water -I couldn't believe how the colours sharpened under the wet brush! (Scene 1, p:23)

From the opening scene, the daughters spontaneously introduced themselves as lovers of creation and imagination, not of rules, and restrictions.

As the play progressed, I focused mainly on the daughters' dreams, deceptions, and relationships with their shadow father. Although invisible, he represented the power which threatened their peace and their love for each other, and every innocent dream they had. I used the direction of *Lear's Daughters* as a metaphoric veil that enabled me to show that these daughters were not innately evil, but were their father's daughters, for he brought them up to compete with each other, and love him for the sake of his crown, not for his person. In the end of *Lear's Daughters*, the crown was thrown in the air and the three daughters rushed up and caught it. Their obsession with the possession of the crown made Lear's question in *King Lear* sound ridiculous; he would rather have asked them "who loves my crown most?"

In this symphony of women's voices, the fool was the *maestro*. This androgynous fool, whose fluidity of gender arises from a need to be all things
to all people in order to earn a living. Cordelia asked him/her: "Are you a man or a woman?", to which he/she answered that "this depends on who's asking?"

Goneril outraged by his behaviour, perhaps because she could not do the same:

"How can you be so accommodating?" Simply, the fool answered: that this is what he/she is paid for (pp:32-33). Alternatively with the nurse - the surrogate mother, she/he was the story-teller who guided the daughters to tell histories in order to correct what had been misrepresented in the patriarchal story. He started his fairy-tale story: The fool: Three princesses, living in a castle, listening to fairy-tales in the nursery (p:24).

Story-telling has been the main technique in the play for at least two reasons; to stress the fact that women have always been excellent storytellers since Sharazad, and to mark women's theatrical discourse.

It was not my intention in that production to Moroccanize Lear's Daughters, but my main focus was to introduce an example of British women's plays to the Moroccan audience; students and academics alike. Though that was my aim, the Moroccan cultural context imposed itself on the performance without my conscious consent. After watching the video-cassette, I witnessed that the performers spontaneously used a lot of body language, and gestures, which are peculiar to Moroccans while speaking to each other. When I made this remark to the students they explained that it was the first time that they felt playing themselves, and they were the main characters not just subordinate to male characters.

Behind the mask of Lear's daughters the students were not only challenging the male's supremacy on the stage but in life as well; their
interaction with these daughters made them forget that they were performing a British herstory, but herstories. Within a female space, they did not feel that they were like an extra decor in the male-centred theatre, but they had a more important stage presence to efface Shakespeare's inhuman image of them, and to show that they "were more sinned against than sinning" as Gloucester complains in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Elaine Feinstein hopes that her "play makes it impossible for anyone to view the opening scenes of the original in the same way again."  

My first intention was that the cast should be all female, but Moroccan cultural requirements were stronger than my will. According to a Muslim tradition; "Ibn Abbas narrated: The Prophet (S) cursed the men who appear like women and the women who appear like men." (Bukhari, 1996), girls refused even to do the rehearsals of the fool's part. They could not assimilate that theatre could protect them, and could be their metaphoric veil behind which they could hide and claim: 'this is just theatre'. So I had been playing the fool during the rehearsals till I succeeded to convince the fool in the performance who accepted the challenge in the end.
Figure 12. Half-dressed as a man and half-dressed as a woman, the male performer is playing the androgynous fool of *Lear's Daughters*.
Though Moroccan youth are experiencing new pressures - Western films, music, images..., to change traditional values and behaviours having to do with sexuality and gender, change norms and traditions may be as superficial as pervasive, but their gender behaviour is less changed from that of their parents. The male performer, who played the fool, offered a vivid example of the ways even major transgressions of sexual norms can be accommodated. He has always dreamed to be in a female's skin, he confessed to me. Thanks to the fool's mask, veil, he fulfilled his dream. This could be judged by his performance; he was excellent, indeed.

Making Lear invisible to challenge the supremacy of the male on the stage was belittled by the three male pictures hanged on the wall. Once again; as if these daughters' destiny was over-watched by the male, the main presence of the three daughters on the stage was challenged by the presence-absence of the three Moroccan royal males; the late king in the middle, the present king on the right, and the prince on the left. These three pictures were hanged, as it is the convention in all Moroccan public spaces, so they could not be removed. The female casts were to perform under their eyes. That overshadowed the relationship between Moroccan women and theatre which is still a relationship of power, dominance, and hegemony - as it will be discussed in the next part.

The scene where the fool/queen of Lear's Daughters (1987) is in labour, was omitted. This was the outcome of another cultural and social Moroccan taboo. It is hchouma (shameful) to expose such an intimate act to the public, let
alone perform it by a male, so the student refused categorically to perform it as it touches deeply his manliness. Since this was the first performance of a women's play, and I was sure that the scene would damage the reputation of the play, my students', and mine, as a director of the play, I gave in. I feel the same embarrassment whenever I come to that scene of Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982), where Angie and her friend speak about menstruation and show blood to the audience.

As a mediator between the Western culture and the Moroccan one, I am self-consciously informed that woman's sexuality, as her body, are still taboos within Moroccan society, and I could not pull the rope too tight. Of course there are cultural and social rules that hamper Moroccan performers from playing British herstories literally. This is well exemplified in *Lear's Daughters* performance at the Amphi theatre of Fez university. For it required one hour negotiations with some fundamentalist students to allow us to perform the play (see the picture below).
Figure 13. The bearded student in the middle represents the fundamentalists of Fez University. He is in a hectic discussion with my students, expressing his brothers' discontent with the performance of *Lear’s Daughters*. 
After the success of the first performance at the hotel, a lot of students - the majority of them were not allowed to attend the hotel performance - insisted on us performing the play at the university, which we agreed to do in March 1998. Their main accusation was "it is a woman's play". "What's wrong with that?", I wondered. "It's going to poison our women's mind, and push them to change their behaviour with men", they vehemently claimed. "Have you already read the play?" I asked them suspiciously. "We don't belong to the English department. It's just our foretelling", they said. I was so outraged that I left the table of negotiations threatening them not to allow them enter my course when they would want to communicate messages to their friends. Supported by my students who assured them that I was serious, they finally inclined: "But next time try to choose a more famous playwright such as Shakespeare, not these unknown women!", they added in an advising tone.

Apart from that incident, the second performance of Lear's Daughters was a real success as it could be deduced from the pictures below.
The audience was very large, and interacted with the performers. "We enjoy it because we feel that these daughters behave more like us unlike Shakespeare's; they wear ordinary clothes, they speak modern English language that we understand more easily, and they express eloquently their relationship with the patriarchal system, unlike Shakespeare's", the majority of the students–spectators commented, "but we hope to see more of ourselves on the stage; we crave to see our stories". This rings a bell as to the question that I have not given up asking to Moroccan theatre critics and practitioners that I come across: Is there any Moroccan women's theatre? Why is Moroccan's
theatre still a patriarchal place?

Cultural, social, political and religious differences always emerge on the surface. This pushed critics, in general, and feminists, in particular, to reconsider their concepts. As we have seen in the previous chapter, women critics called into question all kinds of received ideas and practices and challenged the fundamental patriarchal notion of binary oppositions that considered woman as the opposite of man. Hélène Cixous widely argued against the idea of the oppositions, positing a third way that celebrated the space in between polar opposites. The fallacy of such a position was made clear by the performance of women who are neither white, nor Western; but black, third world, and for Muslim women. As shown in the first part, the veil, which is considered by the Western feminists as an icon of oppression, is for some Muslim veiled women a shield of protection and liberation. As Susan Bassnett (1989) argues:

What was happening was the reassertion of cultural difference, together with differences of class, race, and gender; nor is it accidental that the concept of postcolonialism should have into its own at roughly the same time as feminism was discovering the fallacy of universalism (p:68).

So the subaltern, to use Spivak's word, begins to speak. This subaltern - Indian, Arab, African women...- prone diversity and richness of culture and patrimony, and give birth to a new culture - a hybrid one- which rejects the binary oppositions. This leads the subaltern woman writer to look back into her own traditions to seek for difference from the mainstream and celebrate it. To
speak about Moroccan women's-only-spaces in the absence of Moroccan women's theatre in the Western sense, is to unveil the subaltern and give her a metaphoric veil behind which she explains her difference; her richness.

It is this facet of the metaphoric veil that incited me to delve into 'playwriting' in the absence of a live record of Moroccan women’s-only-spaces: the Hammam, the Fitness Gym, and the Moroccan Salon. The outcome is a play, The Harem, that I attempt to use as a metaphoric veil to unveil these site-specific performances. They have always been Moroccan women’s sites of difference, resistance, and empowerment. What kind of spaces are they? What do they represent to Moroccan women? Why aren’t they developed into women’s theatre? The following part will endeavour to bridge the gap between theorising theatre practice and practising theatre theory in order to shed some light on how Moroccan women perform, and speak their bodies in their 'pri-blic' spaces.
PART III: THE METAPHORIC VEIL ON PERFORMANCE: Moroccan Women’s ‘Pri-blic’ Spaces

In the beginning we had a strong sense of wanting to create a space for women in which they could have a goal at doing drama in a safe environment. It was important to signal our focus on women. Men don’t have to flag up men’s theatre because theatre is that anyway. Gillian Hanna

1. From Traditional Enactments to Theatre

2. Textual/ Performance Praxis: “The Pri-blic” On The Stage/ The Harem
The main issue of my discussion of Cixous's "écriture féminine" and British women's theatre, was not just to unveil their contributions to mainstream developments, but to test the concept of 'women's writing' and 'performing' as metaphoric veils behind which women writers have called into question all kinds of received ideas and practices. This issue opened my eyes to another challenging issue: whether theatre could be used as a metaphoric veil to make Moroccan women's site-specific-performances: "Pri-blic" spaces such as: the Hammam, the Fitness Gym, and the Moroccan Salon, visible.

It is with this idea in mind that The Harem came out as my first play in December 2000. The aim behind the textual/performance praxis of The Harem is to use theatre with an understanding that comes from "getting inside the skin", rather than merely "taking the role of the other" in one's own culture, space and body, and perform them with my students to a public audience.

Why improvising a play? The absence of a live record of these "Pri-blic" spaces especially with the presence of the veiled bodies, incited me to find a mask, a pretence, to unveil these spaces to the public. It was nearly impossible to permit the eye of the camera to intrude these sites; they are resistant to any technological invasion whatever. This is what inspired my writing of the play but paradoxically, it also made the process of directing, performing, organising the performance difficult.

I faced many difficulties, mainly material. It was not an easy task to direct students whose time-table was completely full and does not have room for performance and theatre studies which are still considered not academic. It is just a past-time. To convince the students to free two to three hours a day for rehearsals required a lot of tact and patience, indeed. They have no material
motivation, apart from their love and passion for theatre. To run a group in such conditions was a real adventure. As the majority of the cast was female, another difficulty emerged: how to convince the parents of some female students that theatre is not "a vessel of all sins", but an art and an educational practice? Fortunately, the realism of the space and the clothes make it easy for me to use my own wardrobe for the performances costumes, the utensils of my kitchen, the furniture of my home as a decor and my car as a means of students-performers transport from their homes in Fez to Al Akhawayne's University theatre, sixty kilometres from Fez.

To the students who volunteered their time and energy to make the performance a reality, not a dream, I owe a debt of gratitude on several counts. First, they made it possible for me to practice my postulation of theatre as a metaphoric veil. Second, they contributed to produce the first Moroccan women's play in English. But the debt is also material; no student was paid for his/her contribution to the performance for the reason that there is no funding for such university cultural activities. This certainly explains the defects that the video of the live performance suffers from. The cameraman, who is initially a photograph, was hired by me. I can only hope that the result will be well received and the difficulties appreciated.

In this part, I argue that theatre and performance could be metaphoric veils behind which Moroccan women playwrights could hide to speak the unspeakable and perform their bodies on the stage. This does not suggest that Moroccan women have no experience with performing their bodies, and no theatre of their own. The question to ask is the difference between Moroccan women's site-specific-performances and the Western model of women's theatre?
Alan Lawson and Chris Tiffin situate the politics and possibilities of difference in a useful construction:

Difference, which in colonialist discourse connotes a remove from a normative European practice, and hence functions as a marker of subordination, is for post-colonial analysis the correspondent marker of identity, voice and hence empowerment. Difference is not the measure by which the European episteme fails to comprehend the actual self-naming and articulate subject. Moreover, difference demands deference and self-location ... (1994: 230).

Mapping the geographies of Moroccan women’s-only-spaces is mapping the difference between Western women’s theatre and Moroccan women’s “Pri-blic” spaces (I shall deal with in more details in the second chapter of this part). Though I hope that these spaces will be more visible on the stage where they are represented, I must reiterate the fact that I use theatre as a metaphoric veil to unveil these spaces to a larger public.

This part contains two main chapters. In the first one I attempt an overview of the Moroccan traditional enactments, such as Halqa/ the ring, Lbsaa/the carpet/ the fun. This urge to map the mostly known Moroccan traditional enactments and to extract their particularities seems to be of major importance in situating Moroccan women traditional performers and professional actresses within the Moroccan modern theatre. In the second chapter, I invite you to enter the Harem with me through the text-play and the video of its live performance in order to have a vivid picture of some of women’s performances in the ‘pri-blic’ spaces. Towards the end of this chapter, I argue that these spaces are not only sites of women’s performances of camaraderie and conviviality, but they are their sites of resistance and empowerment as well. To test how realistic their representation on the stage
seems to the audience, I devised a questionnaire to elicit my postulation that theatre could be an empowering metaphoric veil that will enable Moroccan Women to write plays which is still a manly practice.

To achieve the above cited aims, I conducted an extensive survey of Moroccan women’s site-specific-performances, interviewed a wide range of women performing in these sites, and dug through all the available published accounts of Moroccan theatre origins, took some photographs, improvised a play, directed its performance to the public, and devised a questionnaire (see Appendix 2: questionnaire 2) to elicit the real spectator’s reception of the play.

This research is telling in several ways. It shows how little academic research has been done on Moroccan theatre, and almost nothing on theatre as a metaphoric veil. I have had to learn the hard way that Moroccan women’s “private” spaces are still not considered an academic area of research and study. I have also become aware that the absence of Moroccan women theatre needs to be accounted for. Are there any Moroccan women’s theatre makers? What are Moroccan ‘herstories’? Are they different from British women’s? To attempt to answer these questions and more others I start by providing the roots of Moroccan’s theatre.
1. From Traditional Enactments to Theatre

Which comes first text or performance, orality or writing? If we recollect the beginning of Western theatre from the Greeks to Shakespeare and Molière, for instance, the answer is certainly performance. Moroccan theatre notwithstanding its young age, has followed the same path. Yet, the written text -the concrete thing in this ephemeral art; theatre- has taken more importance than performance from the outset. Questions such as: What is a play? How to read a play? How to study the characters, the language, the figures of speech, plot...are still the core of Moroccan teaching and discussion both in the classroom and in the critical books. It is only recently that the performance of the play has gained its place in the critical theatre theory and the academia, for performance praxis happened to operate in the theatre with theatre makers; outside the academy.

Performance is defined in contradiction with theatre rules. In theatre, the play and the playwright represent the authority in the relationship between text, author, actor and spectators, whereas performance has deconstructed this authority and privileged the fluidity of the performer's body. It would be useful here to quote Elin Diamond's (1997) definition of performance that has exercised a tremendous impact on performance studies:

Performance is always a doing and a thing done. On the one hand, performance describes certain embodied acts, in specific sites, witnessed by others. On the other hand, it is the thing done, the completed event framed in time and space and remembered, misremembered, interpreted, and passionately revisited across a pre-existing discursive field. Common sense insist on a temporal separation between a doing and a thing done, but in usage and in theory, performance, even its dazzling physical immediacy, drifts between present and past, present and absence, consciousness and memory. Every performance, if it is intelligible as such, embeds features of previous performances: gender conventions, racial histories,
aesthetic traditions-political and cultural pressures that are consciously and unconsciously acknowledged (p:1).

She specifies that performance can refer to popular entertainment, speech acts, folklore, political demonstrations, street protests, rituals, traditional enactments, carnivals, festivities and aspects of every day life.

This shift to the practice-performance that coincides with the birth of many critical theories from various schools which highlight its importance, is in fact as old as theatre itself. It started when the performer was an individual who was acting alone different roles at home, at market-places, and on streets, then within groups to celebrate religious or festival ceremonies, till it became a constructed art.

Peter Brook (1968) said: “a play is a play”. If we take the word ‘play’, that is, ‘perform’, ‘act’, we can deduce that ‘playing’: ‘performing’, and ‘acting’, is something innate in every human being, that is, something that has accompanied the individual since his/her existence in this world; since birth. The child is closely connected with playing, performing and acting. The child’s health is even judged by the amount of playing it practices. The one who does not play enough is qualified as abnormal. To every phase of our age corresponds a form of playing. This confirms the first postulation that play: performance, is the source of theatre. Sue-Ellen Case (1988) confirms this:

A re-examination of the term ‘playwright’ explicates the point. The etymology of the word, its literal definition, provides a wider arena in which to work than just the discovery of written texts. ‘Wright’ does not denote writing, but means someone who makes something, an artificer. In other words, a playwright is a maker of plays, not necessarily a writer of plays (p:29).

This new understanding expands the theatrical tradition to the performers of play, not necessarily the writers of plays.
Since so little has been written on Moroccan women traditional enactments history, all kinds of misconceptions continue to flourish in this field. A part of the problem derives from the emphasis of so much theatre scholarship on text-based theatre. This is to some extent understandable since theatre is ephemeral and the written play script is all that materially remains after the performance has ended. But to focus on the written text creates an imbalance: the neglect of performance. What kinds of performances were known to Moroccans before they acquainted with Western theatre?

**a. Moroccan Traditional Enactments**

Traditional enactments such as ritual ceremonies, telling stories, and festivities are the backbone of Moroccan modern theatre. The commonalties of these enactments are dealt with by some Moroccan theatre critics such as Hassan Lamnii (1974, 1990, 1992, 1994, 2001), Adib Slaoui (1981, 1996), and Hassan Bahraoui (1994), who sought to historicize Moroccan theatre roots. According to these authors, many of the traditional enactments were rites of passage, space and season which created a sense of theatre, but the ways in which each was situated with its community or setting were vastly different.

This chapter outlines specific practices of Moroccan traditional enactments, women traditional actants, and explores their use in Moroccan post-colonial drama and performance. Discussing traditional enactments’ connection with drama is made all the more difficult by the many differing opinions about the origin of Moroccan theatre. Some follow Turner’s (1982) lead by advocating that Moroccan contemporary drama grew out of their traditional enactments, while others such as Mohamed El Keghat (1996) and
Abdlwahed Ouzri (1997) maintain that Moroccan theatre grew out of Western-Spanish and Eastern-Egyptian-influences.

While Western drama is said to be based on Aristotelian mimesis, Moroccan drama is certainly not. This leads me to determine that Western definition\(^1\) of drama is not appropriate to Moroccan theatrical tradition. Instead a new definition of Moroccan drama is required, which includes traditional enactments that are at the same time real and fictional: presentation and representation. For these enactments usually present a reality, that is, something conceived as a real situation -even if some of their performative practices depend on the stylisation and simplification of that reality.

Postulating that the roots of Moroccan theatre were traditional enactments, Hassan Lamnii (2001), a prominent Moroccan theatre-critic, writes:

> A number of pre-theatrical forms-traditional enactments - were distinguished by their lively action that brought happiness to the hearts of those who watched them on special occasions. Among these enactments we find “Halqa”/the ring/, “Lbs’at”/the rug/, “Sultan Talba”/The Students’ King/, and “Sid El Kafti”/the shouldered/ (p:20)\(^4\).

- **Halqa/ the Ring/**

*Halqa* is a circular popular gathering, directed from its centre by *hlayqui* who is predominantly a male performer\(^5\), a hawker, or *hlayquia*, a group of men who tell the surrounding spectators either known stories or improvised ones mixed with jokes and folktales. They often tell their stories using sometimes the mime and acrobatic games and other times performing some short sketches accompanied by a piper or a drummer. The audience is often invited to participate in the spectacle, which they seem to enjoy.
Halqa is still present in the Moroccan country sides’ weekly suqs/markets/the big-cities main public places such as Bab Ftouh and Bab Boujloud in Fes, Bab El Mansour laälj in Meknes, and the most known of the performing places in the world: Jamaa Lfna of Marrakech which was recognised by U.N.E.S.C.O as a universal patrimony in June 2001. Jamaa Lfna is a source of attraction to national and foreign visitors; tourists as well as researchers. Its uniqueness does not lie in its typical architecture, nor in the beauty of its monuments (it is just a bare and open place), but because of its continual shows and performances that have been presented daily for centuries now, from dusk to dawn. Jamaa Lfnae includes a variety of circles: Halakat/rings/ and each halqa is specialised in a typical performance.

Figure 15. In the afternoon, Jamaa Lfna becomes a big stage of various halakat/circles. Under each sunshade there is a performer who tries to allure more spectators.
As there is a variety of halakat, there are types of hlayqia. The snake-charmer halqa, which is sending its visitors back to the atmosphere of *The Arabian Nights* and illustrating the exoticism of Morocco with its variety of sounds, smells, colours and people, remains the main attraction to the foreign visitors.

Figure 16. A snake charmer hlayqui in Jnama Ifna shows his prowess in taming snakes under the Western gaze of a group of tourists.

Another halqa that fascinates adults and children alike is the halqa of Hmada Moussa's sons, which reminds its viewers of the Western circus acrobats. However, the most famous and popular of all these halaqat remains the herbalist's. Though a very ancient job with its ancient and traditional display of different herbs that the majority of Moroccan still use as medicine, the herbalist's reminds the audience that he belongs to the present as well by his use of a microphone. Near it, there is the halqa of the fortune-teller.
(predominantly female) who tries to cast a spell on his/her spectators by the use of the magical rhetoric that justifies Roland Barthes’ (1977) postulation that:

Nothing to be done: language is always a matter of force, to speak is to exercise a will for power; in the realm of speech there is no innocence, no safety (p.192).

Another halqa is constituted of a solo-violinist who plays some popular folkloric airs and performing their themes. He is a vivid example that “one-man show” is not a new performance style but as old as humanity.

Among the circles, a variety of story-tellers compete with each other in attracting most of the clients to the circle, thus testing their abilities to lure the crowd. For the larger the audience is, the more skilled the performer is. There is the story-teller of the prophet’s life and tradition, and that of the greatest Arab epics which evoke the glorious past of the Arab’s civilisation and culture. What they have in common is their spontaneous gift of directing, writing and performing their own bodies. The hlayqi/ performer’s success and fame depends on his body, that expands, claims and creates space, marks it ritually and exerts power over his physical environment. The more clients gathered around his circle, the more money he can collect from them in the end of his spectacle.

The secret of Jamaa Lfna as a sample of other Moroccan public spaces is its fluidity; it is a free space that changes spectators, performers, and performances.
It is a delicious sideboard not only of food, but also of laughter, poetry, performance, dancing, stories and magic. It is a unique place; the cradle of Moroccan traditional enactments which is different from the Western theatre as Hassan Lamnii (2001) states:

There are general distinguishing characteristics of halqa that make people of today attracted by its various and diverse spectacles such as the aerobic games of sidi hmada Moussa’s sons. The aim of the halqa is to entertain the audience by representing popular folktales or performing Arabic legends inspired by *Thousand and One nights* (p:15).

*Lbsat* the rug/ or /fun*

*Lbsat* is another traditional enactment. It is a manifold word. In classical Arabic *Albissat* means ‘a carpet’, whereas in Moroccan Arabic it means a big room in the first floor of a Moroccan traditional house. It also means
The act of joking mingled with intrepidity and boldness. It could also mean what Mohamed Azzam, a Moroccan theatre critic explains:

The name of the place where the shows are performed. This kind of theatre was known during the epoch of King Mohamed Ben Abdellah who reigned in the end of the eighteenth century. Its aim was to entertain people and teach them (p:17).

*Lbsat* is nearer to satire; it criticises the social and political vices and follies of society in a comic and ironic way. It was mainly performed in the palace courts in front of the king and his train. The performers, generally, seized the opportunity to complain to the king about the injustices of his governors. For that reason, the main theme of *lbsat* was a critique of their political, social and moral life of specific times. The object was not to achieve actual transformation, but to express the reality through symbols, signs and mime. *Lbsat* used satire in order to confront the audience with what the people underwent under special circumstances.

Fez is considered the first city where *Lbsat* emerged. It spread all over the big Moroccan cities such as Marrakech. Thanks to its comic performances mingled with religious songs and dances such as Jilala, Hmadcha, Issawa, AlHouzi, Jabli, AlMalhoun, Almawawil and Alaroubi, in addition to its didactic role⁷, *Lbsat* became the most popular literature that shed light on the social, political conditions of Morocco in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The secret of this expansion resided in its performers, who managed to have a great impact on their audiences by their physical and emotional consciousness. Hassan Lamnii (2001) insists that both anthropologists and sociologists should start their research of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries by studying *lbsat*, affirming that:
The performance [of Ibsat] criticises some well known people in society by using symbols and figures of speech such as irony that attracts both the Kings and the audiences (p:17).

The main performer of Ibsat was Lbouhou or Lamsiah. Lbouhou is a versatile character who could represent a multitude of characters thanks to the variety of masks he professionally uses. He could be Assat; the symbol of power and courage, or Alyahou; the symbol for hypocrisy, greed and deceit. The most popular of his roles is Hediddan, the gagman, the good who loves everybody, and triumphs at the end, whereas the most frightful of his roles is Lghoul/ the monster/. Behind these masks the performer of Ibsat could not only be everyone and everywhere, but he could criticise everything and everybody, including the King. Ibsat ritual renders the performer’s body open and mutable, a fact which transcends social status and hierarchy to seek political awareness and change.

-Sid El Katfi/ Mr Shouldery/

This enactment is derived from Ibsat. It started with a group which took the name Sid El Katfi in Rabat. It contained twelve people and Lmkaddem; the group leader, who headed the performance which took place either in one of the performers’ house or in the house of the most famous or wealthiest person in the city.

Like the other enactments, Sid El Katfi had its own rituals that the group leader repeated in every performance, Mohamed Azzam (1987) depicted some of these rituals:

There was a special ritual repeated in every performance; Lmkaddem took his place in the middle of the meeting, the actors came one after the other, and whoever entered, used to greet him. When all the actants gathered, Lmkaddem opened
the performance by reading “Surat Al Fatiha”, the beginning of the Qur’an, prayed for the host, while the others said “Amen”, then they stared their performance (p:20).

In the absence of media and communicative means, the performance was the sole site of resistance against the tyranny and hegemony of the rulers and their political system.

-Sultan Attalba/ The King of students/

The political dimension of the traditional enactment rituals intersects with the will to transform and maintain the spiritual and the social health of the society. So Sultan Attalba appeared during the era of Sultan Moulay Rachid (1666-1672):

During the spring of every year, the students of Alquaraouin University (in Fes) spent a whole week of entertainment inside the royal palace. The role of the King was played by a young and most distinguished student (Lamnii, 2001:28).

Before starting the festivities, the crown of the throne is sold in the auction. The student who affords the highest price is named: the King of the students. Then he enjoys many royal privileges such as forming his own government among his university fellows, attending government meetings and making decisions. But this role had to finish on the seventh day after the election, after which, the performer asked the king’s pardon and:

In the end of the seventh day, Sultan Attalba, had to leave this position, otherwise he would be beaten and thrown into the river (Azzam, 1987:21).

Moroccan traditional enactments were either altered or vanished in response to changing social and economic circumstances and contexts. Because they tended to be fluid and open in structure, they often dissolve in other literary forms and practices or completely died. As any performance, they were
ephemeral as they relied on improvisation and not on a written text. The only survivor is *halqa* which has resisted time and defied changes.

Reflecting on these traditional enactments, we may note the invisibility of Moroccan female performers except in recent *halaqat* such as the herbalist, the fortune-teller, or the vendor. This invisibility is closely linked with their absence from the public space, but the dichotomy private/public, which will be discussed in more details in the second chapter of this part, has been challenged by the evolution of the social practice. Some women have been obliged to leave the *harem* to the market-place. Poor, and illiterate women – widows or divorced – their presence in the market-place has become an act of survival in the absence of a male provider.

Consequently, there has been a reconsideration and reorganisation of the sexual division of labour. This entailed a dramatic increase in women’s presence in the public space, and had a great impact not only on the social, political, and the cultural participation of women, but also on their participation in the market-place/ *suq* as vendors, herbalists, or fortune-tellers.

The proliferation of women’s bodies in the market-place has attracted the attention of many foreign researchers. Kapchan (1996), as representative of the Western gaze, devotes a section to the analysis of women’s presence in these market places:

Since my first visit to Beni Mellal in 1982, women marketers expanded their trade from food stuffs and items manufactured at home to contraband (clothes, cassette recorders, and perfume) towns with Spain. Even more significant is women’s presence as orators in the performance section of the market place, the *halqa*. Al- though still few in number, women’s voice in the *halqa* mark an important shift in the meaning and function of oral genres in the public realm (p:3).
Yet many wise sayings and proverbs warn people to keep away from the crowded market-places, let it alone if women performers are present. One of Sidi Abderrahmane al Majdub’s – a ‘wise’ Moroccan man- famous saying stresses this idea:

The women’s market is volatile
He who enters it beware!
They’ll show you a ton of profit
And walk away with your capital.

This kind of popular oral culture has had a great impact on the mis-representation of women in the market-place, in addition to the deep social and cultural belief that spatial and sexual divisions are natural. As “hybridity is the trademark of market place interaction” (Kapchan, 1996: 40), this mixed place /mkhlta/, which is neither pure nor clean, is a bastard place. It is a fluid space that flees any definition. It transgresses the borderlines between the sacred and the profane, the permitted and the silenced, the magic and the insipid. It is a play-court for children, a stage for the performers and their livelihood, a past-time for the jobless, and a snack for the hungry and the thirsty.

Though charming and enchanting, the market place is a public arena for social, cultural and linguistic liberty, a space where almost anything can be performed with impunity. It is a site of paradoxes; it is a magic place as it could be a devilish one associated with bewitching, lying, stealing, buying and selling, begging, and behaving unethically. Kapchan (1996) is certainly right when she writes:

Because of the expressive liberties taken in the halqa, it is a marginal site, a man of honour would be embarrassed to be found there (p:38).

So how could an honourable woman enter this marginalised space?

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It is evident that the researcher who enters the Moroccan market-place/suq/ recollects Bakhtin’s description of the market place of the renaissance; the similarity is impressive:

The market place of the Middle Ages and the renaissance was a world in itself, a world which was one; all “performances” in this area, from loud-cursing to the organised show, had something in common and were imbued with the same atmosphere of freedom, frankness, and familiarity. Such elements of familiar speech as profanities, oaths, and curses were fully legalised in the market place and were easily adopted by all the festive genres, even by Church drama. The market place was the centre of all that is unofficial; it enjoyed a certain extraterritoriality in a world of official order and official ideology, it always remained “with the people” (pp:153-154).

As the traditional enactments have as their stage the public space in which women have almost been invisible, women’s absence in the traditional enactments is felt except for one enactment as far as I know: it is shrifat or tarunja.

-Shrifat /Tarunja/

Shrifat, singular of Shrifas is, a blood descendent of the prophet Mohamed, recognised to have social powers. Shrifat or Tarunja is a group of small girls who mask their faces with a lot of make up, and go to the streets to ask for help from God in harsh days of famine, or drought by pulling up a big wooden spoon decorated with necklaces, and a piece of white cloth. Their slogan was: “we wish that what we are appealing for will be fulfilled”. This asserts the patriarchal belief that women are sine-qua non of pro-creation and fertility. So how would a woman express herself if she is faced with the veil of illiteracy? What to do when you are a member of a patriarchal society where woman is still gazed at only as the object of the male desire? To express
themselves, Moroccan women, on their turn, have devised their own
metaphoric veil; orality and the site-specific-performances.

Generally, these Moroccan women are illiterate, who have been veiled
from learning, and have not been allowed to go to school, because it is not their
space, it is their brothers'. Yet they devised their own 'écriture', using not a pen
but other means of writing. In *Charazad n'est pas Marocaine: Autrement, elle
serait salariée*, Fatima Mernissi (1987) ironically answers a man who asks her
"why do you want to read and write?" :

For me, Mister, reading and writing are not a past-time only,
they are a question of survival and at the same time a
pleasure that has been forbidden for centuries for poor,
women and farmers (p:17).

As they have been deprived of writing with a pen, they devised their own
writing; it is with their bodies, with signs, with henné, and embroidery. For
writing to women, whom I label the precursors of Moroccan feminists such as
"Shikha," "Neggafa", and "Hannaya", is different but should not be
marginalized because of its difference. The common element that unites all
these women is that they were the first Moroccan women who worked outside
home. I call them the first Moroccan emancipated women because of their
courage to transgress the veils of the *harem*, though, the price was very
expensive. They are equated to whores and prostitutes because they have
stripped off their veils, deconstructed all the taboos, and let their bodies seen
and their voices heard. I shall deal with these women in the following section
of this part. So what are we going to call this "écriture", isn't it feminine
because it is not writing with a pen? Instead of writing their bodies for their
bodies to be heard as Cixous preaches, they preach another motto: Write with your body. Your voice must be heard.

a. Moroccan Women Traditional Actants.

**Shikhat: The Body show.**

Kapchan (1996) defines Moroccan Shikhat as:

Women who commodities their voices and bodies in context of public celebration (both outdoors at saint’s festivals, and in doors at wedding celebrations) Shikhat (pl.) are often associated with the market place. In fact women without moral scruples may be, compared to Shikhat who are “lost in the suq” (p:181).

How are these women perceived in public? Do they put on any veil? What are their forms of “écriture”?

*Shikha* singular of shikhat, a label given to a woman, who belongs to a folkloric musical mixed group of men and women, sings about ‘daring’ subjects, dances and plays on the Moroccan drum. Her social situation is very contradictory: she is desired and sought after in darkness and in private, but marginalized, rejected, ignored in public. The name Shikha/dancer and singer/is an ambiguous word. The identity of Shikha in Morocco is fraught with social stigma. The very term Shikha evokes a canonical spectre of shame, for it denotes ‘whore’ or ‘prostitute’. The combined effect of such derogatory terms and the discourses that fuel their existence is to keep most “good” Moroccan women from desiring to be Shikhat at all.

*Shikhat* are the very definition of the “bad” public women, for, unlike the chaste loyalty of the good wife who reveals herself to only one man, the Shikha’s profession requires that she willingly exposes herself to the gaze of many unfamiliar men, brazenly stepping out into the limelight. Thus, she has
long been the icon of sexual libertinism. This mixing with males strangers is the cause of the bad reputation of the *shikhat's* job.

Some women do, however, take on this job. For their primary reason for their engagement in this field is to earn a living as the majority of my informants confirmed.

![Figure 18. A group of *shikhat*, that I met in a wedding ceremony in Ifrane, boldly singing their voices and dancing their bodies to the audience.](image)

Some *shikat* developed a keen interest in performing, dancing and singing, but the original impetus for their involvement was poverty. Economic realities are thus a central component in the social identity of these performers, and *shikhat* are invariably (or at least they were at the time they entered the field) poor women.

Within the general Moroccan social context, in which women's education is frequently sacrificed, for a better life standard, marriage, a
family's decision to allow a daughter to become a shikha is still quite extreme, for it harms a woman's prospects of a 'normal' marriage. By 'normal' here I mean a marriage arranged between the bride's and groom's families. No self-respecting groom's family will agree to have a son marry a shikha because of the standard reputation of shikhat as prostitutes. A bride's chastity in Moroccan society remains her main cultural capital. The only 'marriage' route generally open to them is what is euphemistically known as becoming concubines or mistresses to very wealthy or politically important personalities. Thus, a Shikha's only compensation for the loss of social standing is economic. For she can ascend in the social hierarchy if she is very beautiful, and has a good voice.

The shikha is generally chosen by the leader of the group -generally an older shikha- according to her physical body. The body is the shikha's capital, and, thus, should have certain required criteria. She should be plump /Mlehmal, it is the Arab sign of beauty, bold and sexy. The key of her success in the field is her body language; the sexier a shikha is, the more clients she could have.

Kapchan (1996) asserts that:

The movements of the shikha trace the patterns of propriety and impropriety in Moroccan culture. Her body is a socially designated site of shamelessness in that her social mask requires a refusal of deference rules and moral norms. By artistically publicising the intimacies of private life in the public sphere of ritual and secular celebration, the shikha sets cultural definitions of public and private domains into relief. She does this by over-stepping social boundaries in a performance mode designated for such activity. By assertion, expressed in song lyrics, physical postures, and provocative dance movements, the shikha commoditizes sex, becoming a fetishized commodity occupying the margins of Moroccan Society (pp:184-185).
Moving in public, the respectable woman is able to carry with her an inner strength forged indoors. The case, however, is quite different for the *shikhat* against whom Moroccan’s ideal middle class and educated women are explicitly defined. These are the women who are similar to those identified by Chatterjee (1993:131) as “sex objects” for the Moroccan men precisely because they are seen as “other” than his mother, sister, wife and daughter. They are neither of his kin nor of his class. Such women, do not erase sexuality, as do middle class women; rather, they embody it. Their very bodies became the sanction of behaviour not permitted to women defined as ‘properly feminine’.

*Shikhat* have long been the paradigm of such illegitimately public female bodies. Though Moroccan society is evolving, a growing number of women are crossing to the public, the outdoors is still male-dominated. Women who cross the boundaries without playing the game rules well, are in this sense considered “bad” as opposed to those veiled female bodies who are defined as virtuous, innocent, and moral. Publicness is at the core of the “bad” reputation of the traditional actants, and of the professional actresses afterwards as we shall see in the next section.

Thus, *shikha’s* body becomes the canvas which, correlative to its sex, is saturated, marked and encoded with the cultural and linguistic codes and presuppositions of gender and sexuality. Her body, sex therefore, becomes the space of subversion of sex and sexuality. Reciprocally, the spaces of performance –gender and body- equally subvert the power relations and discursive markings on the body, invoking a restructuring of the relationship between the somatic and the performative.
By writing her body, the *shikha* resists the social marginilisation, and oppression. *Shikha*'s body becomes a scene of locating oppression while simultaneously embodying the possibilities of escaping the very oppressive. Her body language is her metaphoric veil. Through her loose language that translates her loose body, the *shikha* expresses and spreads festivity around her. Her competence in dancing can drive the audience to a trance state. Her power emanates from her success in luring her audience and her competence in dancing and singing; as Bourdieu (1977: 649) asserts "*competence implies the power to impose reception*". This power is denigrated to the *shikha* once her performative role is finished, for this power marginalises her in the daily life.

In private celebrations, the *shikhat*’s loose performing body is sought after by the audience, but to behave as loosely in public is not tolerated at all. Kapchan (1996) emphasises this ambiguous reception of the *shikha’s* festive body:

*Shikhat express and create the festive body by making public a repertoire of movements and emotions, embodied in dance and lyrics, that are otherwise limited to familial and monosexual occasion. They also embody, the carnivalesque in that they are at liberty to publicly indulge in wine and in cigarettes, a license that is not in general open to women in Moroccan society. Wine is thought to be an integral ingredient for stimulating their verbal improvisation and artistic style (p:199).*

With their language, coloured clothes, jewellery, make-up and gestures, *shikhat* deconstruct the hegemonic discourse of representation, albeit for a short time. The time and the space of *shikhat* performance exert a kind of ineffable effect on the audience among whom there could be politicians and businessmen. So the glamour of the costumes, the gold jewellery, the applause and the admiration of the crowd give the *shikha* the temporary illusion of being
someone else, for just a night. She profits the maximum from these hours to send her message through her voice and the movements of her body that provide her with the metaphoric veil behind which she transmits even her "immoral" discourse, and make her audience repeat it after her. She sings "lhram"/ the sinful/ for the themes of her songs are as diverse as her body, she enacts the socially and the culturally forbidden. In her sexy way, she moves her hips, her breast, her lower body, and all the parts of her body to express her sexuality which is an act of defiance to the Moroccan society that oppresses her in her daily life. Her strength and power is that she is performing herself behind the veil of the shikha's body; she is writing with her body all the oppression, subordination, and marginalisation that her body undergoes daily. So her festive body and loose language become her sites of resistance, through which, she speaks the unspeakable as Jones (1999) notes:

The link between loose language and loose living arises from a basic association of women's bodies with their speech: a woman's accessibility to the social world beyond the household through speech is seen as intimately connected to the scandalous openness of her body (p:76).

The subversive power of the shikhat's songs has been proved in the Moroccan history, since French colonisation, as a voice of resistance against all forms of oppression. Many oral histories narrate the important role some shikhat played against the colonial hegemony. Protected behind their bodies, shikhat perform her oppression, their peers, and that of their colonised country.

Women as performers in public are always understood as selling their bodies on the market places. Barbara Brook (1999) states that:

A woman designated as a performer has been equated in the west with promiscuity and sexual availability: leading to cross-cultural misunderstandings when western colonialists
encounter women dancers and other performers in different cultures. Women in performance as actors, dancers and other entertainers, athletes, body-builders are, by definition, drawing attention to their bodies: a question for feminism is, how far can they do this and also have autonomy? To become and remain subjects they must negotiate not only the regulatory conventions of performance but also the ways in which the disciplining male gaze attempts to reduce them to no more than the docile (hetero)-sexualized object of desire (p:112).

Within a male's audience shikhat's language is similar to the one said in exclusively female groups. shikhat's language reflects their bodies' movements; they are openly sexual and erotic, as Lahcen Haddad (1996) states:

*Shikhat* reproduce through their voices a discourse that legitimates patriarchal violence and oppression in order to mitigate the subversiveness of their bodies.¹⁰

It trangresses all the 'moral' hurdles, as sexual markers are generally attenuated and "sanitized" out of the female discourse- oral or written. For instance, references to sexual organs, female or male, and all the expressions that incite sexual desire, are frequently censored by the ethical veil in the 'normal' Moroccan female discourse, it is present in the *shikhat's* language. It is presumably rare to hear a non-veiled, let alone a veiled woman, saying in a public audience *Nhud* -breasts of a virgin or a young woman- she would rather say *Sadr*, meaning chest. Because it is *Hchoumal* shameful. Other taboo words are replaced by French words; as 'Soutien' for 'bra', disconnecting the associative chains between a word and all its vast, multilayered culturally scripted erotic meanings.

It is important to note that speech, dances, and songs, performed by women in exclusively female spaces—such as hammams, gym clubs, and social

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gatherings are highly sexual in their language, gestures, and expressed emotions. Shikhat's mask to avoid the socio-cultural and the religious censorship is the music of their darbuka, the taarija, and the bandir (Moroccan drums) and their erotic body language.

Like Cixous' "écriture féminine" and the British women's theatre, the shikhat's body refuses closure. It is a fluid and free body that defies social, cultural, religious and moral rules. This is another "écriture féminine"; a metaphoric veil behind which not only the Shikha, but the Neggafa and the Hannaya search for power and status in this patriarchal society.

-Hannaya/Henna maker: The tattooed body

"The words' perfume confuses me" this is how Khatibi (1968:59) expresses his wonder in front of the female henna tattooed body. The henna tattooed body has a language that releases its own perfume. Tattooing with henna is a female practice which is as ancient as Moroccan history. It has always been connected with festivities, social and religious ceremonies in Morocco such as marriage, pregnancy, and all happy occasions. Henna and Hannaya have accompanied every Moroccan girl since her baby-hood. I first had my hand henna tattooed when I was one year old baby to celebrate the twenty seventh day of Ramadan /Lailatou El Kadr/.

Henna is said to be a paradisiac plant, and it is a sin to burn it. It is cultivated abundantly in Marrakech and in the south of Morocco. It is a widely spread practice in all Moroccan regions, and among all the social classes. Though its designs differ from one region to another, and from one class to another -its signs are continuously innovated as figure 19 shows- yet the occasions of henna tattooing are still the same everywhere in the country.
Figure 19. A sample of women’s hands and feet tattooed with henna. It is a modern design mixing the Eastern designs, with some protecting signs such as the eye, with the English word: love.
*Henna* in Moroccan culture is not only a nexus plant, but a divine blessing/baraka/, protection, colouring and even therapy to some skin and psychological illnesses. *Henna* powder mixed with orange flower water has transcended the materialist world to the divine because of its *Baraka*. Kapchan (1996) brings the Western reader nearer to the Moroccan meaning of *baraka*:

*Baraka* as a noun corresponds, to the Christian notion of grace, it is a state of being possessed by people of virtue. *Baraka*, in the Moroccan idiom, exists in degrees. The *Baraka* of saints survives the body in that it is an effective power for healing and blessing even after death; in another more pertinent sense, *baraka* is inextricably linked to the physical body in that its power “resides” (in popular belief and practice) in the actual place of entombment. In life as in death, *baraka* may be said to inhabit the body; being both material and ethereal, it is able to permeate the porosity of the skin (p:159).

Through henna, *baraka* enters the body to purify the soul. There is no happy celebration without “Nhar 1 henna”/ the day of henna, and *Hannaya* or *Naqqasha* /the henna marker/.

As any traditional performance, *Hannaya* has her own rituals before, during, and after the *henna* tattooing.
Figure 20. The hannayu is writing her own “écriture” (her henna signs) on the bride’s hand without any resistance from the bride.
Before starting the henna tattooing, the hannaya, who is often a young woman in her twenties or thirties, generally a poor woman but rich in her knowledge of Moroccan traditions, puts on her nicest traditional clothes and prepares her secretive recipe of the henna. Each hannaya has her own secrets to make the henna tattoos last as long as possible. Coming to the ceremony space, she finds all the required things prepared by the host such as a silver or golden tray in which orange flower water, sugar/ Kaleb sukkar/ incense, a Chinese ceramic bowl/ taous/ peacock design/ full of henna and eggs are provided as a symbol of luck and fertility.

The hannaya sits near her client, puts her secret mixture in the bowl and then scooped some of it into a brand new syringe. Before starting her henna tattooing, the host, the neggafa and all the guests present chant the ritual religious chant “Prayers and Peace to Messenger of God”/ There is no Power but the Power of our Master, Mohamed. God be with the Highest Power”. The hannaya starts tattooing her clients’ feet and then her hands (see figure 20). The following phase starts when the henna lace-like designs dry, the hannaya prepares another mixture of orange flower water, sugar and some black pepper powder to water the dry henna in order that the designs last for a long period.

The henna designs represent a language that translates the most hidden and the truest, for it is the last controlled and controllable. The henned body is a body of a tattooed memory; through its designs and signs one can decode the society’s traditions and rites. It is an identity card body that marks its sense of belonging to a group, a region, a country, a tribe, and a social class: from the style of the henna designs the gazer can guess the identity of the henned body.
The henned body is both private and public; it reveals its feminine and hides it at the same time. The “écriture” on the hands and feet draw in the gaze of the observer yet it covers its flesh and blood. It is another type of "écriture féminine" that provides the henned body with a metaphoric veil that enables it to express its sexuality without being censored. Though the henna designs are ephemeral as a theatrical performance, it is an “écriture féminine” that expresses the repressed and the forbidden. The henned body becomes a site of resistance resisting all the sexual taboos it has gone through.

The henned body is creation and recreation. It is allowed, for a few days, to abstain from the housework to let the henna last longer. It is admired for its colour and its designs. It is desired by the male gazers. With henna, the hannaya shows her dexterity in writing on the female body using signs that embellish, beautify and lure the gazer. She is an artist. The more famous she becomes, the more clients she has. The clients communicate her name, address and telephone number to others via “the Arab Telephone” as popularly known: “the mouth to ear” communication which is still the most efficient means of advertising in Morocco.

The henned body is a resistant body and at the same time submissive and amenable in the hands of the hannaya. The henned body willingly gives itself to the hands of hannaya to write what she sees suitable for the occasion, the age, the beauty, class, and the region of the henned body. This “écriture” is assessed by another traditional performer: the neggafa.

-Neggafa the bride dresser: Embellishing the body.

Barbara Brook (1999); in her discussion of the body notes that there is a number of disciplinary technologies to regulate a woman’s body in the public:
Performing in public places puts the female body on display in ways that contradict many of the constructions of femininity. These contradictions enable some transgressive feminist performances. Femininity itself may be considered as a drag of performance or masquerade (p:111).

Wedding ceremonies in Morocco have always embodied the display of familial, social and cultural know-how, tact and power. The bride's body represents the canvas on which all this is written. This leads me to speak about another “écriture féminine” and another metaphorical veil: the dressing of the bride by the neggafa. The neggafa, the bride's dresser, is generally a woman, who is rich enough to acquire the necessary gold jewellery, traditional costumes, etc., and is able to hire four peers to help her. The neggafa is hired at marriage ceremonies to dress the bride and lead the show.

Being able to cross to the public and publicness? especially at night, the neggafa, like shikha and hannaya, enjoys an ambivalent role. She is belittled for her boldness and transgression to the public on the one hand, and sought after for her services on the other. The neggafa has the magic to transform the bride into a star on her wedding ceremony. By changing the bride's clothes many times, each time 'outshining' the previous one, she constructs a fairy-like atmosphere during the ceremony. The bride should dazzle all the gazers, the females as well as the males, and especially her family in-law.
Figure 21. The neggafat are displaying their know-how to the audience by carrying the bride on their shoulders to make her seen by everybody in the wedding party.
Like the *shikha* and the *hannaya*, the more the *neggafa* excels in her job, the more famous she becomes. This fame is her key not only to her success (the price of her services becomes higher), but to her status within society as well. The more successful the *neggafa* is the less marginalized she becomes. She can even become a star within her city (as El Hajja Meftaha, whose fame has reached even the palace, was the Moroccan three princesses’ *neggafa*, and considered as an alive encyclopaedia of Moroccan oral traditions because of her experience and her age; she must be eighty or ninety years old now).

Writing on the bride’s body is a twofold metaphoric veil. On the one hand, it is empowering because it gives the opportunity to the subaltern to speak and to impose herself on her whole audience: male/female, rich/poor, high/low. On the other, it enables the *neggafa* to have a place at the centre of the society, not in its fringe. She even exerts some power on the bride herself. The bride’s body obeys and gives herself completely to the *neggafa*’s will. As a very docile body, the bride’s becomes like a doll in the hands of the *neggafa*, who dresses her and arranges her costumes and hair, as if she is preparing the bride psychologically to give up her volition to her groom.

In general, the three traditional actants, namely the *shikha*, the *neggafa*, and the *hannaya* earn their professional reputations as well as their wages according to their desirability as performers (writers on bodies). Individual clients, generally the organisers of the planned ceremony from the same city, are the ones who decide which specific *shikhat*, *hannayat* (*naqqasha*), or *neggafat* to hire for any given festival ceremony. The face to face communication remains the main way to book these performances even though the majority of the three traditional performers now possess a mobile phone.
and even a web-site on internet. The three traditional performers remain the best examples of the extent to which the subaltern can subvert not only the patriarchal system, but even limited feminist theories such as Cixous' "écriture féminine", by expanding it to other different types of “écriture féminine”.

The shikhat's body language, hannaya's writing on the body, and neggafa's dressing the body carry with them various unspoken authorities. While their “écriture” may serve as a body language, its signified meanings extend far beyond the utilitarian. These forms of “écriture féminine” are symbolic as well as functional, for dancing, writing with signs and transforming are significant acts in Moroccan oral culture which have a great impact on modern Moroccan theatrical actresses.

b- Moroccan Women Theatrical Performers

From a feminist perspective, initial observations about the history of Moroccan theatre noted the invisibility of actresses in its beginning. This has more than one reason. The absence of Moroccan professional actresses is closely connected with the long absence of the Western model theatre in Morocco. The first theatre in Morocco was built by the Spanish in 1912, it was named “Cervantes Theatre” and was located in Tangiers. The first Moroccan theatrical group was founded in 1924 by a group of Lycée Moulay Driss students in Fes, after the visit of a famous Egyptian theatrical troupe led by Fatima Rochdi to Morocco in 1923. Thus, 1924 is considered the starting point not only of the first theatrical group in Fez but in Morocco in general. Stunned by the Egyptian theatrical group, the students of Lycée Moulay Driss in Fez, headed by Elmahdi Elmnii, translated plays of Molière such as Tartuffe to preach morality to the audiences.
With the advent of theatre as a discourse, a space, and a performance in Morocco, religious and cultural taboos hindered the presence of women in the public, in general, and in the theatre in particular. In the 1950s the majority of women roles were attributed to men in women’s drags. These were known as impersonators. From a religious point of view, theatre, like art, is considered as a ‘vessel of all sins’ because it distracts the believers from their religious duties.

The absence of theatre both as a place and as a literary genre from the rich and ancient Islamic civilisation has been the subject of a diversity of theories and has remained a riddle that many Muslim and Western critics have tried to decipher. Moroccan theatre is still struggling to assert itself. It is generally regarded (though this is changing) as mere entertainment and not a serious literature, and for a long time, Moroccan theatre continued to be looked upon as a place of immorality with which no self-respecting men (or women for sure), should be associated.

It is not until late 1980s that drama and performance acquired a modicum of respectability because of the following reasons. Firstly, king Hassan II (1985) sent a letter to the Minister of Cultural Affairs, in which he imputed the theatre stagnation to the luck of funding, and ordered the Minister of Cultural Affairs to take theatre seriously in charge. Secondly, the opening of High Institute of Dramatic Art in Rabat in 1986. This Institute opened new horizons to theatre makers to see theatre as an art and a craft to be learned. It was an important sign to those who thought that theatre was the space for anyone who had no diploma and no education. This element of education has forced people to look at theatre at something serious.
This historical evolution of the Moroccan theatre did not preclude the invisibility of women through the colonial period and can be researched from written records such as journals, memoirs, and biographies. The survey provides the researcher with list of performers (actors, actresses, and impersonators) and the different roles they performed. The clear deduction is the scarcity, if not the absence of female roles in the beginning of Moroccan theatre. The main reason was the veiling of women and the male dominance in theatre. Accordingly, directors chose texts in which female roles were completely absent small, or trivial.

The veiling of real female bodies from theatre fostered the appearance of men's drags performing women's roles. Sue-Ellen Case (1988) writes about a similar situation in the Western theatre:

As a result of the veiling or the suppression of real women, the culture invented its own representation of the gender and it was the fictional “woman” who appeared on stage, in the myths and in the plastic arts, representing the patriarchal values attached to the gender, while suppressing the experiences, stories feelings and fantasies of actual women (see Teresa de Lauretis for a development of this concept). The new feminist approach to these cultural fictions distinguishes this ‘Woman’ as a male-produced fiction from historical women, insisting that there is little connection between the two categories. Within theatre practice, the clearest illustration of this division is in the tradition of the all-male stage. ‘Woman’ was played by male actors in drag, while real women were banned from the stage (p:7).
Male's drags/ Women's roles

Female impersonation was understood in Morocco as a theatrical compulsion resulting from the social taboos against women performing in public. The gendered segregation of public and private spheres forced the seclusion of women within the households of socially prominent families. Singing and dancing were relegated to a stigmatised class of women who sought economic stability such as shikhat, for instance, or cross-dressed male performers.

This explanation of female impersonation (although correct, acknowledges the widespread exclusion of women from the public life) confuses the public with that of performing women. It hypothesises a social absence or avoidance of actual actresses that contravenes the historical evidence. Contrary to the argument that performing women were unavailable, the record shows that the National Moroccan Broadcasting Radio employed both female impersonators and actresses for a considerable duration, especially in the beginning of Moroccan theatre.

Both impersonators and real actresses, I argue, were subject to multiple levels of redefinition. The significant frame or site was the gendered performer's body, the medium through which the performer addressed the public. By the process of refashioning and reworking its appearance, the body was converted into a usable construct for visual pleasure, gender identification, and social meaning. To a large extent, this process was conceived of within the realm of the performers' own capabilities. Meanings were mapped onto the performer's body beyond his/her power to control. The self-generating
domains of significance existed in an easy tension with exterior codes and often indeed were overwhelmed by them.

Thus, young men with appropriate physical appearances for generally handsome with feminine voices—were used to create the illusion to the audience. Names such as El Haj Mohamed Bouayad\textsuperscript{16} who was famous for his excellent imitation of the female voice and body. Another well-known female impersonator was Mokhtar Ben Ali who used to perform different female roles with a lot of professionalism\textsuperscript{17}. The most famous of all the Moroccan cross-dressed performers remains Bouchaib El Bidaoui, who imposed his theatrical style on the Moroccan stage till his death in 1969. His adoption of the external markers of femininity such as the scarf, the female traditional clothes, the hairdo, and the jewellery, together with appropriate feminine gestures and vocal imitations, made it easier for him to represent women on the stage.

In so far as cross-dressed male performers usurped the position of actresses within the entertainment world, they had not only denied women opportunities for employment in the theatre, but intensified the misogynist discourse that held that women had to remain offstage and out of the public gaze. Furthermore, by asserting that cross-dressed performers could “do” gender better than women the theatre system, and its public served to perpetuate the male hegemony over the female body and its representation. To sum up, this representation of Moroccan women has perpetuated the patriarchal control not only of the material female body, but its visual manifestation as well.
Figure 22. One of the first theatrical groups that were founded in Lycée Moulay Driss in Fez. Note that some males wear females’ clothes to represent women on the stage.
But in all its ambiguities and complexities this cross-dressing tradition remains worthy of attention and interrogation. The cross-dressed male performers made women publicly visible, no longer objects of a male imagined desire, but represented with visual signs, habits and gestures to denote femininity. Yet, these masquerades of gender were productive of new ways of looking upon the female body. Practices of gender impersonation enlarged the performative possibilities within which theatre managers, dramatists and spectators could experiment with the unfamiliar way of imagining and viewing women.

Although classified separately, traditional enactments such as halqa and the others discussed above had much in common with the beginning of Moroccan theatre. Both share the same orientation toward female impersonation. These pre-theatrical forms provided the cheapest past-time before the rise of a bourgeois class the restructuring of public space and leisure time. The visit of Egyptian troupes to Morocco and the appropriation of Western theatre technologies and new techniques of drama deepened the divide between the older representational arena of the halqa in the market places, and the new public of the metropolis. Consequently, the impersonation of gender, although, continuing with earlier practices, entered a new era and assumed meanings specific to the reconstituted audiences. The audiences, which were initially comprised of workers, craftsmen, artisans and small traders, were joined by young students, accommodated by low ticket prices that ensured a larger public. This public claimed its dissatisfaction with the female impersonators when they saw the real women on the stage. This happened the first time when Fatima Rochdi, the Egyptian star, came and performed on
Moroccan stages. Dazzled by her performance, the young audience became aware of the difference between performance and performativity.

The appearance of real women on the stage trigged great debate between those who condemned theatre and asked for its banishment, and those who encouraged it as another pulpit from which they can preach nationalism, so everybody had to contribute for the independence of the nation. Their fight for the nation's independence was a part and parcel of the struggle for women's emancipation. Alison Baker (1998) has an interesting comparison between feminism and nationalism in Morocco:

If we compare the history of the Moroccan feminist and nationalist movements with histories of feminism and nationalism in other third world countries to free themselves from Western colonial rule, we find many parallel and similar experiences. In all these countries, traditional societies were transformed by capitalist economic development and the emergence of nationalism, and feminist movements were among the products of these economic and social changes (p: 273).

So the nation's need for all its children brought women out of their homes to participate in the nation's independence which had been their own as well.
While a small group of girls from bourgeois nationalist families were going through school, Moroccan women of all classes and in all regions were taking part in the growing nationalist political struggle. Malika El Fassi was the only woman among the group of nationalists who drafted and signed the independence Manifesto which was sent to the King and the French resident general on January 11, 1944. But after this first manifesto great numbers of women signed petitions for independence, which they sent to the governors of the provinces. Women also participated in the demonstrations that took place after the demand for independence, especially in Fez, and the nationalist political parties began to see the importance of mobilising women (Baker, 1998:54).

The connection between nation and woman, is a well-known metaphor that extends far beyond the traditional connection between the earth and women. The idea that an intangible creation like a nation is able to evoke amorous or erotic emotions, sentiments that tend to be directed toward more concrete entities, such as humans. Nations have come to be constructed and the correlation between woman and nation has become so commonplace as to seem almost cliché. And yet the prevalence of the metaphor does not seem to have reduced its effectiveness; the equation of women and nation remains strong today in nationalist rhetoric and literature, where a nation must be cherished, like a good woman, and also protected, like a fragile woman. One only has to consider the international outrage over the rape of Bosnian and Palestinian women by the enemy, a violation that received much more press coverage than the other forms of pillage and plunder which took place in the colonised countries, to see the close comparison between the rape of a woman and the rape of a country. The systematic rape of women become the most effective means of rallying support for intervention in the Bosnian conflict, not
because rape is a new phenomenon in the former Yugoslavia, but because it symbolises the unjust violation of national sovereignty more dramatically than other available example of the horrors of war. But even when national defence is not put in question and the conflation of invasion and rage is not employed within national rhetoric, the nation still appears in literature as a woman, not only bearing children but also instilling in them the virtues and values that they will cherish throughout their lives.

In Morocco, there is an old tradition of comparing the nation with the woman. This was manifested differently throughout the years, and continues through the present. Moroccan nationalists discovered the effectiveness of real women performers on the audiences as a form of political communication and persuasion. Many national protests were fostered by theatre performances, the street became a political stage.

In this atmosphere of social change and modernisation, “modern” men such as the theatre director, Mehdi Lamnii, took the opportunity to introduce real women to perform nationalist plays on the stage. Here, the cross-dressed male performer was supplemented by ‘others’ such as Jewish, Spanish and Portuguese actresses. Maria Ahmed, a Portuguese with the French nationality, who masqueraded as Moroccan heroines and performed almost all the Moroccan female roles at the time (1930s), was the most famous of them. Here, by the apparent anomaly of Moroccan males passing as females and foreign women passing as Moroccan, the national stage established a paradigm for female performance even before Moroccan women themselves had become visible.
To show the extent to which they were nationalists and modern, some theatre directors and actors allowed their wives or daughters to be visible on the stage. Abdelwalid Chaoui introduced his eight years old daughter: Touria Chaoui on the stage. The analogy is striking here, as the nation was under “the coloniser protection”, the young girl was under her father’s supervision while performing. Many theatre males followed the same path such as Hassan Tsouli, an excellent cross-dressed male performer, introduced his sister, Khadija Tsouli to the stage. The Moroccan Jewish Edmund Khayat introduced his sister Mirna Khayat to theatre; she became producer and director as well. In this trend, some women actresses invaded the cinema, especially, the colonial cinema, to perform the native woman who was in fact her nation’s symbol.

In addition to the peoples’ awareness of their role as nationalists, there was the installation of the national radio station, which was a great opportunity for Moroccan women to contribute to the struggle for independence. The radio allowed them to speak their voices but behind the veil (radio). It was the voice of the nation which was preaching freedom and banning colonisation. The female voice allowed the fantasy of the listeners to give a body to the voice they heard. In this period -after the second world war- the Moroccan radio became very popular among the Moroccan people. The first radio actress was Latifa El Kadi, who started as a performer, then as a radio speaker, and had been a T.V speaker till the late 70s -when she retired. It was Abdellah Chekroun, the director of the radio and founder of the radio theatrical group at the time, who discovered most of the first actresses when he raised a motto: “Women roles should be played by real women”. The freedom of women to
represent their bodies on the stage coincides with the nationalisation of the radio from the coloniser. Chekroun introduced to the stage girls, whose families he managed to convince, but under the condition that they would use pseudonyms: Halima El Hachmia whose pseudonym is Habiba El Madkdouri (see the picture below), Faïza El Amrani whose pseudonym is Amina Rachid, who married Abdellah Chakoun, and Latifa Fassi/ Badia Rayan who had charmed the radio listeners and T.V. viewers after with her voice and beauty.

Figure 23. In the theatre festival of Méknes in 1999, I met one of the founders of Moroccan professional theatre Mr Ahmed Alj, and one of the first Moroccan professional actresses, Habiba El Madkouri.
Up to the independence obtained in 1956, the visibility of Moroccan actresses increased very slowly but very effectively. The appearance of many actresses who are still present on the stage as mothers, and grand-mothers such as Safia Ziani, Fatima Ben Meziane, Fatima Regragui, Naima Lamcharki, and Cha’abia ‘Adraoui, made theatre not only their school of nationalism, but also a place for the education of other women.

The birth of Moroccan theatre during colonisation made of it a site of resistance against oppression, and a pulpit from which men and women preached independence and freedom. Theatre was one of the means that Moroccans discovered to hide behind in order to awake the dead; to teach the audiences lessons of nationalism, to stir them up against the colonialist, against all social shackles that hindered their freedom. I think that theatre in Moroccan started as a metaphoric veil, behind which the nationalists voiced their nationalism to large audiences. The result was extraordinary since after each performance the spectators left the theatre to protest in the street against the colonialist.

-Women's bodies/Males' texts:

Moroccan women who were in the front line of the fighters in the resistance, felt that they had been relegated to the last, after Independence. The dream to take on larger public roles and to make their voices heard more loudly started to vanish. Alison Baker (1998) spoke with these Moroccan women veterans of the resistance whose life changed sharply after independence. Some women went back to their former routines; others, whose husbands were leaders in the resistance and liberation army spent years in hiding or in exile with their husbands and children. The decade after independence was an especially difficult time for these women. The women all insisted that they had worked and
fought and suffered in the armed resistance for "God, King, and Country" [...] Nonetheless, there were other hopes and expectations, however tentative or inchoate, and most of the women were disappointed. Many had hoped that independence would bring a better life for them and their families, and that they would somehow be recognised and rewarded for the extraordinary contributions they had made in the struggle for national liberation (p:34).

The same disillusion was felt by theatre practitioners. Once the country obtained its independence, they either left theatre to the domestic or they married colleagues in the theatre; a tradition which is still maintained. Generally these women remain a discourse of the objectified as other as Jeanne Forte (1988) found out:

Woman constitutes the position of object, a position of other in relation to a socially dominant male subject; it is that “otherness” which makes representation possible (the personification of male desire). Precisely because of the operation of representation, actual women are rendered an absence within the dominant culture, and in order to speak, must either take on a mask (masculinity, falsity, simulation, seduction), or take on the unmasking of the very opposition in which they are the opposed, the other.23

In the answers of the actresses and theatre practitioners I interviewed, one sentence is reiterated: “we are like bodies without souls on our theatre stage.” The theatrical conventions of the dominant tradition of the domestic life is still present in Moroccan theatre. Although some theatre activists argue for a greater and more realist representation of women in the theatrical “male stream”, and for a change of the text that objectifies them, Moroccan theatre is still male par excellence in which the female character roles represent the oppressed women. The Moroccan actresses’ current situation is similar to the British one before having their women’s theatre as the feminist theatre critic, Sue-Ellen Case, explains:
The psychological construction of character, using techniques adapted from Stanislavski, places the female actor within the range of systems that have oppressed her very representation on stage (p:122).

Moroccan actresses are not performing their own bodies, and speaking their own voices; they are always males’ wives, sisters, mothers or maids. Their roles are limited to represent either the angel or the devil, the stupid or the shrewd, the naive mother or the cunning maid, the wicked mother-in-law or the weak wife. The Moroccan theatrical repertoire contains many examples that confirm this.

The Moroccan actress is still considered a spurned person who is mainly connected to theatre as a site of immorality and debauchery; a vessel of all sins. Accordingly, she has to strive on two front lines: as a woman in order to deconstruct her image as a sex-object, and as an actress to transform from a spurned female performer into a ubi (female fetishism).

To be transformed from the spurned female performer into a ubiquitous emblem of national culture, the Moroccan female performer still needs time. The blow of change has been felt in the three last years with the coming of an intellectual, who is both a writer and a poet, as the head of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Mr El Achari. To reverse attitudes of marginalisation, denigration, and sometimes violence (Touria Jbrane, one of the most committed of Moroccan actresses, was kidnapped and physically aggressed while driving on her way to animate a programme on Moroccan Broadcasting station five years ago) and to render the publicly displayed woman acceptable will be the result of a lengthy and hard process of negotiation.
The performer’s status and image have to be reworked to incorporate the signs of Moroccan womanhood. The new generation of Moroccan performers felt alienated by the patriarchal system theatre and are eager to explore new theatrical forms and performing styles to represent their bodies, and their own views of the world. Will they fulfil their dreams in the absence of women playwrights’ texts?
Apart from some roles in the cinema, which are mainly directed by a female director, the Moroccan women performers still represent women who are alien to themselves; they are males’ creation. They are almost in the same situation that urged Kate Millett to advocate in her book *Sexual Politics* (1970) a feminist reading of the androcentric canon by being alert to the prejudiced images of women in male writing, and by being aware of the close relationship between art and politics. The same idea was developed by Judith Fetterley, in her book *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978), who explained how women should resist while reading androcentric
texts. She insists on reading against the male texts to realise that these images of women are mere stereotypes and far from being true. The woman who reads such texts, Fetterley argues, must learn to resist the temptation to identify with the hero against women. A similar approach has begun in Moroccan theatre, especially with the new generation of actresses in order to resist estrangement to their own bodies and voices.

Except for two unpublished plays—one in Arabic, and the other in French—the former by Fatima Chabchoub and the latter by Naima Ben Zidane, there is a complete absence of Moroccan women's theatre (Moroccan professional theatre-makers are still not aware of the metaphoric veil of the theatre that could be used to strip off all the veils that have made them invisible in theatre so far). They should know the theatre game-rules and play with them and not be played by them, as the first female T.V. director (see the picture below) told me.
Figure 25. After the theatre festival, I had a long discussion with Farida Bourquia (the first female T.V. director in Morocco) in the middle, and Mohamed Chraibi (a famous Moroccan playwright).

With Bourquia’s words in my ear, I left the theatre festival to my home wondering when will Moroccan actresses play their own bodies? Can the mask of theatre as the metaphoric veil provide me and other women who want to ‘playwrite’ with a shield of protection against all the forms of oppression that hinder women’s invasion of the public space? Is the theatre as a mask able to allow me to unveil some of the Moroccan women’s ‘pri-blic’ spaces without censorship?
2. Textual/Performance Praxis: The 'Pri-blic' on the stage / The Harem

I shall begin this section from where I stopped in part two of the thesis with the note that British women playwrights are still under-presented because of the simple fact that British theatre is still predominantly male. For it is generally managed, sponsored and commented on by men. Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt (2000) state a similar opinion to other British feminist theatre critics:

An outsider might be forgiven for thinking that the tables had finally turned: that women playwrights had at last achieved a significant presence at the close of the century. However, like several other 'stages' in our twentieth-century history of women's playwrighting, the contemporary situation of women dramatists is far less propitious than one might at first suppose (p:1).

Why, despite British women playwrights' success, do they continue to be under-presented in the mainstream theatre? Could it be the consequence of the general invisibility of women in all the public spaces?

a. Private, Public, and 'Pri-blic'

In addition to what is stated in the previous parts, the partition of space according to gender could be an answer. Places, such as theatre, parliament, government have a set of rules that determine their boundaries, the people who are allowed in, and those who are not. Here, gender makes the difference, men have always enjoyed an easier access than women to these spaces. To deconstruct this dichotomy, women theorists and playwrights - as seen above - called into question all kinds of received ideas and practices to challenge the fundamental patriarchal notion of the public/private.
Tompson (1994) labels 'Hermean' space - the public, the visible male world- and the 'Hestian' space -the private, the invisible female world, the household. Is this division of space in two halves so clear-cut, or is there another third space? Bearing the Moroccan mapping of space in mind, I presume that there is another space in the intersection between these two spheres -the 'pri-blic' space- women's-only-spaces that shape Moroccan women's lives in contemporary, post-colonial Moroccan society.

I argue in this section that the public/private divide, central to Western constructs of citizenship, is differently constructed in Moroccan society. The public/private are not separate in the Moroccan social reality as they are in the Western discourse. In *Dreams of Trespass*, Fatima Mernissi, (1994) articulates the difficulty in defining the boundaries - *hudud*:

> The problems with the Christians start, said father, as with women, when the *hudud*, or sacred frontier, is not respected. I was born in the midst of chaos, since neither Christians nor women accepted the frontiers (p:1).

Boundaries have always been sites of struggle, there is rarely a consensus on the meanings of boundaries and categories. There is rarely any homogeneity on any side of a divide. Boundary making is about difference making for purposes of empowering or disempowering. Sullivan (1995) succinctly observes,

> The demarcation of public and private life within society is an inherently political process that both reflects and reinforces power relations, especially the power relations of gender, race, and class (p:128).

The binary between public and private in Morocco is more complex because it is blurred. Both the private and the public spaces are gendered ones. There are what I call "pri-blic" spaces (private and public at the same time).
This blurring is still present in the contemporary as in the traditional housing-style in Islamic societies in general, and in Moroccan household in particular. The Moroccan household space -harem- is still affected by the general rule of the separation of the sexes. This is more apparent when guests enter one’s harem. Fatima Mernissi (1994) provides a vivid portrait of the men’s places within the private/domestic life:

Finally, on the right side of the courtyard was the largest and most elegant salon of all – the men’s dining room, where they ate, listened to the news, settled business deals, and played cards. The men were the only ones in the house supposed to have access to a huge cabinet radio which the kept in the right corner of their salon, with the cabinet doors locked when the radio was not in use (loudspeakers were installed outside, to allow every one to listen to it)...(p:7).

The separation of the sexes appears even in the inside of the private/the house. The concept of the male guest-room and female guest-room are usual practices throughout most Moroccan households. This separation of the sexes appears not only in the house but even in the public space -where Muslim women are required to veil whenever they cross the private to the public- such as the mosque, the hammam and the fitness-gym. The Moroccan public space is a gendered-space.

To deconstruct this duality between public and private, the Moroccan social and cultural construct has enacted to devise a third space, which is neither purely public, nor purely private. It is what I label “pri-blic”, women’s-only-spaces, situated in the public, outside her home, yet it is very private. It is specially constructed for women and by women. Men are not allowed in such places, which either have been present in the Moroccan socio-cultural landscape for a long time such as the hammam, and the Moroccan Salon or
have been the outcome of the evolution of the modern Moroccan society such as the fitness gym.

Since these women-only-spaces are accessible to female only, I find it very inconvenient to rely only on male imaginary for this research. By virtue of being a woman, I have access to women’s everyday experiences in the *hammam*, the fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon: the “priblic” spaces. It is on these grounds that this kind of research is often credited with the discovery or rediscovery of the real intensities of the everyday life of the *harem*, which had been for so long veiled or distorted by false interpretations—especially by male Western writers. As opposed to the Western male gazers who were denied access to women’s-only-spaces, I attempt to provide an image from the inside, penetrating women’s privacy which is mine too. This fact interrogates the reliability of the male colonial observers’ writings and paintings of the “*Harem scenes*” as Graham-Brown (1988) confirms:

Harem scenes were studio reconstructions composed by the photographer. In this respect, the photograph, like the painting or engraving, was a figment of imagination, which assumed the privileged position of the voyeur entering this closed and private space, and allowing the viewer to do likewise (p: 74).

Malek Alloula (1986) has come to a similar conclusion when he affirms that the studio staging of “models” was the material for the colonial postcards of the *harem*. In general, it is this constructed imagery that has shaped the colonial representation of the Muslim women’s ‘priblic’ spaces such as the hammam, for instance.

The Western gaze at the *harem*, represented visually or textually, has been a divided gaze between bewilderment, amazement and wonder, and
distortion, denigration, and condemnation. Malek Alloula (1986) sums up this idea:

Arrayed in the brilliant colours of exoticism and exuding a full-blown yet uncertain sensuality, the Orient, where unfathomable mysteries dwell and cruel and barbaric scenes are staged, has fascinated and disturbed Europe for a long time. It has been its glittering imaginary but also its mirage (p: 3).

Western painters, photographers, travellers, missionaries, writers, and soldiers expressed their phantasms about the harem, which makes Alloula come to this conclusion:

There is no phantasm, though, without sex, and in this Orientalism, a confection of the best and of the worst -mostly the worst- a central figure emerges, the very embodiment of the obsession: the harem. A simple allusion to it is enough to open wide the floodgate of hallucination just as it is about to run dry (p:3).

Some Muslim critics -male and female- have been through the colonial gaze, exposed it and deconstructed it. In their perceptions, the veil, harem, seclusion, and unbridled sexual access constitute a linked whole. This colonial visual construction of the harem is the core of Malek Alloula's thesis in The Colonial Harem (1986). Through a study of postcards, Alloula displays the colonial gaze of the Muslim Algerian veiled bodies, and deconstructs its reading of the 'other'.

Fatima Mernissi (1993) focuses on the Arabic epistemology of the word harem (see note 6 of the first part notes) and attempts to see the link between its meanings and draws attention to the sexual implications embedded in the totalizing Euro-Christian-centric view of the harem as an embodiment of Muslim sexual obsession. She concludes that the harem is both a sexual
institution and a locus for polygynous alliances with limits that gender cannot ignore.

The notion of Muslim women’s seclusion, “The ultimate expression of female seclusion is the harim/harem system” is the harem as it has been defined, for a long time, a belief that Doumato (1995: 19) attempts to shatter. On the contrary, she sees the harem as a part of an aristocratic way of life in which allowing one’s wife to remain at home is a mark of luxury.

In addition to the seclusion aspect of the harem, Leila Ahmed (1982: 521-34) mentions another of its aspects, qualified as the women ‘protected space’, a place where the sense of collectivity and bonding among women was increased.

A biographical description of a woman who lived in the harem, engenders another reading. The harem did not emphasise women’s seclusion, but their power over the major decisions taken by their husbands, as Huda Sha’arawi’s (trans 1987) real experience with the harem from her birth to her unveiling (1879-1924), as a child and as an adult, confirms.

This idea is supported by Abbott’s (1946: 137) observations that these women “could get powerful men removed from offices, engaged in wheeling and dealing in the market-place and were fabulously wealthy”. A feminist reading of the Islamic history shows the presence of many famous names of princesses, daughters, and sisters of Muslim kings, who justified Abbott’s claim. They held audiences with State officials, travelled publicly around the country, endowed mosques and supported charities such as Fatima El Fihria, who built the Al Quaraouin Mosque which is the landmark of Fez city, in the

Hoodfar (1991)26 objects to the Western representations of the harem in Iran because they “exclude the reality of harems and the way women experienced them” (Hoodfar, 1991:8). Keddie (1991:11), in turn, notes that the harem is very different from the Western view of it, she describes the harem as a space “where the indoor work of the family was planned and carried on, usually under the supervision of the wife of the eldest male”.

Likewise, Makhlouf (1979: 25) maps out the harem as Muslim women’s “source of support and even of power”. Fadwa El Guindi (1999) has a similar approach to the harem as Mernissi’s. She starts by defining it:

The English term harem (stress on first syllable) is a distortion of the Arabic word harim (stress on the second syllable –a derivative of the same root (h-r-m) that yields the Arabic/ Islamic notion of haram (stress on the second syllable), which means “sacred”(p:26).

One way to open up new directions for the reflection on other aspects of the harem, is to shift the focus from its being the central attraction to the Western and the Muslim gazes to a site where women perform resistance to marginalization and oppression everyday. In what follows, I look at the harem as women’s third space situated between the public and the private. It is a ‘pri-

blic’ space that provides women with a fluid stage where they can perform their bodies and speak their voices. Some of the ways in which this methodological approach can be achieved is by unveiling these spaces, such as the hammam, the fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon, through textual and performance praxis.
Before I invite you to read, and watch the live performance of *The Harem*, let us overview each of these ‘pri-blic’ spaces respectively: the hammam, the fitness-gym, and the Moroccan salon.

**-The Hammam: Collaborative theatre/ Slippages of authorities**

For centuries now – the exact date is still the subject of many debates among historians- Moroccan women leave their domestic space to the public for their weekly visits to the public bath, generally known as the hammam, the Turkish bath, or the “bain maure’. Besides its primary function; that of being Moroccan women’s “beauty centre” in which the body is adorned with *henna*, *ghassoul* (white argile home-made shampoo), shampoos, and soaps, the hammam remains the only space where Moroccan women could go without asking permission from their father, brother, or husband. Naaman-Guessous sums up these characteristics in the following:

For centuries, the hammam was the only place Moroccan urban women were allowed to visit and, for this reason, it played a social role in their lives. While men congregated in the market place, the mosque, and cafés, women had no other place to meet than the hammam. It was their unique link with the world outside the domestic sphere. In the hammam, women established network relationships, knew about the prevailing fashion, enjoyed themselves freely, and gathered information about their neighbours. Thus, a visit to the hammam was celebrated as a holiday since it disrupted the monotonous rhythm of everyday life and they made sure to fully enjoy it. This was the reason women were able to stay in the hammam up to six or eight hours. Wealthy households had the possibility to hire the hammam for the night and all female family members shared in the experience just like on ceremonial occasions: full dress, pastries, fruits, tea...

One of the aims of this dissertation is to break new grounds in the discovery of the hammam, traditional women’s space, as a site where their
resistance to the patriarchal system is performed, and power is negotiated. This section is based on the premise that the public bath is a rich milieu of Moroccan women's performances, yet it remains marginalized in writing. Except for some excellent but scattered analyses such as Geertz (1978), Susan Schaefer Davis (1978), Naamane-Guessous (1988), Kilito (1992), Mernissi (1994), Valerie Staats (1994), Kapchan (1996), texts on the hammam are scarce, and almost nothing on the hammam as a 'pri-blic' site of female bodies performance.

The hammam like British women's theatre, is a site where women write their texts, perform their bodies, speak their voices, and construct their own rules. Kilito (1992) states a similar atmosphere in a men's hammam (as there is no mixed hammam, both men and women go to their respective hammams in Morocco):

The hammam is a theatre where rehearsals for the final day, judgement day, take place. All these bodies slowly moving about, as if in a dream, or silently gathering in front of the basin, indistinct bodies, interchangeable, naked: one cannot make out their contours in the dim light, and besides, they display no sign that might betray their origins, their social class, their wealth or their poverty, their strength or their weakness.... Establishing an absolute indistinguishability, the hammam simultaneously creates an absolute equality, prefiguring the situation that will prevail on the final day, when no one will be able to enjoy the benefits of titles, honors, or any privileges (p:204).

The hammam is a part and a parcel of the Arabo-Islamic architecture of the city which includes the mosque, the market-place/suq, the public oven/el farran as well. There is no city or village without a hammam, mosque, market-place, and public oven. The hammam is embedded in Moroccan culture as a place of purification and cleanliness, for "Cleanliness is part of faith", as Prophet
Mohamed said; cleanness is a requirement of all Muslim females and males. Separate women's hammams and men's hammams have existed for centuries.
Figure 26. The hammam in Morocco is a gendered space. The picture shows two different entrances: the right one for men, and the left one for women, both under the watch of the hammam keeper in the middle.
Many writers have dealt with the close connection between the hammam and the purification of the body. This chapter, however, takes a different perspective. It looks at the hammam as a women’s site-specific performance; a space in which women perform female, write female, speak female to female. It is a similar practice to the British women’s collaborative theatre that the latter struggled very hard to have in late 70’s as Hanna (1991) claims:

We realised that we had never worked in an all women, as opposed to women dominated, environment and we wanted to explore that. We found that it gave us a different kind of freedom to anything we had experienced before and we enjoyed it (p: ixii).

This women-only company policy was a choice that many of feminist theatre practitioners sought - as argued previously in part two, chapter two - to represent their bodies:

The first task of CR (consciousness-raising) groups was to provide women with a voice after centuries of silence, CR groups provided a situation in which women could begin to articulate what it felt like to be a woman. The all- woman composition of the groups provided safety from the scrutiny and criticism of men and gave women an opportunity to enter into a dialogue with other women (Case, 1988: 65).

Valerie Staats (1994) explores the social world of the hammam – the collective body experience – which still casts a spell on both Moroccan and foreign women today:

This collective bathing experience is a way of life as unquestioned as the rising of the sun. Sanitation is not an issue, because one leaves the public bath so unquestionably clean that potential hazards seem impossible. Many Moroccans have bathing facilities at home, but still go to the hammam, at least for special occasions such as religious feasts, weddings, or after the birth of a child, no matter what their educational level or social class. Whether for the
cleansing steam heat or the social encounters, the visit to the bath is experienced as pleasure\textsuperscript{29}.

The hammam frees the oppressed body and permits her to voice her silence, her misery, and her problems. Thus, the majority of the informants, veiled and non-veiled, agreed upon the preservation of this space. Mernissi (1994) narrates:

Visiting our neighbourhood hammam with its marble floors and glass ceiling, was such a delight, I decided one day as I was splashing about, that I definitely would find a way to take one –along with my beloved terrace- with me whenever I went as an adult. The hammam and the terrace were the two most pleasurable aspects of harem life, mother said, and the only thing worth keeping. She wanted me to study hard to get a diploma and become someone important, and to build a house for myself with a hammam on the first floor, and a terrace on the second (p:179).

Each trip to the hammam- as to the fitness-gym, and to the Moroccan salon- has its ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ phase that Fatima Mernissi (1987) superbly describes:

The phase before the hammam took place in the central courtyard, and that was where you made yourselves ugly by covering face and hair with all those unbecoming mixes. The second phase took place in our neighbourhood hammam itself, not far from our house, and that was when you undressed and stepped into a series of three cocoon- like chambers filled within steamy heat. Some women got completely undressed, others put a scarf around their hips, while the eccentrics kept their sarwals on, which made them look like extra-terrestrials after the fabric had got wet. The eccentrics who entered the hammam with their sarwals on would be the target of all sorts of sarcastic remarks, such as “why don’t you veil too?” The ‘after’ phase involved stepping out of the misty hammam into a courtyard where you could stretch out for awhile dressed only in your towels, before putting on clean clothes (p:224).
The ritual of the hammam does not come to an end in the dressing-room of the hammam, for a beauty ritual starts once at home:

There was still another step to go: perfume. That night or the next morning, the women would dress up in their most cherished caftans, sit in a quiet corner of their salon, put some musk, amber, or other fragrance onto a small charcoal fire, and let the smoke seep into their clothes and long unbraided hair. Then they would braid their hair, and put on kohl and red lipstick. We children especially loved those days because our mothers looked beautiful then, and forgot to shout orders at us (pp:225-26).

Thus, the magic could last for a long period. I still remember an aunt of mine who used to sit in the salon with her nicest silk Moroccan traditional clothes, labssa, and keep her towel over her head two or three days after the hammam, just to relish the pleasure of hearing the other members of the family wishing her: “Bsaha l hammam” / To your health / to which she replied: “Allah atik sahha” / May God give you health/. This came from her feeling that she was reborn in the hammam and she contributed in that rebirth.

The ritual of unveiling, or undressing in the hammam, has a tremendous impact on women’s performances, and language in this space. Liberating their bodies from their clothes means liberating themselves from all the social, and cultural shackles and rules of the outside. This feeling of being inside is very securing; they are free because they are among themselves. This freedom of performance is linked with a linguistic freedom, for the space affects the bathers’ language, which becomes as fluid, sexy, and “naked” as their bodies. A bawdy language which they would not use in a heterosexual space. It is a performance of openness in which women divulge their own and other women’s secrets. All topics are permitted, none is forbidden. When women bathers return home, they are generally more informed about everything.
Going to the hammam is always a great social event to women because it is their space where they escape the patriarchal pressure. In Guessous’ (1988) phrasing:

In the hammam, women chat and prattle, whisper and chatter out of reach of the indiscreet ears of the male. They can move around unclothed without the risk of being accused of indecency and without inconveniencing those around them. Above all, they wash, rub, and massage themselves. This is why the hammam visit has remained a customary rite for the majority of female population. The fact that women are more emancipated today has not much affected the frequency of their visits to the hammam. For the large number of women who live in houses now equipped with bathrooms, the hammam visit is obviously an indispensable rite (p: 214).

The hammam is based on the principle of sharing. Women bathers could share almost everything; their ghassoul (traditional home-made shampoo), their kees (a coarse and rough mitt) to rub and scrub their bodies and each other’s backs. It is also a place where the young and the healthy bathers assist the old and the weak ones by filling their buckets with hot and cold water, for instance.

The hammam is as a democratic parliament in which all social classes are represented, ranging from the élite to the subaltern. It is a place where boundaries of hierarchy almost dissolve, and slippages of authorities could be witnessed. Being endowed with self-interrogating characteristics, the hammam is able to transform the bather from a subaltern to the dominant who can suspend and distance ideology even for seconds.

Teyyaba, who is generally a poor woman, becomes the mistress in the hammam, she brings hot and cold water and makes massage to the one who can pay her. She fixes the time of opening and closing the door of the hammam to the public, and decides when to open and when to stop the tab of cold and hot
water. She represents power in the hammam that no other woman could negotiate unless she is one of her faithful and generous clients.

This slippage of authorities appears more clearly when once in the hammam I witnessed a maid who defended her mistress. The inversion of roles was very amazing. Mastering the bawdy language of the aggressing bather, the maid felt more in power over her mistress’s aggressor than the mistress herself, who watched the scene as silent as a dumb. Frightened, she could not utter a single word to defend herself against the fierce attack, the insults of the other bather who wanted in fact to take her bucket from her. In a second the maid ordered her mistress to leave the third cocoon-like chamber to let her settle the problem in her own terms. Submissively, the mistress gave in, and the maid snatched the bucket from the bather’s hands triumphantly: “I am not shlida (weak) like her”. The hammam’s inherent discursive practices empowered the maid and enabled her to perform the role of the dominant even for the short time of the performance. The hammam questions hegemony, and makes it a process which is continuously “renewed, recreated, defended, and altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own”.30

In late 1990s, the hammam, like the street as discussed in the first part of this thesis, witnessed the presence of a new body that persists in marking her entrance. It is the veiled bodies which insist on keeping on their sarwal, traditional pant, and a T-shirt, and bathe with them. They even allow themselves to make remarks to the naked bodies. A new conversation topic has been introduced by these “veiled” bathers; it is the teaching of the Shari’a (Divine Law) and the respect of Islamic precepts even within a women’s-only-space. Like the mosque, the hammam is becoming a pulpit of preaching for the
veiled, and a site of resistance for the non-veiled. The “harmonious” collective space is now under testing. Will it remain that harmonious space where every woman feels at ease, or will it fail to mend this breach, which is becoming wider and wider? Since March 2000, as it has been discussed in the first part, this division in the Moroccan female body is becoming more and more important even in women’s ‘pri-blic’ spaces. Another example where it is very apparent is the fitness-gym’s locker-room as the following section argues.

- Fitness-Gym: Formation and Transformation of the Space

The little and energetic body, tight and slim, with its firm and noted up boundaries is a powerful image of contemporary culture, especially as articulated in advertising and consumer culture. Not only has the toned body become a commercial icon, but also the gym has become highly visible as the site where this body is produced.31

It is evident from the above citation that contemporary interest in the human body, and the nature of embodiment has been fuelled by a diverse range of feminist theoretical traditions such as French feminism – discussed in the second part, chapter one. Certainly, the rise of interest in the body is connected with a wide range of cultural and social changes in Moroccan society. It is a result of the modern consumer culture and the increasing number of glamorised pictures on T.V. and magazines adverts. The health business is booming. Every shopping mall has health food stores and special sports shops which sell clothing and equipment for just about every imaginable type of exercise. The same holds true for working out or body building. This has fostered a new space, which has been introduced in the Moroccan social and cultural landscape since the beginning of the 1970s, the fitness gym.
Modern gymnastics date from the early nineteenth century, although most cultures have always practised some sort of gymnastic activity. The popularity of Nadia Comaneci in the 1976 Olympics began an enthusiasm for gymnastics in most countries, including Morocco where the sport has been attracting more and more athletes ever since. The best example which is followed by Moroccan generation is Nawal El Moutawakkil (the first Muslim Arab female World Champion in 1984) and Said Ouita (World Champion and Recordman for many times and for many disciplines).

Today, almost every neighbourhood seems to have a gym. Fitness gym is one of the symbols of modernisation in Morocco. It is a booming business which competes fiercely with the hammam. Though it is a Western concept in its beginning, Moroccan cultural and social conventions have given it a Moroccan colour; it has become a women’s-only-space, or a men’s-only-space: a’pri-blic’ space. This section focuses on this space as another site where ‘modern’ women perform resistance to the new patriarchal system that favours the ‘perfect’ body. It is a place in which they do not only look at their bodies, but perform them and speak their voices too.

Based on an ethnographic study of three fitness gyms in Fez, this section aims at describing how these gyms are formed and transformed to be a women’s ‘pri-blic’ space. I consider how the female body feels free to express itself by moving, dancing, and performing with other female bodies in such places. The findings refer to fieldwork conducted in Moroccan fitness gyms. The three fitness gyms are located within the same middle-class neighbourhood, thus helping me to focus more persuasively on what is typical of the interaction rules within gym environments. For my analysis, I have
drawn on two different sources: participant observations, and informal interviews with clients, trainers, and managers.

In no other space, the body is the topic of conversation, the text, the object, and the space as in the fitness gym. The fitness gym becomes the icon of the modern society in which the body is manipulated and manipulating. It is the space of the celebration of the body, *par excellence*; images of bodies on the walls, real bodies in the gymnasium, and reflected bodies on the mirrors. Expressions such as these: “Oh! You’ve lost a lot of weight, I envy you”. “What have you done to look so slim? Tell me your secret, please.” “What is your type of diet?” “I want to lose five kilos” “How many kilos have you lost?” This illustrates the tremendous importance given to one’s body-image. According to my informants, the image they hold of their bodies influence to, a greater extent, how they experience their bodies in everyday life. Their body-image is shaped not just by the perception of their bodies, but how they perceive, and are perceived by others in a certain social and cultural context. To have ‘a good look’ modern women (and men) are ready to make particular efforts to try and bring their perceived body-image more in line with their ideal images.

As a business institution, the fitness gym is typically open to everyone, (veiled, non-veiled, rich, middle-class, literate, and illiterate) who has money to be its client. Yet, its commercial openness is limited to gender (mixed fitness gyms are almost non-existent in Fez). In this sense, the fitness gym epitomizes the sexual division between male and female. As a ‘pri-blic’ space, the fitness gym, though situated in the public space —outside the home—, is protected from the male intrusion, and becomes private.
Performing resistance: this woman resists the eye of the camera to maintain her privacy.
Passing the threshold of the fitness gym, one can feel that she is entering a female space: women's voices, bodies, and perfumes. Every gym, I have visited for this dissertation organises itself to receive its clients; the use of light, decoration, mirrors, the gymnasium, the locker-room, and the shower-room, are all the distinctive ways that mark their difference.

The specificity of the Moroccan gym is due to its physical separation from the public space, though its building is constructed there, and its locker-rooms practices. Like the dressing-room of the hammam, this room makes the clients—veiled and non-veiled look similar—a space to change their clothes to put on their sport-wear, and back again to their usual clothes. It is a "liminoid" space where cultural de-classification typical of passage rituals is lived individually, each client manages her specificity to her own shifting requirements. Undressing, and taking off the veils that render the veiled bodies invisible in the public space, sustains the gym's specificity, and makes it 'private'. The change from everyday veils, and clothes, is a fundamental symbol of having entered the gym, of turning in, of being in the right spirit to work out one's body. It is also the space of intimacy, of conversations, and new friendships.

The changing-room operates as the back-stage in theatre where the outward body leaves the space to the inward body. It is, thus, meant to strip individuals of their external identities, filtering out social attributes (which could interfere with training and making their bodies equally into an object) to switch to the women's realm where they could exercise and perform their bodies with more freedom than in the outside world. However, the fitness gym has constructed its own rules; time is organised between training in the
gymnasium, break (when one feels free either to speak with friends, or exercise), and showering. The clients could spend one to three hours every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, or every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, organised between stretching, aerobics, dancing oriental, and exercising ballet.

The fitness gym is not simply a space in which women are looking for a perfect body, but a women’s-only-space where a vast array of women’s performances are played. Meeting friends, or making new ones is always sought. Many of the gym clients confirmed that coming to the gym is not only to exercise their bodies, but to speak with other women. They agreed on the comparison between the hammam and the fitness gym as fluid spaces where they feel free to be among women and to speak ‘women language’.

During the break, or before training, groups are formed according to the topic of conversation discussed. These topics can vary from types of diet, to the funniest jokes, to gossip, to politics, to the weather and the problem of the drought, to the education of the children, to fashion, to veiling, to the news coming from Palestine... there is no censorship, they are completely free to speak about all subjects. Their language becomes free-floating, from serious to bawdy and sexy, depending on the conversation topic.

Although, some glimpses of difference can be seen, especially as far as the label of the sports-wear each client wears, the whole atmosphere remains a cosy women’s-only-space in which the female body may be obscene, clean, dirty, made of sweat, pain or pleasure, is very well-at-ease, because it feels free in its space. As this is a space of camaraderie, and conviviality, it could be a place of disputes. The slightest breach in the space rules and restrictions could
launch quarrels which fortunately cease quietly thanks to the collective spirit of the space.

After all the clients' efforts in exercise, there is the pleasure of finding themselves with relaxed nerves in a relaxed shower-room that reminds them of the hammam with its smells, bodies, voices, language, and subjects. Washing, dressing, and drying their hair, the clients return back to their veils, and daily masks as a preparation to their return to the outside world as the picture below illustrates.
Figure 28. Once the performance is finished, the trained body puts on the veil to cross to the public space
The Moroccan Salon: Counter-hegemonic discourse

Since Moroccan women have generally been confined to the home, and forbidden to cross to the public arena, their site-specific performances have always been within the walls of the private: their homes. Fatima Mernissi (1994) evokes a lively image, in its minute details, of the Moroccan women’s realm, the house:

I would sit on our threshold and look at our house as if I had never seen it before. First, there was the square and rigid courtyard, where symmetry ruled everything. Even the white marble fountain, forever bubbling in the courtyard center, seemed controlled and tamed. The fountain had a thin blue-and-white faience frieze all around its circumference, which reproduced the design inlaid between the square marble tiles of the floor. The courtyard was surrounded by an arched colonnade, supported by four columns on each side. The columns had marble at the top and the bottom, and blue-and-white tilework in the middle, mirroring the pattern of the fountain and the floor. Then, facing one another in pairs, across the courtyard, were four salons. Each salon had a gigantic gate in the middle, flanked by enormous windows, opening onto the courtyard (p: 4).
Figure 29. Facing the courtyard of a traditional house is the salon with its gate in the middle.
In all Moroccan houses, small or large, traditional or modern, rich or poor, there is at least one “Moroccan salon”. Of course, the furniture differs from one house to another according to its owners’ social class, region, and lifestyle, it remains easily distinguishable. The salon in Moroccan society is the icon and the display of women’s familiar status, power and prestige. The more expensively and traditionally furnished, the more proud and prestigious is its owner.

Generally speaking, the salon is connected with women in Morocco. It is the outcome of the dowry that the husband gives her on the wedding-day, in addition to the furniture that her father offers her, and the embroidery that her mother prepares for her, since the age of seven. The more the salon is expensive, the more proud her husband, and her mother-in-law are. It represents the wife’s future social security if she is divorced, or widowed. It is her salon. Briefly, it is her realm, that she continuously clean, arrange and rearrange to be the tidiest, the cleanest, and the most appealing part of the house. It is the symbol of her know-how as a housewife. Both the children and the husband are not allowed in without her permission and consent. It constitutes a “source of support and even of power” (Makhlouf, 1979: 25) to women. It is her place, where she meets her friends, and sits with them sipping mint tea, and enjoying moments of peace together.

The day she wants to invite her friends to her salon for a party to celebrate a ceremony, or just for a social gathering, male and children are asked to be out of sight. She has complete freedom in inviting whom she wants
the time she deems it appropriate. Makhlouf describes even the same timing and atmosphere of women gathering in Yemen:

These women are actively exchanging information in their daily visiting and do have a role in informal political decision-making. Between ‘asr (afternoon) prayer and the ‘isha (evening) prayer women are out of their homes going to the tafrita (women’s visit) where women gather in friends’ homes dressed up for the occasion; they enjoy each others’ company, listen to music, tell stories, smoke the hookah, chew qat, and exchange valuable information. The all female groupings... constitute the universe within which girls and women of all ages spend the greatest part of their lives. From... childhood, girls... participate in an inter-generational world with their mothers, aunts and grandmothers (1979:24).

The “Moroccan salon”, is another private and public space. It is a women’s site where the host could invite other women who cross the public to enter another’s woman salon. The time of the salon performance is usually between three to six or seven in the evening, depending on the seasons. The whole atmosphere of the Moroccan salon is a festival one, the variety of the drinks, biscuits, the scent, orange flower water, music and dancing (see the last scene in the live performance of The Harem). Yet, this jovial atmosphere could be interrupted by a tempest of tears and lamentations of an ill-treated wife. Consequently, the scene changes from festivity to psychological therapy where each woman gives her own prescription to comfort the victim, to a state of dance trance, to a display of traditional clothes and gold jewels.... It is as a fluid space as any women’s-only-space.

The salon as a site-specific-performance is a theatre without assumed characters. Women speak their lives, and improvise their own texts that they themselves perform very spontaneously without any rehearsals. It is a place characterised by non-linearity, and licence; their dialogues, and conversation
topics are dictated by the moment, their creation of the social, the political and the aesthetic as personal foreshadowed the feminist slogan: “The personal is the political”. Unlike The Western salon that was essentially the space of women belonging to the elite—women privileged by their families, their money, the power of their husbands, or their beauty, Moroccan salon is more popular, and accessible to all women.
Figure 30. Wearing their nice traditional clothes, Moroccan women’s festive bodies enjoy sipping their mint tea with pastries in the host’s salon.
In the salon as in the other ‘pri-blic’ spaces, women have developed a different language and rhetoric from those of men. They excelled in the oral: conversations, dialogues, and telling stories. In a convivial atmosphere, among friends and relatives, they spontaneously devise their texts of which they are the authors. Sue-Ellen-Case (1988) maps out similar female’s dialogues in the Western salon:

It is a dialogue built on mutuality and intersubjectivity, eliminating any sense of formal distance or representation (p: 46).

These improvised dialogues and conversations emerge from the everyday life, like traditional enactments discussed in the beginning of this part; they operate through enactments, not through mimesis. They are the outcome of the moment and the present interaction among the partners, who are guests, and at the same time prolific and versatile performers. Women write their texts, perform them, design the decor, and act as an audience. As opposed to the passive theatre audience, they are very dynamic; they are dancers, singers, story-tellers, and waitresses. Like in the majority of British women’s plays, the male is invisible, he is not allowed in, yet he is present in all their conversations. Women’s performance is as non-linear as the women’s plays, constructed according to their own rules that could change at any moment, following their mood, and their desire. To visualise these ‘pri-blic’ spaces such as the hammam, the fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon, I have improvised The Harem.
b. A Real Female Spectator as a Critic

After this overview of the three ‘pri-blic’ spaces: the hammam, the fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon, and with Jill Dolan’s *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1991) in mind, I invite you, to read the play-text: *The Harem*, and watch its live performance. As I have already mentioned, the performance is far from being professional: in its techniques, its performers and its director. This is just an attempt to strip the veil off these ‘pri-blic’ spaces, which are still considered as taboos, and to assess the postulation of using theatre space and the theatrical space as metaphorical veils behind which women playwrights could hide in order to speak their voices, and write their bodies. We will meet, then, to discuss the real spectator as a critic of *The Harem*, and how successful has this improvisation been? This is the aim behind the questionnaire (Appendix 2), which is devised to elicit the audience’s reception of the play.
-Textual/Performance Praxis: The Harem

Figure 31. I invite you to enter The Harem to have some glimpses of the different women’s performances within these ‘pri-blic’ spaces.
The Harem

By F. AMRANI

Cast

Lalla Thor ("Lalla" is a sign of respect) has been living with her daughter Khadija since her husband's (Haj) death. She is in her late sixties. She is loved and cherished by her family.

Khadija is thirty eight, a French teacher. She is torn between the traditional and the modern. She is veiled.

Salma is Khadija's daughter. She is Sixteen. She is a bright student. She is non-veiled.

Sanae is Salma's friend. She is non-veiled.

Bouchra is a veiled young woman. She is Khadija's friend.

Amal is another of Khadija's veiled friends.

Aziza is the Gym trainer and has recently joined Khadija's group of veiled friends.

Aicha is another of Khadija's veiled friends.

Fatiha is one of the Gym's members.

The woman is a Gym's member. She is a non-veiled doctor.

Mi Rkia is El Guellassa; the hammam's keeper.

The chamber-maid of the Gym.

Haj is Lalla Thor's husband. He is a man in his fifties. He has a very traditional concept of marriage.

Salah is Aicha's husband. He is a man in his forties, Westernized in appearance, but has very traditional ideas.

The same actress plays both the roles of Lalla Thor and Khadija.

The same actress plays both the roles of Salma and the woman.

The same actress plays both the roles of Aziza and Sanae.
The same actress plays the roles of Fatiha, Mi Rkia, and the chamber-maid.

The same actor plays the roles of both Haj and Salah.
Figure 32. The female cast that performed *The Harem*. 
List of Time and Locations

**ACT ONE**  
Khadija's living room. The present. Wednesday morning. The flashback was in the beginning of 1980s.

**ACT TWO**

**Scene One:** A gymnasium. The same Wednesday morning.
**Scene Two:** The locker-room of the Gym. Forty five minutes later.

**ACT THREE**  
The dressing-room of the hammam. Wednesday at 11 a.m.

**ACT FOUR**  
Khadija's Salon. Thursday afternoon. The flashback was on Thursday Morning.

Note on the play

_The Harem_ was written in 2000, under the first elected government in Morocco, when the question of women's issues was at the front with the roar triggered by the courageous government's "Integration Plan" (the Integration of Moroccan Women in Developing the Country). A "never seen" polemic debate followed it. It "balkanized" (my word) Moroccan women into divergent groups. Consequently, on 12th March, 2000, Morocco was marked by two women's demonstrations; Casablanca veiled women demonstrators who paraded against "the plan", and Rabat non-veiled women demonstrators who paraded for "The Plan". Since then, "The plan" has been in a deadlock. During the first rehearsals of this play, the government gives the responsibility of women's issues to the only woman minister in this government, for the first time in Moroccan political history. She is trying now to secularise "The Plan" by emphasising the respect of women's basic human rights such as education, employment, non-violence...so as to save "The Plan" and to push forward the integration of Moroccan women in the active life. Is she going to succeed where he (the previous minister) failed? I am not so sure, because she pledged, with a group of women activists, for the king's interference to find a solution that the government has failed to come up with till now. He met them on 4th March 2001. It is to be continued.

The play was first performed at Al Akhawayne University Theatre on 8th February 2001 with a group of my students, that I labelled "The Group for Performance and Gender Research"; directed and designed by me.
ACT ONE

A sunny March Wednesday morning. A Moroccan, middle-class living-room furnished with two banquettes, a red carpet, a round table with an embroidered napkin, and a television. Lalla Thor is sitting in the corner. She is wrapped up in a blanket, humming this prayer:

La ilaha illa lah Mohamed rassoulo allah. La ilaha illa lah Mohamed rassoulo allah. (suddenly, she starts calling)

Lalla Thor: Salma, Slima, Lalla Salma Slimty, (She hums her prayer again, then calls) Salma, where are you my little girl? Oh! The young girls of these days! They Listen but to their own voices... Ehhhh! Those days when the old were obeyed... Ehhhhh!!! (Grumbled some words with resignation as: 'Allah yarham ayyam zman).

A young girl appears. She is sixteen. Active, cheerful, with a strong-willed eyes. Singing the famous Spice Girls' song Wannabe:

I'll tell you what I want, what I really really want
so tell me what you want, what you really really want

She sees her grand-mother moving her lips. Takes her walkman off her ears, hugs her mummy with a great affection.

Salma (with great respect and love): What does the nicest mummy in the world need? Order me and I obey.

Lalla Thor: 'Ya lafrita'! Little devil! Where were you? I have been calling for a long time! No one hears me! Are they all out?

Salma (kissing mummy's hands): I don't know sweetie! I was outside...
Lalla Thor: *Outside* again! You become a *boy* now.

Salma (*ignoring her comment*): I went to the cyber-café to send an e-mail to my uncle...

Lalla Thor: A *café*! You said a *café*! Do girls go to *cafés* nowadays? Women aren't free, they say? Add the television volume. Watch. Women haven't stopped complaining, arguing, speaking... all the morning.

*Salma moves near the T.V. takes the remote control, adds the volume.*

The presenter (*of a monthly political programme appears on the screen*): Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen! Happy birthday to all women. The date of the programme coincides with the celebration of all women of the eighth of March. Women in Morocco represents 50.3% of the population, yet their situation is among the worst in the world. I have many questions concerning women's marginalisation, poverty, justice, employment etc. To answer these questions, I've invited the Secretary of the State responsible for Family and Children. Welcome, Sir.

Salma (*laughing*): Ironical, isn't it, mummy?

Lalla Thor (*searching for something*): Oh, God? Everything is confused! I...

Salma: Let's hear what will he say?

The minister: Thank you very much, Madam. Happy birthday to all women.
If we analyse the late statistics, one cannot but agree with you that the situation of Moroccan women is alarming, indeed. 87% are illiterate in rural areas, 68% are illiterate women in Morocco, 24% active women with only 0.6% in the parliament, 0.34% in the political arena, only one woman in the government...The list is long...

Salma (*frightened by the figures*): Gloomy! Don't worry! Mummy! I'll be the first woman Prime Minister in Morocco.

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Lalla Thor *(laughing)*: Like that woman with brooches?

Salma: Whom do you mean? Margaret Thacher or Madeleine Allbright?

Lalla Thor *(trying to remember)*: That long-nosed woman, not the double-chinned one.

Salma *(bursts out laughing)*: Haaaaa! Mummy! You'll make a brilliant cartoonist!

Lalla Thor *(with a sigh)*: God bless my parents. They didn't teach me even to write and read.

Salma *(trying to remember)*: Do you mean that Super Maggie? I don't...

Lalla Thor: Ehhh! I don't know exactly! That woman who was labelled "iron", "steel", or something like that!

Salma *(spontaneously)*: Oh! No, mummy! I want to be as famous, but not as iron-hearted.

*Salma's attention is attracted to the screen where images of veiled women and non-veiled women appear.*

A speaker *(in a street, interviewing one of the veiled demonstrators)*: Why haven't you joined the others on this Eighth of March as usual? Why have you organized your own demonstration?

The veiled woman *(frenetically)*: We're non-Westoxicated. We have a Muslim identity. We should preserve it...

Salma: Good Lord! What does she mean? Are the others not Muslims? What is the difference?

Lalla Thor *(is still looking for something)*: These with scarves. The others without scarves.
The non-veiled woman *(takes the microphone)*: We're for women's participation in all fields. Women should be given their place in this society. They shouldn't be....

Salma *(puzzled)*: I can't make it out! Why is this division? Why don't they ...

Lalla Thor *(finds what she's looking for)*: Divide and Rule! What a shame! *(She takes her rosary, and hums)*: Ya latif. Ya latif Itf bina...(Oh! Gracious God, be merciful with us).

Shaking her head, Salma does not seem satisfied with what these women's claim. She stands up as if she is making a speech in front of a vehement audience.

Salma: It isn't enough. No it isn't enough. I want to go out day and night without being harrassed. To decide for myself. To be a human being, not just a woman. To represent myself. To be a prime minister if I'm better qualified. To travel without his consent. I want to divorce if I am humiliated. I want to say No to injustice. No to marginalisation. No to being a victim. No to ignorance. No to illiteracy. No to poverty. No to poly/

Lalla Thor *(absent-minded, the past emerges before her eyes)*: I wasn't allowed even to look through the window. Your grandfather, God bless him, was a real man; 'rajl'. He didn't let me even open the door to a cousin. To climb the roof to dry the washing clothes, we asked him for permission.... But we're satisfied. We're happy. We're obedient. We're silent....

Blackout. Flashback begins. The scene is now twenty years earlier. Lights rise on Lalla Thor who is embroidering a handkerchief, and singing a folk Moroccan song; "Alash ya ghzali? Alash?" *(Why my darling? Why?!)* Haj appears on the stage with a white djelleba, a red Moroccan hat (fez), carrying a bascket full of vegetables and fruits of the season.

Haj *(feigning a cough as a warning of his arrival)*: Eh! Ehhhhh...

Lalla Thor *(in a hurry, bowing, ready to serve)*: Welcome home Haj. 'la slama. *(she takes the bascket from him)*
Haj (with a deep, and authoritative voice): Bring my slippers, and hot water as usual. (He sits comfortably) Allah! (she vanishes for a short time, and comes back).

Lalla Thor (bowing, carrying the slippers, a basin, a towel, and a kettle of boiling water with some salt): Here are your slippers, Haj.

Haj (with his authoritative manner): I'm not blind! Make a massage bath for my poor feet. All day standing, whereas you're staying comfortably at home.

Lalla Thor (submissively): Bismi allah! (in the name of god). This is how we've been brought up. Men work outside, and women work inside.

She sits on the carpet under his legs, starts the massage of his toes.

Relax! Don't be too stiff!

Haj: Slowly, please. You're hurting me (He adds with his serious tone): Listen Lalla Thor! Haj Ahmed...

Lalla Thor (startled): My brother! What has happened to him?

Haj (enraged): Who speaks about your brother? A foolish woman! Haj Ahmed, my associate. He wants our daughter, Khadija, for his son Ali...

Lalla Thor (confused, pours very hot water on Haj's toes): Yo yo yoyoooooo/

Haj (removing his feet quickly from the basin): Ay! Ayyyyy. The older you are the crazier you become...

Lalla Thor: But, Haj/

Haj: Carry this out of my sight! (stands up) Do you want to burn me?
Lalla Thor (baffled): Excuse me Haj, please. I don't mean it. (following him with a towel) Let me wipe up your feet first! Khadija is our first joy. (adds thoughtfully) I wish she'd consent/

Haj (irritated): What! What what what! What do you mean by you "wish she'd consent". I've given him my word!

Lalla Thor (trying to wipe out his feet): This is God's will! Her consent is recommended! It's her right/

Haj (very irritated, he kicks away the towel): It's you who is going to teach me what God said, or didn't say? What is right, or what is wrong? Who is the man, the master of this household, you or me? I'd better wear women's clothes, and stay with the harem? You spoil all that I try to teach her.

Lalla Thor (respectfully): You're our man. You're our master. Nothing can be done without your consent. God bless you. (She kisses his hands as a sign of complete obedience).

Haj (appreciates the kiss): So why are you arguing?

Lalla Thor (looking on the floor): Sh sh sh she is my daughter as well. Times have changed. She is educated. She has her own word to say/

Haj: Do you mean that she'll dare to refuse? Close this subject. Go, set the table for lunch. I'm very hungry...

Lalla Thor (gives in): But/

Haj (despotically): No but. I'll go to the bedroom to offer my sallat (prayer). I want to find the table ready when I come back. (he stops as if he has remembered something) By the way, where are the children? How many times I told you that everybody should be here for lunch? I'm no longer listened to in this house!

As soon as he has disappeared, cheerful voices of young men and women are heard in the courtyard of the house. The mother leaves the room in a hurry. Her voice is heard whispering: 'He is here! Your father is already here! Why are you late? Didn't I tell you to come early?' A deep silence follows...Darkness.

Flashback ends. Lights rise. Full stage.
Lalla Thor (touching salma's hair softly): You see my little baby. This was your mummy's life...

Salma (with her head on her mummy's shoulder): Do you miss him? He was jealous because you were very beautiful, weren't you?

Lalla Thor (coming back from very far, laughs): You've always nice words, naughty girl! I'm still beautiful, aren't I? (She takes her mirror from under her pillow, and looks at her face admiringly). God bless him! He did say so when we're alone, and that God showed His love on him by giving him such a good wife. I obeyed him, was a good cook, a good housewife, and a good mother for his children...

Salma (kisses mummy's forehead): Live in a harem with only harim! Poor mummy! Didn't you feel bored? Spending all your days and nights at home?

Lalla Thor (Shakes her head violently): Who told you so? I went outside twice a week. (She continues with pride) Thursdays for the hamman, and Fridays to visit the Saint Moulay Idriss. Never alone, always accompanied by my mother-in-law, or by one of my sons when they grew up and your granny died 'Allah yer 'hamha'. With my haik (veil) I could see everything and not be seen by anyone. For these two great events, I spent all the other days preparing myself. I was very proud of being secluded. Seclusion was prestigious...

Salma (nodding): It's prison. Oppression...

Lalla Thor (trying to convince her): It was a golden time for women. Women were respected, honoured, secluded. Men did the shopping for us. They worked outside for us. They protected us as precious diamonds/

Salma: Precious Diamonds! This is their eternal excuse of marginalising women. What is this precious diamond? It's a thing, an object, isn't it? I don't want to be a thing...

Lalla Thor: Look at women nowadays, they mingle with strangers in the markets, on the streets, in offices, in schools, everywhere. No men these days! No jealousy! No virility! No dignity! How could they accept that their wives work outside, and they are sitting in cafés? I guess it's near doomsday. (she takes her rosary and start counting
her prayers, then she remembers). You make me forget what I called you for. What a talkative girl! Euh! Go and make me some tea.

Salma: Certainly, Madam. What are grand-daughters for? (She is preparing herself to go, when her mother's voice is heard offstage) "Salma. Don't forget to meet me at the hammam at 11 o'clock. Take care of mummy, and tell her that I'm going to the Gym now". (She slams out of the door).

Lalla Thor (aside): Poor daughter! She didn't sleep all night looking after the baby. She's mutilated between outside and inside!

Salma: I'll bring you your cup of tea.

Lalla Thor: God bless you Salma, and help you fulfill all your dreams. (She Hums: la ilaha illa illah...)

Salma: Amen. (Kisses her mummy's head, puts on her walkman, leaves the room singing Britney Spears' song: I will be there):

Come on over here
Let me show how things should be
I will make it alright
Let me make it clear
You can put your trust in me
Yes I will be there

The curtain falls.
ACT TWO

Scene one

The same Wednesday morning. It's 8.25 a.m. In a nice sunny gymnasium, with mirrors on the wall, and carpets on the floor. Laughter. Giggling voices. A disco music is played: "We are Family. I've got all my sisters with me...."On the stage, young women in sweatsuits, or tracksuits are sitting in a group. A cheerful female atmosphere.

Aziza (a young woman in a tracksuit enters): Hi, girls. What's the news?

(All laughing).

Amal (wiping her eyes): Just for laughs! Come and join us. Fatiha, as usual, is cheering up the atmosphere...

Nadia (still giggling): It's a long time since I laughed. Fatiha's jokes are unique...

Aziza: The space frees her tongue. All the taboos are dismantled...

Amal: It's amazing! How she dares! Who can guess that she is Fatiha 'El Munaqqaba' (the veiled) of the outside?

Aziza (looking at her watch): It's the magic of the space! We've time for some more...

Nadia (shouts): Yes. More jokes...

Amal (cries): More jokes before we start our training...

All women (clap their hands and shout): Fatiha, Fatiha, Fatiha, Fatiha...

Fatiha: O.K. You win. Come nearer. Once a veiled woman was asked whether she did some exercise. She answered: "No, I don't exercise. The way I see it, if God had meant for us to touch our toes, he would have put them further up our body."

Aziza: You're cheating! Tell us the others! Those you keep hidden!

Nadia: Yes, the others. The latest! The sexiest!
Fatiha: Naughty girls! Come nearer. *(no sooner has she whispered something than all the women burst out laughing).*

*Aziza, laughing, looks at the clock on the wall. She puts on a C.D, takes the lead in the exercise line-up.*

Aziza *(claps her hands)*: The sparks are going to fly. Exorcising is over. We're for exercising now.

*All the women obey the trainer's directions; resume their places, laughing.*

Aziza *(taking a serious tone)*: And now for your morning exercise. Ready? Up, down, up, down, up, down. And now the other eyelid.

All the women *(burst out laughing)*: Ahhhhh! It's no picnic! Fatiha's contaminated you!

Aziza: Let's start seriously. We'll start by streching. One. Two...*(They all fall into line streching)*...
Scene Two

The locker room of the Gym. It's 9.15 a.m. There are two benches, a mirror on the wall. Two doors, one is the entrance from the gymnasium, the other leads off to the shower-room. Music and women's voices are heard. Amal and a veiled young woman enter at the same time, each from a different door.

Amal: Assalam Alaikoum (peace upon you) Khadija.

Khadija (putting off her scarf and djellaba): Alaikoum assalam wa rahmato allah.

(God's bless and peace upon you) Oh! your sweatsuit, and sneakers are soaking wet?

Amal (exhausted): 'Apparatus work!' Good Lord, why are we doing this to ourselves?

Khadija: That sounds like medieval torture? What do you have in mind? Scaring me?

Amal: Just kidding! It's the price to get in shape those days...

Khadija: Every woman tries to have a Barbie body. The body is a booming business these days....

Amal: By the way, why didn't you come at eight thirty, as usual?

Khadija (with a deep sigh): Omar got a fever. Didn't stop shouting all night.

Amal: Oh! Little baby!

Khadija: My husband advised me not to come to the Gym. I've had no sleep...

Amal: It's always relaxing to exercise in the morning. Have a steambath. Forget everything...

Khadija: He keeps nagging every time I come to the Gym. "Only Mutabarrijat (exhibitionists) frequent such places", he says.

Amal (surprised): You've got to be kidding! Your modern husband! What's wrong with exercising?
Khadija: "Time which the believer spends in playing, not praying or working, is *hram* (a sin)", he says.

Amal: So modern in appearance!

Khadija: Fanaticism becomes fashionable these days! Everybody hides behind religion!

Amal: Our religion is very vast. It's *rahma* (tolerance). Openness...

Khadija (*putting on her sneakers*): It's a standard practice now. I've got into the habit of exercising every morning. Too late to change now, whether he likes it or not...

Amal: *Din wa dounia* (religion and life)...

_Aziza's voice is heard warning them to be ready for the second session._

Khadija (*ready, gives a last glance to the mirror*): I have to hurry. See you next Thursday. Don't forget our gathering.

Amal: *In Cha Allah* (if God wills). How could I forget my puff of oxygen! Take care.

_Khadija disappears. A young woman emerges from the steambath, wrapped in a dressing gown._

The woman (*with a French accent*): Bonjour! Ça va! Comme c'est bon de faire sa gym! What's the time please?

Amal (*ironically*): *Assalam alaikoum wa rahmato allah wa barakatoh* (God's bless and peace upon you). It's nine thirty.

_The chamber-maid enters. She is a woman in her thirties, but already wrinkled. She greets the ladies, and starts arranging and wiping up the wet spots on the floor._
The woman (in a hurry): Oh Goodness! The patients are waiting? I forget about everything in this place.

The chamber-maid (aside): That's why whenever I go to the hospital, the nurse tells me that the doctor has an external visit. I keep waiting, and waiting...

Amal: As usual! What are the doctors' waiting-rooms for? Waiting, waiting, waiting....No alternative.

The woman (drying her hair, putting on her make-up, she observes her face in the mirror): Swelling eyes. Didn't sleep well. I was invited to a wedding...

Amal (gazing at her): One of your V.I.P weddings?

The woman: A night of one thousand nights. A beautiful bride. She was sublime in her silk qaftans. Her jewelry. The neggafa (a woman who dresses, and hair-dresses the bride) was very professional. She transforms the bride into a fairy, even the groom couldn't believe his eyes. Everything was luxourious: delicious food, a good group of musicians. We didn't stop dancing all night...

The chamber-maid (aside): This is life! There are those who enjoy their lives, and those who are trying to survive!

The woman (putting on her shoes): C'était merveilleux! It was such a magic night! Fabulous!

Amal: Did they know each other, or was it an arranged marriage?

The woman (combing her hair, and arranging her bag): I think there was a love story. They're both very young. The bride is only sixteen. The groom is twenty one. I hope their love story is as exceptional as their wedding, and not just the same run-of-the-mill love story that ends as quickly as it starts. I've got to go, now! I'll tell you everything in more detail next time (she finishes her make-up in front of the glass, and rushes to the door).
Amal (making her way to the steambath, notices the woman's short skirt): God will guide you to His right path. When are you going to put on the veil, and throw away these clothes of temptation? You should come to our gatherings to listen to/

The woman (laughs): Who knows! One day perhaps! God guides us all. Au revoir.

The chamber-maid (alone in the room): God helps us all. They married young, she said. I felt old at the age of six or seven. When my father brought me from my countryside, my family, to the city, he told me: "Look, daughter! Now, you're a woman. You're responsible for all the family: your mother, sisters, and brothers. You're a grown up now". The mistress I worked with confirmed this whenever she found me playing with her children: "You're a woman now. I give you money to work not to play. Go to the kitchen and see what is to be done".

She sings a Moroccan folk song:

*Ana Imsikina. Ana Imribina. Ana libaouni. Ana ana ana Ah! (I'm the poor woman. I'm whom they sold. I'm the miserable. I. I. I. I. Ah!)*
ACT THREE

It's 11 o'clock, in the changing room of the hammam. A bright large room. On the right, El Guellassa (the hammam's keeper) is a woman in her fifties, surrounded by the bathers' bundles of clothes, bags, and cases. She is busy preparing a tajine of potatoes for lunch, and keeping an eye on the door, while humming a traditional Moroccan song with the radio. On the left, there are three benches. Empty buckets are arranged in the corner. Voices of women and children are heard in the next rooms. Khadija appears, and starts her ritual undressing.

El Guellassa: Alaikoum assalam wa rahmato allah, lalla Khadija. How are you? How are your children?

Khadija (looks at the mirror hanged on the wall): Oh! I'm frightening! I look horrible with this mask of henna and oils on my head. This shabby djellaba, and this old qmis (a long dress). A witch. Children will be afraid of me.

El Guellassa (wisely): The uglier you're before the hammam, the more beautiful you're after.

Khadija: I hope so! Has Salma come, or not yet?

El Guellassa: Salma hasn't come yet.

Khadija (gives El Guellassa her djellaba and scarf, to hold it for her): Mmm. Miam. Miam; a nice smell is coming from your tajine.

El Guellassa (arranging Khadija's djellaba, and scarf): It's just potatoes with tomato sauce. The tajine of the poor. Who can dare buy meat now? We're becoming vegetarians against our will.

Khadija: Mi Rkia. What're the news of the hammam, today? Full or empty? Is there enough hot and cold water?
MiRkia *(Tasting her tajine, and adding some salt)*: It's always fine on Wednesdays. And the beginning of the week. Not like Thursdays or Sundays. Last Sunday, the hammam was a furnace. No cold water. Women's voices and children's screaming raised to beat the din. Exhausted children couldn't find their place on these benches to have a nap...

*A bather comes out from inside the hammam, steaming; a young woman wrapped in a towel, exhausted. She stretches on one of the benches to settle the red flush on her face.* "Assalamou alaikoum."

Khadija: *Assalamou alaikoum warahmato allah wa barakatoh.* "B'sahti l'hammam" *(to the health of you and your bath)* Bouchra.

Bouchra *(becoming reacustomed to the temperature of the real world sees Khadija and smiles)*: "Allah atik Sahha" *(God give you health).*

Khadija *(carressing Bouchra's face)*: I envy you! Look at her beautiful red cheeks...

Mi Rkia: It's the magic of the hammam...

Bouchra: I feel like a new woman. A clean body purifies the soul. *(miming to Mi Rkia to bring her the bundle of clothes)*, Can you bring me my bag please? I don't feel my legs, queuing for hot water.

Khadija *(taking off her qmis)*: One forgets oneself in this cocoon-like chamber...

Mi Rkia *(handling Bouchra's bag)*: It is so filled with steamy heat that you can't see who is near...

Bouchra *(opens the bag, and takes her clothes)*: It does a lot of good to our bodies. It's always relaxing to have a moment for oneself...

Khadija: Except in the fitness gym, or the hammam, we forget that we have bodies that need to be looked after...

Bouchra: We have time for the husband's desires, the children's, the mother-in-law's...
Mi Rkia: Everybody but ourselves...

Khadija (consents): Superwomen...

Mi Rkia: Working outside as men, and inside as women...

Bouchra: This is the slavery of modern times...

Khadija: Where is women's emancipation?

Bouchra: In speeches. In plans. "Words, words, words" as Hamlet said...

Khadija (sings Dalida's refrain): Parole, parole, parole! (They burst out of laughing).

A knock is heard from the interior of the hammam, followed by a voice of a woman calling.

A woman (showing only her arm): Mi Rkia! Mi Rkia, give me some sabon ibidi (country soap) please?

Mi Rkia (kidding): Why don't you come here? Are you ashamed?

Khadija (teasing the woman): Come in! Show up...

Bouchra (laughing): There's no man here...

Khadija: Don't be too shy! It's a spectacle for women only...

The woman (laughing): Ashamed, they say! Behold and admire! Taratatata (She shows her right arm and leg in a music-hall girls' manner) Here is Claudia Sheiffer's sexy body...

Khadija and Bouchra cannot stop laughing, while Mi Rkia hands the woman some of this dark-brown jelly.

Mi Rkia: Don't pay attention to these devils. Here is your soap. Go, have a nice hammam...

The woman: Bye, bye, little devils.

Khadija and Bouchra (simultaneously): Bye, Ms Claudia Shieffer!

Khadija (still laughing): Tell you what, Mi Rkia. We don't come only to bathe, but ...
Bouchra: To cheer up, and to forget our problems as well. By the way, speaking about problems. I've very bad news to tell you...

Mi Rkia and Khadija (speak simultaneously): What's up? Tell us!

Bouchra (seriously): Asmae was divorced, and kicked out of her house with her three children. He married a sixteen year old girl...

Khadija (motionless): Oh, dear me! Of course, he could do it...

Bouchra: Now that he is rich, and has power. Isn't he a M.P now?

Mi Rkia (with a sigh): Men never get old in this society! My God, where is Asmae now?

Bouchra: No fortune. No work. No rich family. No justice. She is lodging with her sister, but till ...

Khadija (didactically): You know that all our social problems stem from our neglect of Islamic divine law. Both the Qur'an and the Hadith incite men to treat well their wives and vice-versa...

Mi Rkia: They both teach women to put on the veil in order not to tempt other men...

Khadija: I put on the veil to preserve my honour, and not to tempt other men...

Mi Rkia: God help the men of these days! With all the sexiest girls on the streets...

Bouchra: Do you think it will veil your husband from remarrying, or divorcing you? Where is the ideal Muslim? Human selfishness blinds the most religious!

Khadija (alarmed): You're right! L'habit ne fait pas le moine! They're saints outside, and devils inside...

Mi Rkia: They preach sex equality, and advocate polygamy...

A woman is heard calling from inside the hammam.

A woman: Mi Rkia! Mi Rkia, where are you?

Mi Rkia: I'm here. What's the matter?
The woman: There is no hot water, please come and see what is to be done.

Mi Rkia: Please, Lalla Khadija keep an eye on the door, and on my tajine. *(she enters the interior of the bath nagging):* Whenever there is a problem, they call Mi Rkia...

Salma appears giggling with her friend, a fashion magazine in her hand, and a bag on her shoulder. They say "Hi", and sit on a bench looking a photo on the magazine.

Salma *(admiringly)*: Wow! What a sculpted body! I bet she doesn't eat! Why are Top Models so slim and glamorous, Sanae?

Sanae *(whistling)*: Why? They invest in their bodies...

Salma: Our bodies translate our identities *(pause).* They reflect our souls...

Sanae *(teasing her)*: Woman is her body/

Salma *(shaking her head)*: Her mind as well. Women are thinkers. Philosophers. Writers. Nobel prize winners. Politicians. Playwrights. Poets...

Sanae *(walking as a top model)*: Top Models. Miss World/

Salma *(interrupts her with a strong will)*: I'll make you change your mind. I'll have the highest diploma. I'll be a decision-maker, an important public figure.

Sanae: Let me tell you. You know my brother Said, don't you? He's got a Ph.D in science. He's still asking my parents for his pocket money. Jobless. No employment/


Sanae: I'll take care of my skin, and beauty. I'll be a famous Top Model, rich, and glamorous; a star. I refuse to suffer like my brother...
Mi Rkia *(all sweat, coming back from the interior of the bath, she addresses the girls)*: If I were you, I would study night and day not to have such a miserable life...

Salma: We should be creative, and create new jobs. Not rely on the public, or the gov...

Sanae: I've heard many thinkers saying so. Nothing comes of nothing/

Salma: Rely on our minds. Imagination. Creation. New jobs. We mustn't just sit, complain, and lament/

Sanae *(posing as a model)*: That's right. I'll rely on my body. Beauty. Aerobics. Cosmetics...

*As she is parading like a top model, a man shows up behind her, and touches her back, and all her body. Sanae jumps towards Salma, and hugs her. Startled. They couldn't believe their eyes. They shout, and laugh at the same time: "A man enters women's hammam". Khadija and Bouchra hurry to dress themselves. Not finding a scarf, Khadija puts on a pull-over to hide her hair. Confused. Mi Rkia, shocked, goes towards him like a tigress with a wooden spoon in her hand. A chaotic atmosphere.*

Mi Rkia *(furiously pushing him outside)*: Are you mad? Go out, or I'll call the police?

*The man is so confused and lost that instead of turning back to the front door, he goes towards Sanae. As he starts touching her head, her shoulder, her hips... All the women scream, shout, and beat him.*

The man *(puzzled)*: Where am I? Who are you? Tell me where ...

Mi Rkia *(beating him with her wooden spoon on the head)*: Where are you? A son of a b... You're in a women's hammam..

The man *(begging)*: Ay! Ayyyy! Don't beat me. I swear. I don't know it's a women's hammam.
Mi Rkia (still beating him): How comes? Are you blind? Don't you see the big notice outside?

The man: I don't/

All women together: Don't you read that it's a women's hammam from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.?

The man (pathetically): It isn't my fault/

Mi Rkia (furiously): Whose fault is it? Mine, perhaps/

The man: The children outside told me this is a man's hammam. (He almost falls into tears) They laughed at a blind man...

All women stop shouting at once. Gasp out: A blind man! (Mi Rkia takes his hand): Meskine! Poor man! Let me help you. Leads him to the front door. The voice of children is heard laughing at him. He, in his turn, is cursing them...

Khadija (laughing, takes the pull-over from her head): We can't get rid of them. They invade even our harem.

Mi Rkia (coming back): Oh! The children of these days!

Khadija (turns to Salma): Undress quickly, and go inside to find us a suitable place. Take the buckets with you, and fill them. I'm coming. Hey! Don't forget to clean the floor well!

Salma: O.K., Mom. Men had been here before us! Blablabla! I know the usual refrain...

Sanae: Let's go Salma, and finish our discussion inside. (They take off all but their undergarments. Leave their belongings and magazine with Mi Rkia. They go inside).

Khadija: Don't worry Mi Rkia! I'll pay their fee. (She takes off all her clothes. Wrapped in a towel, she prepares to gather her belongings to give them to Mi Rkia, when Bouchra invites her to share some orange juice).

Bouchra: This is the phase of the hammam that I enjoy most. Sipping my glass of orange juice. My body is pure, my soul as well. I enjoy every minute in this room! Forget everything: home, children, and work...
Khadija: It's our café house, our female space: an excuse to escape away from the daily routine...

Bouchra: I enjoy everything here; our scrubbing, and rubbing each other...

Mi Rkia: The massage of the *tayaba* (a woman who makes massage to women in the hammam, and fill their buckets with hot and cold water)...

Khadija: Meeting friends. Speaking...

Bouchra: No censorship. All subjects...

Mi Rkia: Time and space are women's...

*A knock at the main door of the hammam is heard.*

Mi Rkia: Hang on! Hang on! *(She goes to the front door. Comes back)* Lalla Bouchra. It's your husband. He couldn't wait till the house to see the effects of the hammam on you. *(They look at each other. Laugh).*

Bouchra *(finishing her juice, stands up)*: Leisure time's up. Reality. See you next Thursday. Are all the sisters informed of our meeting? *(she puts on a dark-coloured djellaba, a hood on her head, a black veil on her face, black gloves, black socks. Rushes to the front door).* Assalamou alaikoum. Mi Rkia, see you next week.

Khadija: Thursday! It's tomorrow! Of course. All of them. Try to come early! Assaloumou alaikoum.

Mi Rkia *(aside)*: They change their skins as chameleons! Funny world! Difficult to know who is who!

Salma *(is heard shouting)*: Why do you take my place? Mom! Mom! She takes my place.... *(Khadija pays Mi Rkia. Gives her the bundle of her belongings, enters the interior of the bath in a hurry)* I'm coming, baby....
Khadija's house. The salon is well furnished with Moroccan banquets, a carpet, and a big canvas on the wall. The Moroccan traditional music, El Alla, sets the atmosphere of celebration. Now and then Khadija crosses the stage. Her maid and Salma do the same. They are busy preparing for the Thursday gathering. Today, it's Khadija's turn. It's three o'clock.

Khadija: I think, it's nearly time now. (Salma is giving the final touch to the "Salon", Khadija looks at her watch, and tells Salma) Fill the kettle with water for tea, and tell mummy to get ready...

Salma: Yes, Mom. Everything is ready! But mummy won't join us. She prefers to have her usual siesta...

Khadija: I noticed at lunch time that she was a little bit dizzy. She refused to admit it...

Salma: Don't worry, Mom. She is alright...

Khadija (anxiously): I hope so/

The door bell rings. Salma opens the door, and greets the first guest.

Khadija (greeting): Welcome, Welcome. (laughing at the sight of the veiled woman) Take off your mask, or speak that I can guess who you are!

The veiled woman (laughing): I like this very much...

Khadija: A quizz. Anonymity!

The veiled woman: Freedom! Invisibility on the streets. No one can harass me. No one knows whether I'm old, young, ugly, beautiful...


Bouchra (with pride): I'm anonymous to those who never meet me in the harem...
Khadija: You mean in our women's spaces...

Bouchra (Taking off her veil): When they see me, they can't help gasping out. They say that the difference is staggering...

Khadija (witnessing the difference): Wow! A metamorphosis!

Bouchra: I don't understand their reaction. I feel like myself everywhere I go; outside or inside!

Khadija: I can understand. Do you enjoy teasing people with your veil?

Bouchra: I enjoy it, I must admit, but I wear the veil out of religious faith as we do all...

The door bell rings. A woman's voice is heard. Salma opens the door, and Khadija goes to greet her. Bouchra finishes her make up, combs her hair, and puts a French perfume. She looks very beautiful.

Amal (appears): Assalam Alaikoum.

Bouchra: Alaikoum assalam wa rahmato allah wa barakateh. (They kiss each other).


Amal emerges from under her djellaba. She looks very sexy in her traditional silk qaftan. She takes a mirror from her handbag, combs her hair, and makes-up. She looks like a different woman.

Bouchra (admiringly): Wow! Bssahha! Your qaftan is very nice.

Amal: Allah ya'tik essahha! Thank you very much. This is the fashion this year.

Khadija: Bssahha! It's very nice, indeed. It must be very expensive...

Amal: About two thousand and five hundred dirhams, for the fabric and needlework.

Bouchra: Wow! But it's worth it! It looks gorgeous on you!
Amal: Thank you very much.

Khadija: I can't imagine a Moroccan social gathering, be it a wedding ceremony, a party without women wearing qaftans.

Amal: They set up the celebrating atmosphere...

Bouchra: They add beauty and colour to the celebration.....

At this time the door bell rings. Salma opens the door. A woman's voice is heard in greeting: Assalamou Alaikoum.

Khadija: Welcome! Welcome! Aziza. It's your day...

All the women trilling away: Yo yo yooooooooo! It's a great day! Who could believe that?

Khadija (helping her to take off her djellaba): Who could imagine that the Westernized gym trainer would put on the veil one day?

Aziza: Allah hadani (God has blessed me with his guidance). There're still people who can't believe it...

Bouchra: It's hard to believe in such a radical change...

Amal: From the latest Western fashion to the veil...

Aziza (recalling): It's a miracle!

Khadija: How did it happen?

Aziza: It's fate, destiny perhaps. One day a veiled woman who often comes to the Gym to exercise -You know her; Faiza! (all women nod)- invited me to her house. I went wearing my usual clothes; tight jeans, and a top (God forgive me). To my surprise, all the guests were veiled, the Qur'a'n was cited. It was such a solemn atmosphere that I felt it was a mourning not a party...

Bouchra: It's al jalsa (a religious gathering) where the Qur'a'n is cited and explained to the audience...

Aziza: I'll never forget the embarrassment I felt that day. I felt alien to them; not a Muslim. Faiza introduced me to the group. They welcomed me, and she started her lesson. It was her turn...
Amal: The subject was veiling, I guess...

Aziza: The theme of these congregations varies from day to day. From *Fiqh*, *Tajwid* (rules of recitation of the Holy Qur'an) to *Tafsir* (interpretations of the Qu'ran). She was pretty rhetorical, very persuasive...

Salma: She casted her spell on you...

Aziza: I felt naked in that context. From that day...

Khadija: The new thing in these religious gatherings is that some of these veiled women are scholars, and they are challenging the ulama's (male Islamic scholars) hegemonic power over...

Bouchra: Over women/

Khadija *interrupts her*: Over the interpretations of the Qur'an and the Islamic teachings...

Aziza: Do you really think so? I think that they are still under their grip...

Amal: Step by step, they will succeed....

*Khadija: Allah ya hdina* (God guides us to the right path) *(she gives Aziza a present)* This is a scarf. A present that we usually offer to the recent veiled...

*All women trilling away*: Welcome to the group. Yo. Yo yoooooo! They cite surat "el Fatiha" (the opening) together:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.  
All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of mankind, and all that exists.  
The Only Owner of the Day of Recompense.  
You Alone we worship, and You Alone we ask for help.  
Guide us to the Straight Way.  
The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not the way of those who earned Your Anger, nor those who went astray.  
Amen.

*At this time, the door bell rings. A veiled woman appears. Salma opens the door, and Khadija stands up to greet her.*

Khadija: Welcome. Welcome Aicha. I haven' seen you for ages. How are you? And the children? Salma, go and bring us the biscuits and tea.
Salma: Faster than sound, Mom.

Aicha (low voice): Assalamou Alaikoum. Nice to see you all here...

Bouchra: We've missed you. It's been a long time....

Aicha (taking off her djellaba with difficulty): I missed you too...

Khadija: May I help you? You seem so weak!

All the women (gasp out simultaneously): Oh, God! What happened to your face? An accident? Are you alright?

Aicha (trying to calm them): It's nothing. Don't worry!

All women: Tell us what happened! (Aicha bursts out crying).

Blackout. Lights rise on Aicha's husband, Salah, who is coming from outside. The same Thursday. It's 12.25 a.m.

Salah (whistling, playing with his keys): Hey! I'm back. Where are you, darling, and where are the children?

Aicha (from the kitchen): I'm in the kitchen. Coming from work, I left the children with Mom. Come and help me to set the table for lunch...

Salah (zapping the T.V remote control): I want to watch the 12.30 news, babe. (he continues zapping) Why did you send the kids to your Mom?

Aicha (appears with an apron on, an ognion and a knife in her hands): Come and help me. I should go to the hair-dresser before she closes. I have an appointment this afternoon. Who will take care of them?

Salah: I'll watch the news. Don't you hear? It's not my duty to prepare food.

Aicha: I'm not your maid either. (she takes off the apron, and puts the ognion and the knife on his lap) We work outside together, we should work inside together as well (she stands between him and the T.V.).

Salah (changes his tone): The same tune again. It's your role as a woman, as my wife. Why have I married you?
Aicha (ironically): To be your slave! I refuse this role!

Salah (stands up): Who are you to refuse? Bring me food, I'm very hungry, or I'll be another man!

Aicha: I'm frightened! (she sits and starts watching T.V.) I want to watch the news as well!

Salah (shakes her energetically, and makes her stand up): Do you think that because you work outside, you are educated, and you have a salary; that we're equal? You must obey me, satisfy my desires, or...

Aicha (enraged): Or what? Divorce?

Salah (furious): It's your duty to serve your husband. My duty is to punish you if your refuse.

Aicha: I refuse. Punish me, if you dare! (A violent sound. He slaps her face. Aicha is crying bitterly. He takes his keys, and leaves the house).

Lights rise. Full stage.

Khadija: It's your husband! I couldn't believe it!

Aziza: Is he mad? You're silent! Incredible!

Bouchra: No to violence...

Amal: Why? Because you ask him for help!

Aicha (still crying) None sense. It's the usual story; the food isn't ready...

Khadija: Hungry. Loss of temper!

Bouchra: Are we their maids?

Amal: How could I live without my maid. I'm lost without her. I have no family here...

Aicha: If I hadn't the children, I would go back to my parents' home...

Khadija: Working outside, cooking, and bringing up the children....Not enough...
Aicha: God forgives us all. I forgive...

Bouchra: What to do? Divorce! With three children!

Aziza: Not to be submissive....

Aicha (hopeless): Destroy the family?

Amal: Educated to obey, to say yes, to cook, to sacrifice. It's education to be b....

At this time Salma enters, very cheerful as usual, with two plates on her hands.

Salma: Hey, everybody! It's like a wake (mourning gathering) here! Here are some biscuits and nice mint tea. Cheer up! Switch on the television. Shikhat are on. (she puts the plates on the table, and switches on the T.V.)

Khadija: Let's change the subject. Look at them! Cheerful! Enjoying their lives!

Shikhat (a group of women singing Moroccan folk music) on the screen, singing and dancing.

Aziza (thoughtfully): I think they're trying to forget all their wretchedness in singing and dancing...

Salma: I can't imagine that they're miserable: these dancers...

Bouchra: They're paid to cheer up people...

Amal: Like clowns, they weep inside...

Aziza: They hide behind their music, and their belly dancing...

Khadija: Anyway, men can be manipulated when they're under their spell...

Aicha: By their swinging of the hips, and twisting of the body...La dounia, la a'khira (they're marginalized in their life, and in their death).

Salma: Come on! Forget about misery. Let's dance with them, and enjoy ourselves!
All the women dance and sing with the Shikhat, except for Aicha.

Aicha (trying to join the group clapping her hands): I don't know. I'm learning from you. You dance better than the Shikhat?

Khadija: Look at Aziza. Isn't she a good dancer? Cheer up! (to Aicha) Come and dance with us!

Aicha joins them, and starts dancing histerically. She is in a trance.

Salma: Exorcise all your body's demons! Ahaaaaaaaaaaaah.

Aziza. Dancing is good for the soul and the body.

All the women sit down except for Aicha. Khadija brings some orange water, and lights some sticks of "El oud" (incense). She starts to perfume Aicha when the Muanadin's (the man in the mosque who summons the Muslims to pray) voice is heard. Allahou Akbar (God is great)...

Bouchra: Allahou A kbar. You're lucky to live near a mosque...

Amal (wiping out her make-up): Let's make our ablution...

Aziza (doing the same): Where is the bathroom?

Khadija: One at a time.

Aicha (herself again): Thank God we've these places for ourselves, otherwise our lives would be hell. Let's offer our sallat (our prayer). It's time.

All women together (put on their scarves, ready for prayer): Allahou Akbar.

Salma (puts her walkman): When Angels are present, Devils should leave.

While the women are praying inside, it is growing dark outside.

The End

11th December, 2000.
Fez, Morocco.
The Female Gaze: A background Questionnaire

Every time I asked Moroccan theatre critics, who are all men, or theatre practitioners, about the cause behind the absence of women playwrights in Morocco, I am faced with this answer: “There are not male playwrights, let alone female ones!” I have been made to feel ludicrous to ask such a question. As if it has been for granted that men should be the leaders, and women their subordinates in all fields, even in the literary one. I am made to learn the hard truth that theatre is still considered as not a serious academic subject (this is changing, especially with the coming of the new Minister of the Cultural Affairs, Mr El Ashari). Both the theatre critics and theatre makers are still speaking about Moroccan theatre and the tragedy of beginning, the crisis of the theatrical text in Moroccan theatre, the reliance of Moroccan theatre on the adaptation of foreign texts, and the lack of the theatre spaces (except in Rabat and Casablanca, they are almost non-existent in the other Moroccan cities).

Instead of discouraging me, these comments have flamed the fire of my curiosity and urged me to stop at these gaps and silences, which are informative in and of themselves, and try to fill them up. Why are Moroccan women still alien to this “écriture”, playwriting?

In this section, I seek to evaluate the postulation of using theatre as a metaphorical veil by women playwrights to speak their own voices and write their own bodies. Using theatre as a mask, a pretence, may open up new horizons for Moroccan women in the theatre, a patriarchal space, and encourage them to ‘playwrite’ their bodies, and to make their voices heard. The aim of this section is to assess the extent to which theory can imbricate
practice to dismantle social and cultural taboos? It is for this reason also that I improvised *The Harem* that I wish you have enjoyed.

![Figure 33. Can you guess who is behind the mask?](image)

Figure 33. Can you guess who is behind the mask?
In most Moroccan academic institutions—as hinted at in the analysis of Lear’s Daughters—drama has been taught as a branch of literary studies, as dramatic literature, and, hence, as a divorced from the theatrical process. Such approaches which do not significantly differ from the ways in which students are called upon to read a poem, or a work of prose fiction. To break the ice, I have introduced students to performance plays. By performing Shakespearean, and other British and American texts, they become eager to play a Moroccan text. Faced with the lack of a live record to support my ideas about the ‘public’ spaces, and to imbricate theory with practice, to see whether I can hide behind the mask, theatre, to strip the veil off these spaces, I indulged in the experience of playwriting. The result was The Harem (2000) play-text. To test whether the experience was a success or a failure, let us analyse the results of the questionnaire devised for this purpose.

-Data Analysis of the questionnaire

One hundred copies of the questionnaire (Appendix 4) were distributed to female spectators of different ages, educational and social backgrounds, at the gate of the theatre space. The return rate was 50% with 50 questionnaires completed and returned out the 100 distributed. At the beginning, a paragraph was introduced to inform the respondents about the aim of the questionnaire. The type of questions used were varied: close questions, forced-choice questions, filter questions, multiple choice questions, and an open ended question. As far as the contents of the questionnaire are conceived, the first question was meant to elicit some background information about the age of the respondents. Then, focus is shifted to their reception of the play. Finally, the
last and most important part of the questionnaire dealt with theatre as a
metagoric veil to unveil women's 'pri-blic' spaces.

A majority of the respondents (60%) are aged between 20 and 25, 20%
are aged between 25 and 30, whereas the group aged over 30 constitutes 10%.
The findings are somehow consistent with the age of the students which is
between 20 and 25, with the age of the administration personnel which is
between 25 and 30, and with the academic staff which is over 30.

As concerns the choice of Al Akhawayne University theatre –which is
sixty kilometres far from Fez- it is initially chosen to find a stage for the
performance of these 'pri-blic' spaces, which are still-considered taboos. To
venture unveiling veiled women's-only-spaces in Fez university theatre would
have been suicidal both to the performance of the play, and to the performers,
since the university is under the fundamentalist' lead –as mentioned in the
second part, chapter 2 of this thesis. Al Akhawayne University, as a private
institution, provides me with a stage first, and with a context which is different
ideologically from the Fez University one. My aim is first to have another kind
of audience which is more 'objective' and 'flexible' than the majority of Fez
university audience, who tends to be more 'ideologically rigid' as I depicted in
part two, chapter two of this dissertation. Finally, since my play is written and
performed in English, and is mainly geared toward the English speaking
students and staff, Al Akhawayne University (is an English speaking
institution) provides me with the ideal audience.

The choice of only female respondents (a quite important number of
male spectators were present and seemed to enjoy the play) is not based on a
sexist behaviour, but to have a male imaginary was not required for the
purpose of the thesis. The aim is to see the female spectators not only as a theatrical sign, or as a subject, but as a real presence on the stage; a real spectator into the performance frame. By writing this play, I engaged in the theatrical project of making the sign female to realise the pleasure and the desire of the female spectator. In contrast to *Lear's Daughter*'s performance, previously discussed, the presentation of Moroccan women's-only-spaces required real female spectators. Elaine Aston argues that:

The real female spectator does not have to enter the theatrical frame in 'male drag'; she is not coerced into producing woman as object, but is pleased by the co-authoring of women as subject. To understand how feminism revisions theatrical communication, it is useful to examine the roles of the model and the real spectator in the context of feminist performance (p:6).

This is the purpose behind the question: Do you identify with the women in the play? To which 84.6% of the respondents answered "yes". This explains also the high percentage, 80%, of the respondents’ answer to this question: What do you think of the settings of the play?" as realistic, and 5% as very realistic.

-The Reception of the play

The purpose behind this question, "could theatre be a metaphoric veil that unveils all women’s taboos?" aims at testing the extent to which theatre can be used as a metaphoric veil by women playwrights. Two categories emerged from the analysis of the question, 33% of the respondents believe in the changing power of theatre, if it is practised professionally, whereas the majority group (77%) are suspicious of this facet of theatre because they have connected it to the fact that: “it is hard to change things, especially in a society which clings to its traditions and conventions as Moroccan society". They gave
the example of the male audience reaction whenever the female performers take off clothes on the stage.

Though, the majority of the respondents remain suspicious as to the use of theatre as a metaphoric veil to change the people’s vision of the world, they are eager to see Moroccan women plays invading the patriarchal space, theatre. This, explains the high percentage (90%) of the respondents who add that they hope to see more of these plays because, they are convinced, that these plays would open up different and new perspectives to the Moroccan theatre.

The general reception of the play shows that there is an affinity between the performance and the audience— as you can witness from the video performance- and from the additional comments to the last open question. Expressions such as “Fun over” have been reiterated.

Including laughter as one of the major techniques in the play is a conscious act that is dictated by the women and their ‘pri-plic’ spaces. It comes also from my first conviction that the general belief, ‘female humourlessness is a myth’, is not true. Women have a deep sense of humour, which has been oppressed, or made invisible. My second conviction is that many messages can be transmitted via laughter. Drama can be both didactic and entertaining.

When traditional performance elements such as music, clothes, and body language are incorporated into a contemporary play, they affect the play’s content, structure, and style, and, consequently, its general effect on the performers, and on the audience. Mingling traditional enactments (story-telling) with Western dramatic practices, fosters a drama which moves beyond its origins while not undermining them. It is a new empowering veil. Edovard Glissant (1989) has a similar conclusion when analysing the Caribbean drama:
The Folkloric background is represented, reflected on, given a cultural thrust, also raised to the level of consciousness, it emerges as a new form of self critical culture (p: 198).

As the real veil has its own rules that protect the veiled bodies’ privacy, that defies any intrusion, even the eye of the camera, the metaphoric veil provides the women playwrights with the alternative to unveil the hidden, the invisible, and the forbidden. It affords both playwrights and performers the excuse that ‘this is not reality, it is just theatre’. Alan Read’s (1993) words bring us nearer to this meaning:

Theatre, by definition, is not this daily domain but an extra-daily dimension, beyond the everyday but ironically dependent on the everyday realm [...] To understand everyday life not just as a lived experience, that is, talking, walking, dwelling, cooking, and reading, but as a critical concept which derives from these quotidian practices, provides a perspective from which to understand theatre. Everyday life is after all the habitual world which would appear to differ most greatly from theatre. And yet it provides the context in all cultures from which theatre arises and distinguishes itself (p ix).

Conclusion

With performers who have never experienced going to theatre because there is no theatre space in their hometown, Fez, I undertake to imbricate practice with theory, to try to prove that one can trespass boundaries, and strip off even the thickest veils. However, one can conclude that the female spectator does not stand for the ideal spectator to women’s theatre. There are some female spectators who could oppose women’s theatre, and see it as alien to them. This was confirmed by 15% of the respondents who frenetically wrote that they did not identify at all with these women on the stage. The same idea has been tackled by Elaine Aston (1996):
It would be wrong to claim that all feminist theatre brings the real spectator into the performance frame in this way, which is clearly not the case, nor that this is a phenomenon restricted only to feminist theatre. [...] The feminist spectator cannot be squeezed into the frame: rather, she exceeds, troubles and disturbs it (p: 63).

In fact, even if the percentage of the respondents (15%) that claimed their resistance to the performance is not very important, it highlights the impact of the patriarchal system values on them. Furthermore, the male's reaction - whistles, and noisy sounds- whenever the female performers take off clothes on the stage sheds some light on the fact that even among 'modern' men, women's body is still considered as a taboo that should be kept hidden. Does theatre succeed in being a metaphoric veil?

Judging by the applause at the end of the performance, the audience participation in the songs with the performers, and the encouraging comments in the questionnaires, I can presume that it was an achievement, especially for the first performance of a woman play in that theatre space, and I join Peter Brook's (1968) analysis to the meaning of the audience participation:

Participation occurs when there is an emotional, spiritual, and cognitive relationship which is not necessarily overtly expressed: the audience that answers back may seem active, but this may be quite superficial, true activity can be invisible, but also indivisible (p: 44).
CONCLUSION

This thesis is an attempt to re-read the concept of the veil in relation to the women’s visibility and invisibility in the public sphere, the literary canon, and theatre. Imbricating theory with practice, this thesis has endeavoured to analyse the veil both in its real and its metaphoric meanings. As the contents of the thesis show, the real veil, the Muslim veil, is not one, but plural as each woman has her own veil which could be different in colours, forms, and fabrics, depending on the class, race, and the geographical space this veiled woman is living in. As to the metaphoric veil, it has been depicted as a feminist literary discourse, Cixous’ "écriture féminine", women’s theatre as British women’s ‘herstories’, or oral performances in ‘pri-blic’ spaces as in Moroccan oral culture.

Although, these two aspects of the veil are different, they intersect in many ways. Both the real and the metaphoric veils are sites of resistance that women have devised to hide behind in order to be visible in the public sphere; either on the street, in the canon, on the stage or in the everyday life performances. Both the real and metaphoric veils are as fluid and complex in meanings and performances as women. Each woman has her own veil as each woman undergoes a different oppression that muffles her voice and shackles her body. Julia Kristeva cautions against the political effects of taking “women as too generalized a category, since race, class, and national origin may account for more differences than would gender.” Indeed, ambivalence and resistance to definition have characterised both the definition of the terms.
'veil' and 'woman'. I, nevertheless, hope that at least I have proposed some ideas which are worth developing in future papers.

This thesis aims at introducing the metaphoric veil that can open up new horizons for Moroccan women to write in general, and to write plays in particular. I also hope that this thesis encourages more Moroccan researchers—especially women—to delve into feminist theatre criticism, and women's theatre. As far as I know, these two genres are still male-centred in the mapping of Moroccan cultural landscape. There is no notorious Moroccan woman playwright (apart from the two shy presences of Fatima Chebchoub and Naima Ben Zidane who have written a play each), and no woman theatre theorist in Morocco.

As seen in the third part, the reasons of this absence are various, and ambiguous, but the main reason that this thesis has tried to emphasise is the absence of Moroccan women from the stage as theatre makers and performers. It is this reality that has urged women to create their theatre spaces, the 'private' spaces such as the hammam, the fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon. Here, the everyday theatre has outweighed the theatre, and shows Moroccan women's daily performances as more versatile than their theatrical ones. As Jeanie Forte states:

All women's performances are derived from the relationship of women to the dominant system of representation, situating them with a feminist critique. Their disruption of the dominant system constitutes a subversive and radical strategy of intervention vis à vis patriarchal culture.  

This dissertation has attempted to depict Moroccan women traditional actants such as shikhat, neggafat, and hannayat, and Moroccan women professional performers since the beginning of modern theatre in Morocco. It
has also endeavoured to depict women’s-only-spaces in *The Harem* as real not as idealised or sensualized by orientalist descriptions and writing. On the opposite, it has endeavoured to give a realistic image of spaces which are very rich and indicative of everyday theatre. Moroccan women’s ‘pri-blic’ spaces are marginalized not because they are sensual women’s spaces, but because they allow complete freedom, which is very important to any creation. Unlike theatre that has to take into consideration the politics of the *polis*, women’s oral performances in the ‘pri-blic’ spaces are free from any censorship. Alan Read clarifies the relationship between politics and theatre in the following words:

Politics are already imbued in these positions because theatre and its thought are possible only within a *polis*, different cultures have different politics that give rise to different theatres with more or less freedom, and theatre’s relevance and innovation are contingent upon such variable perspectives.³

Quite a few social, cultural, and political changes confirm my argument that the veil, as the women’s bodies, are sites of resistance against oppression, and violence. Images from Palestine, Algeria, Macedonia and, lately, Aghranistan give live pictures of the fluidity of the veil, and the female bodies that wear it. As far as the metaphoric veil is concerned, numerous are the debates on the development of Moroccan theatre, the ways to help women be more visible on the stage as performers, playwrights, and directors, and to make them more respected in the public sphere, especially, in theatre. Glimpses of hope are blowing in the Moroccan theatre arena, as younger women, students of the High Institute of Theatre, are getting motivated to intrude this space with fresh, new hopes and ideas for the future of Moroccan women’s
theatre. Let us be optimistic and share with them the view that the future generations will be luckier to play with the metaphoric veil in their favour.

New places are now open to women, especially younger generations, such as the cyberspace. Unlike the café, which remains a male-dominated space, the cyber-café is opening new horizons to women where they cannot only chat, send e-mails, but also broaden their knowledge, and free themselves from the domestic space. It is everyday life which will affect theatre as Victor Turner (1982) states in his book, *From Ritual to Theatre*, as follows:

When we act in everyday life we do not merely re-act to indicative stimuli, we act in frames we have wrested from the genres of cultural performance. And when we act on the stage, whatever our stage may be, we must now in this reflexive age of psychoanalysis and semiotics as never before, bring into the symbolic or fictitious world the urgent problems of our reality. We have to go into the subjunctive world of monsters, demons, and clowns, of cruelty and poetry, in order to make sense of our daily lives, earning our daily bread. And when we enter whatever theatre our lives allow us, we have already learned how strange and many-layered everyday life is, how extraordinary the ordinary.4
NOTES

Introduction


3. The term orientalist, here, is used in Edward Said's (1978) sense of Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and 'the occident'" (p:2), and as he adds that:

   Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text—all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf (p: 20).

4. By 'pri-blic' spaces, I mean these women's-only-spaces in Moroccan society where they perform their bodies in the physical absence of men such as the hammam, the fitness gym, and the Moroccan salon. These places are ambivalently situated between the public sphere and the private sphere.

5. See the first part of the thesis for an explanation.


PART I. To Each Her Own veil

1. In this part, I will be using the terms “the real veil”, “the Muslim veil”, or “hijab” as synonyms. For the definition of “the hijab” see page 19, and of the veil see page 4.

2. In Western philosophical and political traditions the public realm of the polis, state, city, or republic becomes the site where people consent to or contest the laws, contracts, covenants, or principles of community that govern personal and social conduct. For Aristotle, man is "by nature an animal intended to live in a polis" (Baker, 1962: 4). The private realm, defined by the hearth and home remains the loci of family, comfort, and individual identity. The family as the primary and immediate unit of society forms the training ground for conduct, nature, and morality. The public realm of the polis and the spiritual realm of the family come with particular inhabitants. While the public realm has been the domain of the Western male subject, the private realm belongs to the wife, daughter, mother, sister who are responsible for the passing down of traditions (such as honouring the dead), maintaining the sacred flame of the domestic altar, and the healthy upbringing of children. Men also functioned as fathers, sons, husbands, and brothers within the family but did not take these roles with them into public life where history, community, and state demanded mutual recognition and progress toward rational and universal goals.

3. The term 'performance' includes in its meanings the idea of offering up the body/ the self to public consumption, and of being assessed on the adequacy of the performance. It also puts a question-mark over the 'authenticity' of what is being offered. 'Performance' is conventionally something constructed, something with a gap between what we see and what we think might be its invisible origin. However, the theorising of performance in post-structuralist analysis calls into question such a boundary between 'staged' performances as a separate sphere and everyday enactment or performance of self, and in so doing, problematises authenticity, identity and origins. This collapsing of definitions that divides performance spaces from the everyday events has informed much contemporary praxis in the arts. For a deeper analysis of performance see Barbara Brook, Feminist Perspectives on The Body, (1999:113).

4. The best example of this division in the Moroccan female body is the two demonstrations of Moroccan women on the occasion of the eighth of March 2000: 1
have never imagined before that day that the Moroccan female body has been divided into two: the veiled bodies that advocated equality with their brothers according to Islamic precepts in Casablanca, and the unveiled bodies, that manifested their strong refusal to subordination and violence in Rabat. The main question that has imposed itself on me since that day is who is behind this division? Does not it remind us of the saying that says: "divide and rule"?

5. A deep phrasing of the Muslim sexual boundaries is given by Fatima Mernissi (1987):

Muslim sexuality is territorial: its regulatory mechanisms consist primarily in a strict allocation of space to each sex and an elaborate ritual for resolving the contradictions arising from the inevitable intersections of spaces. Apart from the ritualised trespasses of women into public spaces (which are by definition, male spaces), there are no accepted patterns for interactions between unrelated men and women. Such interactions violate the spatial rules that are the pillars of the Muslim sexual order. Only that which is licit is formally regulated (p:137).

6. This term will be dealt with in more details in the third part of the thesis; yet a brief explanation is required here. Generally, harem means both the house and the women who are living in it. An insightful definition is given by Fatima Mernissi (1994):

The word harem, according to her, was a slight variation of the word haram, the forbidden, the proscribed. It was the opposite of halal, the permissible. Harem was the place where a man sheltered his family, his wife or wives, and children and relatives. It could be a house or a tent, and it referred both to the space and to the people who lived within it. One said "Sidi So-and-So's harem," referring both to his family members and to his physical home. One thing that helped me see this more clearly was when Yasmina explained that Mecca, the holy city, was also called Haram. Mecca was a space where behaviour was strictly codified. The moment you stepped inside, you were bound by many laws and regulations. The same thing applied to a harem when it was a house belonging to a man. No other men could enter it without the owner's permission, and when they did, they had to obey his rules (p:61).

7. See Appendix 1.

9. Islam has two sources for guidance and rulings: first, the Qur’an, the revealed word of Allah and secondly, the Hadith or the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (S) who was chosen by Allah to be the role model for mankind. The practice of hijab among Muslim women is one based on religious doctrine, although the Qur’an does not mandate it. Instead, it comes from the Hadith of Sahih El Bukhari. The Hadith, the "tradition of Mohammed," reveals the teachings of the Prophet to believers. Bukhari's version of this text is generally regarded as the standard one, although numerous versions exist. In a very broad sense, the relation the Hadith has to the Qur’an resembles the New Testament to the Old in Christian Scriptures.

10. It is a plan proposed by Mr Said Saadi, the ex-Moroccan State Secretary of Social Protection of the Family and Children, in March 1999. It includes 215 steps to promote the role of woman in Moroccan society.

11. I think that the semiotics of both cities cannot be ignored. Casablanca is the most modern city in Morocco, as it was the cradle of Moroccan resistance against the French colonisation, and Rabat is the capital of Morocco, as it is the main local of the government, the parliament, the palace, and all the decision-making administrations.

12. To subvert the typically male's reading of the Islamic history and the past of Muslim women is a very thorny road to follow. Fatima Mernissi (1991) sums up this idea when she states:

   Delving into memory, slipping into the past, is an activity that these days is closely supervised, especially for Muslim women. A passport for such a journey is not always a right. The act of recollecting, like acts of black magic, really only has an effect on the present (p:9).

The question that teases any woman who wants to follow this road is: what is in this history that justifies Muslim men's supremacy over Muslim women, give them the right to be the dominant and decision-makers, exclude women from the public space, relegate them to the private one and, thus, reduce them to veiled bodies? Currently, most people in positions of power and respect are male. If we rhetorically ask man to imagine that his lawyer, doctor, minister, representative, mayor, president of his institution, most of its trustees, most of the deans, almost all of the writers, artists, dramatists, and most of his colleagues were all women; how would he feel? Men are in control of official decision making; they clearly dominate all facets of public life in Morocco. Not only are these positions held by men, but the media propagate stereotypes of women. A Moroccan woman is always described in our commercials, for instance, sweeping the floor, cleaning the dishes, washing the clothes, or talking nonsense. Whether or not people realise this, many of their expectations of men and women are based on what they have observed and by what messages their culture presents.

As a reader of this paper, one may feel that there is a great affinity between
Fatima Mernissi's ideas and mine, and that explains my repetitive citations of her. In trying to find the reasons of this closeness, I was surprised to hear from my father that she was born in the same district that I was born, and lived in a similar house in Fes, thus we had breathed the same air, and walked the same narrow streets of the medina, except that she had been in this world before me. So it's no wonder that she teaches me now via her books what I have always heard from my mother, aunt, and grand-mother but did not experience personally, yet I can visualise so vividly.

13. I call 'Islamists' and not women only because when I had studied the different images transmitted on T.V or the ones I saw on newspapers, and after long discussions with my students who participated in Casablanca demonstration, I became convinced that the majority of these women -the number of the very educated and committed among them is very small- have been used if not abused by the Islamists' ideology, especially that the majority were children, old women, and illiterate. They were wronged by such questions: Do you want your daughter to get married without your consent? Do you want your daughter to have an illegal child? Playing on the right string that touches Moroccans' sense of honour and dignity (this question of honour is discussed under the heading: "the veil as an ethical dimension), women sign against this plan and join them in the streets of Casablanca to perform their opposition to the Plan. So how can this majority understand the 'Integration Plan' if we presume that they have read it at all? I had hunted for it for three months before reading it, so how could an average woman take hold of it so easily, read it thoroughly and prepare her own critique?

14. Does not this definition of the street by the fundamentalists ring a bell to a similar definition given to the theatre in its beginning in the West, as a place of all sins?


16. A brief look at the statistics given by the ex-minister of social affairs can help us visualise the situation of Moroccan women. Mr Said Sa'adi, in one of the most popular political programme of the second channel of Moroccan T.V, gives a long list of statistics that show the Moroccan woman's subordination in economic, social, political, and cultural fields. Representing 50.3%, women still represent very low statistics in the public sphere: 2% as decision makers, 23, 5% as university graduates..., for the main cause is education since 89.7% of rural women are illiterate.

17. The subordination of woman and her relegation to the private space started when Goddess Athena and God Poseidon asked the Greek citizens to choose one of them. In a very democratic atmosphere, women voted for Athena and men voted for Poseidon. As the number of women exceeded that of men, Athena won the elections. Furious, Poseidon decided to punish the Greeks by sending salty water to destroy their fertile lands and mar their crops. Thus, he took his revenge from the victory of Goddess Athena and pushed the people to support him even though it was
against their will and principles. To punish women for not voting for him, Poseidon forbade them to vote and participate in the elections. Since that time women have been relegated to the domestic sphere. This Greek mythology shows the disposition of the male and his great will to have absolute power and deprive the female from all her civic, political, social and cultural rights. It unveils the male's democratic mask and shows his real reasons: his thirst for absolute power and the speculation of the government. This Greek mythology historicises the shift of power from the female, the city, the land, the mother, the Goddess to the male, the absolute God and the transition from the motherly societies to the patriarchal ones. This mythology has engendered the general belief that supports Aristotle's definition of woman as "a muffled man". The tragedy is that this humiliating image of woman translates the perplexed affinity between the popular imaginary and the philosophical thought that has been prevailed ever since; in reality as in literature. Why has woman been excluded from the public life and reduced to a silent spectator?

18. Qassim Amin, the pioneer of the emancipation of Arab women; an Egyptian lawyer and a judge proceeded to enfranchise the Egyptian Muslim Arab woman, basing his argument on Islamic precepts at the beginning of the twentieth century. He set the trend for many others after and showed that the veil was never a true Islamic institution. The Qur'an never instituted it neither did the different Islamic schools of law prescribe it:

It is a great mistake to believe that the veil can be a safeguard of a woman's chastity? Experience has shown that unveiled women who are free to mingle with men are more chaste, unlike the veiled city women, are less inclined to cheat their husbands and develop healthier attitudes toward the other sex (1899: 40).

Thus, he categorically denounced the veil as the symbol of the slavery of women, and advocated a better education for women to be better citizens. His ardent and daring plea for the emancipation of woman was quite controversial in his day, and caused a furore in the whole Arab world.


21. Shirley Ardner (1993) clarifies the word “space” in these words:

Space is a restricted area like a club, a theatre or a nation-state has a set of rules to determine how its boundary shall be crossed and who shall occupy that space. Those who enter it will share certain defining features: they will perhaps have met specific criteria of
22. The female body becomes mutilated between working outside, especially that the working woman is under male's constant watch; she has to double her efforts to prove to him, to herself, to the whole society that she is not only body but mind as well, and working inside her home, to be the ideal wife and mother. It is a common image in the Moroccan society to see a working woman hurrying to the kitchen after a full day's work, whereas her husband is zapping for a suitable programme on television, and nagging at the slow domestic service. Working outside in such conditions becomes more slavery than independence.

23. *Mahram* is the legal term denoting a relationship by blood, milk, marriage or sexual union which makes marriage between persons so related forbidden. It is a permanent prohibition which remains unaffected by divorce or death. *Non-mahram* literally denotes any person of the opposite sex whose kinship does not represent an impediment to marriage. By extension *non-mahram* is sometimes used to denote people of the opposite sex whom the speaker does not know.

24. Not only in our bodies, this mixture of the Western with the Arabo-Islamic is embedded in all our daily life. It is so striking that in a moment of serenity we ask ourselves who we are? Are we schizophrenic? Is it a sign of richness-as we tend to say of a bilingual; two languages, and two cultures-or a torture -a constant conflict between the West and the East in one same body and mind.

25. Nawal Al Saadawy exposes her opinion of honour in the following words: "I think we are in need of understanding thoroughly what we mean by the term "honor". Who is an honorable person? If honor means, for example, truthfulness, then the truthful man becomes honorable, so will the truthful woman. The moral values imposed by society have to apply to all the members of that society irrespective of sex, colour or social class. The society that believes in chastity as a moral value has to apply this value to all its members. In the event that this is enforced on one of the sexes, or upon a specific social class, this proves chastity is not a moral value, but rather a law imposed by the ruling class.


27. Not infrequently, Arabic media carry stories structured along the following lines: "Mr X stabbed his sister or his daughter to death in the street across from the university campus or a secondary school because she had been suspected of having a love affair with her class-mate. The police are investigating the crime". A possible scenario for the crime is: the woman, a university or a secondary school student belonging to the middle or lower classes, is having a love relationship with a classmate. Somebody 'tips' her brother or her father that she is involved in sexual relationship with this man.Provoked by his sister's/daughter's public behaviour with another man, and ashamed by other people's thinking that this public
performance has in fact led to illicit sexual contact between them, he kills his sister/daughter in defence of family sexual honour. The time between the 'tip' and the actual murder is usually brief. More concerned with the reception than with the actual fact of the sister's/daughter's behaviour, the brother/father rushes to promptly protect the family honour. After trial, the brother/father is imprisoned for one year only. His extenuating circumstance is committing a 'crime of honour', sanctioned in most Arab penal codes. This is an eloquent example of the crime of honour, a paradigmatic example of which is the killing of a woman by her father or brother for engaging in, or being suspected of engaging in, sexual practices before or outside marriage.

28. Fatima Mernissi (1987) has already found an answer to the return to the veil:

If fundamentalists are calling for the return to the veil, it must be because women have been taking off the veil. We are definitely here in a situation where fundamentalist men and non-fundamentalist women who have opted to discard the veil. Class conflicts do sometimes express themselves in acute sex-focused dissent. And contemporary Islam is a good example of this, because, beyond the strong obsession with religion, the violent confrontations going on in the Muslim world are about two eminently materialistic pleasures: exercise of political power, and consumerism (p:xi).


30. See Belhassan (1979).

31. A thorough and a detailed study conducted by Hind Taarji, the Veiled of Islam (1992), where she analyses her interviews and meetings with Muslim veiled women in Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Koweit, Lebanon, Turkey, and Algeria.


37. Mai Yamani, *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary perspectives* (1997); this book brings together renowned women researchers and academic historians, political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, social anthropologists and literary critics, who examine the phenomenon of feminism within an Islamic cultural framework.


40. Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978), presents his notion of the body as the point where power relations are manifest in their most concrete forms. It is this relationship between power and body that has a great impact on Western feminists who have used it to explain how women are oppressed and controlled with certain culturally determined images of feminine sexuality.

41. Fatima Mernisi has offered us a vivid description of the Moroccan traditional house, where beauty is blended with strict *Hudud*, boundaries, in *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood*, (1994).

42. See Lila Abu-Lughod (1986).

43. In the first week of July 2001, a fundamentalist member of the Parliament attacked publicly a woman T.V journalist, Amina Akhbab, and asked her to leave the institution because she is not “properly” dressed according to him. She wore a T-Shirt and jeans.

44. One of the veiled students gave me this poem in the end of one of the hectic debates that we had concerning the "Integration Plan", and told me: "It is no my poem, but it translates really how I feel as a veiled woman":

I am a Muslim woman
by Jenn Zaghloul

I am a Muslim woman
Feel free to ask me why
When I walk,
I walk with dignity
When I speak
I do not lie
I am a Muslim woman
Not all of me you’ll see
But what you should appreciate
Is that the choice I make is free
I’m not plagued with depression
I’m neither cheated nor abused
I don’t envy other women
Note, I speak perfect English
Et un petit peu de Français aussi
I'm majoring in Linguistics
So you need not speak slowly
I run my own small business
Every cent I earn is mine
I drive my Chevy to school & work
And no, that's not a crime!
You often stare as I walk by
You don't understand my veil
But peace and power I have found
As I am equal to any male!
I am a Muslim woman
So please don't pity me
For God has guided me to truth
And now I'm finally free!

45. I recall here Joan Rivière's definition of masquerade or "womanliness" as "a mask
developed by women who desire to be masculine (to have rather than be the
phallus) but who want to deflect the opposition and resentment this will generate
from men" to speak about the veil as a blur of gender. For an extended and
informative discussion of this see Joan Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade".

46. I borrow Butler's (1993) word to stress the idea of the daily performances of
woman's body as opposed to the professional performance on the stage for
entertainment.

NOTES

PART II. This Veil Which is Not One

1. If we bear in mind the fact that the words ‘textile’ and ‘text’ have both the same root, one can assume the fact that women have never been strangers to writing because of their historical connection with textile: writing on cloth. I can presume that they started with writing on textile to reach the text, writing on paper.


5. Virginia Woolf in “Professions for Women” in *The Death of the Moth* (1942), expresses the difficulty of defining ‘woman’:

   What is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skills (p:67).

   Defining woman is so diverse, because of the difference of race, class, and culture, yet women around the world do still share some common ground despite Butler’s demand that we should view every person individually. Butler claims that since women are varied we can no longer define them as a unified group: "The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms" (Butler, 1990, p.1). Here, I prefer to speak about the general experience of all women without making any essentialist assumptions about women based on gender stereotyping.

6. Phallocentric system stems from phallocentrism which is -as Elizabeth Grosz, (1989) states:

   a form of logocentrism in which the phallus takes on the function of the logos. The term refers to the ways in which patriarchal systems of representation always submit women to
models and images defined by and for men. It is the submission of women to representations in which they are reduced to a relation of dependence on men. Phallocentrism is generally manifested: whenever women are represented as the opposites of men; whenever they are represented in terms the same as or similar to men; and whenever they are represented as men's complements. In all three cases, women are seen as variations or versions of masculinity -either through negation, identity or unification into a greater whole (see Glossary).

French Feminists sometimes use the term 'phallogocentrism'.


8. By feminine Orality, I do not mean just speaking, having a voice, but performing and producing orally literary genres such as stories, drama, songs, and poetry. This type is still very important as a vehicle of cultural traditions in Morocco because it is "at the centre of the Moroccan speech community's sensory experience" as Fatima Sadiqi clearly argues in one of our conversations.

9. Cixous is widely known as a poetic theorist who plays with words, here is an example : -"je," in this text, can both mean "I" as it can mean "jeux" which means "games" (what sports am I playing? what roles? how many masks have I?),"sont" can mean "are" as it can mean 'sounds"; "voices" -To understand Cixous the reader has not to be content with understanding the surface structure but should delve into the deep structure as well.


14. Semiotic: This term is first devised by Ferdinand de Saussure who uses it to refer to the scientific study of signs and sign-systems. However, in Julia Kristeva's usage, it refers to one of the two modalities comprising all psychical and signifying relations. The semiotic is understood by Kristeva as a pre-Oedipal, maternal space and energy subordinated to the law-like functioning of the symbolic, but, at times, breaching the boundaries of the symbolic in privileged moments of social transgression, when, like the repressed, it seeks to intervene into the symbolic to subvert its operations.
15. Lacan opposes the term ‘symbolic’ to the imaginary, as Kristeva does to her notion of the semiotic. For Lacan, ‘symbolic’ refers to the social and signifying order governing culture, to the post-oedipal position the subject must occupy in order to be subject. The symbolic is the order of the law, language and exchange, and is founded on the repression of the imaginary.

16. Jacques Lacan, a French psychologist, is known more for his subversive methods and interpretations of Freud. He has a strong influence on French feminists.

17. *Speculum de l’autre femme* (Paris:Miniut,1974) translated by Gillian C. Gill as *Speculum of the Other Woman*, New York: Cornwell University Press,1985, represents her most known and influential book with her other most quoted one: *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un* (Paris:Miniut,1977 was translated by Catherine Porter as *This Sex Which Is Not One*, New York: Cornwell University Press, 1985. It is this title that has influenced me while writing this chapter on Cixous.

18. The term ‘Jouissance’ tends to be used untranslated in English texts because of its ambiguity in French. The term refers both to orgasmic pleasure, and a more corporeal, non-genital pleasure.


23. For an insightful and illuminating study see Lizbeth Goodman, *Feminist Stages: Interviews with women in contemporary British Theatre*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers,1996, where she makes some fifty women currently working in British theatres to answer these questions: What is Feminism? Does gender matter in the theatre? Is there a female of feminist way of working in the theatre? Are things changing for women in the theatre today?
24. Cixous' deconstruction of Freud's Dora in her play *Portrait of Dora* (1976) has urged women playwrights to focus on rethinking many patriarchal myths and images, like Kim Morrissey's play *Dora: A Case of Hysteria* (1994), which is a feminine rewriting of Dora.

25. Cixous is still an active playwright, among her famous plays are: *The Terrible But Unfinished Story of Norodom Sihanouk King of Cambodia* (1985) and *Indiada or the India of Their Dreams* (1987) have been attended by large audiences in France.

26. That is, the woman's body as the part which represents the whole; the entirety of her own experience as a woman and the significance of the woman's body on stage as representative of the spaces women occupy.

27. The feminist critics' receptions of Cixous have been multiple and contradictory; they fluctuate between those who praise and those who accuse her for being essentialist: See Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking. Feminism, Nature and Difference*, New York/ Routledge, 1989, for further discussion on the meaning of essentialism and its difference from constructionism.


30. I am indebted, here, to Irigary's title "This Sex Which Is Not One".

31. Fatima Mernissi argues in *Charzad n'est pas Marocaine: Autrement, elle serait salariée/Charzad is not Moroccan: Otherwise she should have a salary*, Casablanca: Editions Le Fennec,1987, that knowledge is the source of development and power, and so long as Moroccan woman has not this right Morocco will remain a backward country.

32. Thanks to Dr Lizbeth Goodman I met Susan Croft who is in charge of the archives at London Theatre Museum.

33. Feminism can be defined as the theory that seeks to uncover and understand the ways that men and their control of social, political, and academic institutions have oppressed women. Feminism seeks to strip the veil off those institutions and attitudes that contribute to women's oppression, and to redefine them.

34. For further reading see Michlene Wandor's article,"The Impact of Feminism on TheTheatre" (*Feminist Review* No 18, November 1984).
35. See my paper on "The Images of Shakespeare's Tragic Women" presented on April 16, 1998, during a study organised by our Woman's Studies Centre.


38. Many books interested in the history of the feminist theatre introduce a number of women pioneers, such as Cotton Nancy, *Women Playwrights in England* (Bucknell: University Press, 1980).


40. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was rewritten by Bryony Lavery in 1996.


42. See Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988).

43. Moroccan women-only-spaces (such as women's-only parties, public baths, fitness clubs), which are situated in the public space but are considered as private spaces. In these spaces women are among themselves without male's presence; they feel free to tell "very daring" jokes, sing, complain about their lives, and speak about their very intimate and personal problems.
PART III. THE METAPHORIC VEIL ON PERFORMANCE/
MOROCCAN ‘PRI-BLIC’ SPACES

1. I should mention, here, that I am aware of the studio constructions of some fitness gyms which are shown on the Moroccan T.V. during the morning program that deals with women’s health and shape, but what I intend to delineate is the everyday experience of women in the real fitness gyms.

2. I am aware of the important role that ‘University Theatre’, an international annual festival of students’ theatre held in Morocco, plays in order to initiate students to theatre, however, this remains very individual endeavours made by some students and teachers.

3. By modern theatre or Western theatre I mean what Lizbeth Goodman (1996) defines as:

   Theatre is the forum where plays are performed; it is a broad term, and includes the physical space for performance (the stage), the area reserved for the audience, and the backstage area. It can also refer imprecisely to ‘drama’ and to the study of drama (p:15).

4. I have translated from Arabic all the Moroccan critics’ citations in this part.

5. I presume that Moroccan women are still almost invisible as hlayqia in the market place, except from some examples such as the herbalist of Beni Mellal that Kapchan (1996) described. The halqa is still a manly space though the presence of women is becoming more visible.

6. Though seen with Western eyes, Kapchan (1996) has done an interesting research on the herbalist of Beni Mellal.

7. Lbsat has had a tremendous impact on modern Moroccan theatre and theatre practitioners such as Taib Saddiki who is the founder of professional theatre in Morocco.

8. It is an ambiguous word that means both nobility in social and religious status, e.g. it is still used with this sense in most Arab Gulf countries as shikh and shikha to call a noble man and a noble woman, or a scholar in Islamic religion –fqih, whereas it has an ambivalent significance in Morocco, for it still means an honourable social and religious status for man, but it is the synonym of looseness and immorality for women.


13. There is, however, a crucial difference between the shikha’s “écriture” on the one hand, and the other two on the other. When the neggafa, and the hannaya write on bodies other than their own, the former uses her own body as a text. This explains the shikha’s stigma, whereas the other two are less stigmatized.


A cross-dressed performer—for example, a man playing a woman—can be read as a woman, or as a disguised male, or as a man who longs for other men, or as a mixture of all three. Depending on the variety of people in the audience, and depending on each individual’s gender and sexual preference, each spectator will have their own personal response to such a performance.


20. If the actress wants to survive in the Moroccan theatre world, have a name, and be respected, she has to get married with a colleague, this has been the tradition in Moroccan theatre since its beginning. Thus, the majority of Moroccan actresses belong to this category. A long list can be established: Amina Rachid married to Abdellah Chakroun, one of the first theatre directors in Morocco, Fatima Ben Meziane married to Hassan El Jundi, actor and director, Malika El Omari to Ahmed El Omari, actor and singer, Naïma Lmcharqi to Mohamed Khayati, director, Khadija Assad to Saad Allah Aziz, actor, Rachida el Harrak to Mohamed Ahmed Basri, actor and director, Nezha Reraggui to Bachir Abdou, singer and actor, Touria Jabrane to
Abdelwahed Ouzri, director, Sophie Hadi to Nabil Lahlou, actor and director, and Mona Fattou to Saad Chraibi, director.


25. Though the number of Moroccan female directors in the cinema is still limited to four: Farida Bel Yazid, Fatima Ouazzani, Imane El Mesbahi, and recently, Khnata Hilali. They have offered Moroccan actresses new opportunities to play their own bodies.


28. In her autobiographical book, *Dreams of Trespass* (1994), Fatima Mernissi, recollects her memories with her cousin Samir as they both approached puberty. One of her most vivid recollections: “The day that Samir was thrown out of the hammam because a woman noticed that he had ‘a man's stare’, (p: 239).


32. The notion of “liminoid” is borrowed from Victor Turner (1969, 1982).

33. The theory of the ‘resistant reader’ has been transposed into theatrical feminist criticism as ‘resistant spectator’. The feminist reader/spectator is urged to watch the performance critically to see how women’s-only-spaces have been represented by other women on the stage.

34. Hanna Scolnicov (1994) distinguishes between theatre space and theatrical space in her book, *Woman's Theatrical Space*, in which she defines theatre space as follows:
Theatre space is an architectural concept. The given theatre space is the shell or the hulk within which each performance creates its own theatrical space. The performance may take advantage of an existing space such as a hillside or a public square; or make use of a converted building such as a church or a hangar; or take place in a specialised architectural space such as an open-air theatre or a closed auditorium (p: 2).

35. The same critic, Hanna Scolnicov (1994) explains the term theatrical space in these words:

Unlike the theatre space, the theatrical space is created anew by every production. Every performance defines its own boundaries in relation to its own space-time structure....The theatrical space is a composite creation of the play, mise-en-scène, acting, choreography, scenery, lighting, etc., as well as the given theatre space (pp: 2-3).

36. As far as I know there is no single Moroccan woman theatre critic. This confirms that theatre in Morocco is still a manly-centred one, par excellence.

37. Laura Mulvey' in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1986) argues that the character possessing the look in classical narrative cinema is almost always marked as 'male'. For this reason, she argues that the 'gaze' in mainstream films is always male. These processes transform "the look" into a sexual "gaze." The 'female' object of the gaze, according to Mulvey, is transformed into an object of desire. In other words, the female character functions as an object of desire for the male character, but what happens when women watch films or plays? In short, Mulvey's theory has not really provided a space for theorizing the possibility of a female gaze. This is what I attempt to do while analysing the questionnaire findings.


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The Questionnaire 1

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect some information concerning the different meanings of the veil (Hijab) and shed some light on how Moroccan female students conceive and define the concept of the veil.

The result will be of a great value to the practical side of my Ph.D thesis, and to the academic research on Moroccan women's studies in general.

I would be grateful if you fill in this questionnaire and express sincerely your opinion about the subject.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Please, put a tick in the box corresponding to your answer

1. How old are you?
   a- Below 20
   b- Between 20 and 25
   c- Between 25 and 30
   d- Over 30

2. Are you a/an ................... student?
   a- Under-graduate
   b- Graduate
   b- Post-graduate Graduate
   d- Other, specify please

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3. Do you live...............?
   a- With your family   □    c- With a friend   □
   b- With a relative   □    d- Alone   □
   e- Other, please specify............................................................

4. Are you veiled?
   a- Yes   □    b- No   □

5. If ‘Yes’ can you find a reason from the following list?
   a- Religion   □    f- Invisibility   □
   b- Muslim identity   □    g- Protection   □
   c- Empowerment   □    h- Respect   □
   d- Freedom   □    i- Difference   □
   e- Modesty   □    j- Seclusion   □
   k- Other, please specify............................................................

6. If ‘No’, can you find a reason from the following list?
   a- Anonymity    d- Restriction
   b- Oppression    e- No marriage
   c- Imprisonment    f- No good job
   g- Other, please specify............................................................


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7. If you are veiled, how do you feel in the public space (streets, university...)?
   a- Respected ❑  d- Free ❑
   b- Invisible ❑  e- Peaceful ❑
   c- Happy ❑  f- Not annoyed ❑
   g- Other, please add...........................................................................

8. If you are not veiled, how do you feel in the public space?
   a- Harrassed ❑  d- Desired ❑
   b- Not respected ❑  e- Free ❑
   c- Visible ❑  f- Sexy ❑
   g- Other, please add...........................................................................

9. If you are veiled, do you intend to put on the "Niqab"?
   a- Yes ❑  b- No ❑
   Please, explain why or why not.......................................................
11. What kind of veil do you put on/ want to put on when you'll veil?
   a- A djellaba and a scarf
   b- A long dress and a scarf
   c- Modern clothes and a scarf
   d- Other, please specify

12. Do you think the veil is just a fashion?
   a- Yes
   b- No

13. Do you think it will last and spread in the world?
   a- Yes
   b- No

14. Is there a relation between the veil and gender?
   a- Yes
   b- No
15. Do you define the veil as a ..............?
   a- Dress                     d- Body language
   b- Muslim garment           e- Space division
   c- Mask                     f- Discourse
   g- Other, please add.........................................................
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16. If you have any additional comments, please, write them in this space:........
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Thank You For Your Cooperation.
The Questionnaire 2

The aim behind this questionnaire is to know your reaction to the play, *The Harem*, in order to elicit some information about theatre as a metaphoric veil, that allows both the playwright and the performer to strip the veil off some Moroccan women's specific performances in such women's only spaces as: The Public Bath, The Fitness Gym, and The Moroccan Salon (the drawing-room).

The result will be of inestimable value to the practice-based part of my Ph.D thesis, and to the development of academic research on Moroccan women's theatre and performance.

I would be grateful if you fill in this questionnaire and express sincerely your reaction to the play.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Please, put a tick in the box corresponding to your answer

1. How old are you?
   a- Below 20
   b- Between 20 and 25
   c- Between 25 and 30
   d- Over 30

2. Did you enjoy the play?
   a- Yes
   b- No

Please, justify .......................................................

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3. What do you think of the settings of the play?
   a- Very realistic
   b- Realistic
c- realistic Not □

. d- Others, please specify........................................................................................................
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4. Do you go to the public bath?
   a- Yes □
   b- No □

   Please, explain why or why not..............................................................................................
   ..............................................................................................................................................

5. Do you go to the Fitness Gym?
   a- Yes □
   b- No □

   Please, explain why or why not..............................................................................................
   ..............................................................................................................................................

6. Do you attend "only women's" Salon social gatherings?
   a- Yes □
   b- No □

   Please, explain why or why not..............................................................................................
   ..............................................................................................................................................

7. Do you identify with the women in the play?
   a- Yes □
   b- No □

   Please, explain why or why not..............................................................................................
   ..............................................................................................................................................

8. Does the play deal with Moroccan women's issues?
9. Is the veil still a taboo subject in Morocco?
   a- Yes □  b- No □

Please, explain why or why not

10. Are you veiled?
    a- Yes □  b- No □

Please, explain why or why not

11. Could theatre be a metaphorical veil that unveils all women's taboos?
    a- Yes □  b- No □

Please, justify

12. Do you know any Moroccan woman playwright?
    a- Yes □  b- No □

If "yes", cite her/ their names, please

13. Has she brought any newer thing to the Moroccan theatre?
    a- Yes □  b- No □

Please, justify
14. Would you label this play a feminist play?

a- Yes ☐  b- No ☐

Please, justify. ..............................................................................

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15. If you have any additional comments, please, write them in this space:
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Thank You For Your Cooperation.
STRIPPING OFF THE VEIL

Women's Performances of the Veil from Street to Stage

Appendix 3: Lear's Daughters: Performance Video

See Video, Enclosed as a Document of Live Performance (not for examination)
STRIPPING OFF THE VEIL

Women's Performances of the Veil from Street to Stage

Appendix 4: *The Harem*: Performance Video

See Video, Enclosed as a Document of Live Performance (not for examination)