# THE WOMAN QUESTION IN ISLAMIC STUDIES

# The Woman Question in Islamic Studies

KECIA ALI

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON & OXFORD

Published by Princeton University Press
41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540
99 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6JX

press.princeton.edu



ISBN 9780691183596
ISBN (pbk.) 9780691261843
ISBN (e-book) 9780691263748

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available

Editorial: Fred Appel and James Collier
Production Editorial: Nathan Carr
Jacket / Cover Design: Katie Osborne
Production: Lauren Reese
Publicity: William Pagdatoon
Copyeditor: Bhisham Bherwani

This book has been composed in Arno

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Mama Dot (1925–2022) and Tata Ellen (1923–)

# CONTENTS

# Introduction

IN 2007, SHORTLY after my first book was published, I spoke about gender and Qur'an interpretation at Loyola University in Chicago. During the Q&A, an audience member objected that my feminist critique imposed a Western perspective. Did I know about William Chittick's book *The Tao of Islam*, which argues for Islam's balanced treatment of the masculine and the feminine? I responded that I found the book important but unpersuasive for my purposes. I also pointed out that it was written by Sachiko Murata; Chittick is her husband. In turn, the questioner offered a compromise: they *both* wrote it. Actually, they didn't.[1]

Attributing women's scholarly achievements to men is a time-honored practice that spans fields and disciplines.[2] It is but one example of how sexism and misogyny thrive in the academy.[3]

1. Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought.* Foreword by Annemarie Schimmel (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992). Murata and Chittick did, however, co-author another book that may have been the source of the questioner's confusion. For more on that book, and the reflex to attribute collaborative work solely to men, see Chapter 4.

2. For one example, see Kishonna Gray, "#CiteHerWork: Marginalizing Women in Academic and Journalistic Writing," December 28, 2015, http://www.kishonnagray.com/manifestmy-reality/citeherwork-marginalizing-women-in-academic-and-journalistic-writing.

3. Danica Savonick and Cathy Davidson, "Gender Bias in Academe: An Annotated Bibliography" summarizes the findings of dozens of studies, http://blogs.lse.ac

Discrimination occurs in its upper echelons, as men—especially straight, white, abled, cis men—are disproportionately hired into tenure-track jobs, tenured, promoted, given named chairs, and awarded prestigious lectureships. At the other end of the higher education spectrum, women are overrepresented in the gig academy, the "insecure and poorly paid" adjunct jobs that now make up close to three-fourths of instructional positions.[4] The contingency crisis itself reflects the changing demographics of the academy. As more white women and people of color of all genders have earned doctorates and pursued scholarly careers, the security and prestige attached to being a professor has declined.[5] This is not coincidental, nor, as Tressie McMillan Cottom points out, are its effects equally distributed.[6] The growth in tenure-ineligible positions in centers, programs, and areas deemed peripheral to the university

---

.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/03/08/gender-bias-in-academe-an-annotated-bibliography/(updated 2017); see also Kathleen E. Grogan, "How the Entire Scientific Community Can Confront Gender Bias in the Discipline," *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, 3, 2019: 3–6, https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-018-0747-4.pdf. The short pieces collected in "The Awakening: Women and Power in the Academy" (*The Chronicle Review,* April 6, 2018, B1–B24) traverse disciplines.

4. This phrase already appears in a study written decades ago. Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington, *Women of Academe: Outsiders in the Sacred Grove* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 54. On women as adjuncts, see also Sekile M. Nzinga, *Lean Semesters: How Higher Education Reproduces Inequality* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 15, 133–37, 151.

5. Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar discuss the way "academic minefields" in Middle East/North Africa (MENA) anthropology relate to "the broader loss of professorial legitimacy in the United States" in *Anthropology's Politics: Disciplining the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 15 ff.

6. On the structural effects of anti-Black racism in adjunct hiring, see Tressie McMillan Cottom, "The New Old Labor Crisis," *Slate*, January 24, 2014, https://slate.com/human-interest/2014/01/adjunct-crisis-in-higher-ed-an-all-too-familiar-story-for-black-faculty.html. See also Joseph Fruscione and Kelly J. Baker, "Introduction," in Fruscione and Baker, eds., *Succeeding Outside the Academy: Career Paths beyond the Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEM* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2018), 1–7 at 3.

accounts for some disparities.[7] Humanities programs, in which men constitute a smaller proportion of faculty than in STEM fields, are shrinking or are threatened across the United States. Faculty positions are being eliminated. Professional vulnerability, like caregiving duties and service obligations, is unequally distributed.[8]

There seems to be a paradox. Academia has a reputation as a bastion of progressive values, a haven for feminists and other impractically utopian social justice advocates. But despite loud claims that conservative speech is being suppressed, those under threat from repressive policies limiting academic freedom tend to be on the left. And in its mundane practices, the academy remains thoroughly, if unevenly, (cis)sexist as well as classist, racist, ableist, and homophobic.[9] As Sekile Nzinga observes, "the structural inequities" of contemporary academic life are "encapsulated within and often hidden from our sight by the resilient enshrinement of the university as a fundamentally progressive institution."[10]

Islamic studies, an amorphous field crossing area studies, philology and textual studies, religious studies, and theology, is inescapably shaped by the contemporary academy, with its endemic

7. Such fields include women's and gender studies and ethnic studies, Black studies, and critical race studies. Cottom, "The New Old Labor Crisis," and Nzinga, *Lean Semesters*, 57, 71–75, 80–85.

8. See, e.g., Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, University of Oregon, "The Burden of Invisible Work in Academia: Social Inequalities and Time Use in Five University Departments," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 39, 2017: 228–245. An important early study of this phenomenon is Shelley M. Park, "Research, Teaching, and Service: Why Shouldn't Women's Work Count?," *The Journal of Higher Education,* 67:1, 1996: 46–84.

9. Places to begin with this extensive literature include Lorgia García Peña, *Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for Surviving Academia as a Woman of Color* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2022); Deborah L. Rhode, "Women in Academia," in *Women and Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 95–110; and Nicole Brown and Jennifer Leigh, eds., *Ableism in Academia: Theorising Experiences of Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses in Higher Education* (London: University College London Press, 2020).

10. Nzinga, *Lean Semesters*, 12.

precarity, hyperattention to productivity, and fetishization of metrics as well as its sexist norms. Yet even as it shares patterns with other fields and disciplines, the gender politics of Islamic studies are distinctive. The incident at my lecture illustrates the complexities of talking about women and gender in Islam. My interlocutor, a brown man from the local community, held that I, a white academic visitor, was inappropriately pushing a Western feminist agenda when Islamic gender complementarity was the answer. Although that was not my aim, he was not wrong to push back. The gender politics of Islam in the U.S. and globally are also always racial politics (and conversely, the racial politics are deeply gendered). As a white person and an American citizen, I benefit in numerous ways from the racist and colonialist status quo.[11] Deployments of liberal feminism against Muslims do real harm, helping justify military invasions overseas and expanded surveillance at home.[12] At the same time, his insistence that Muslim women's roles are sacrosanct in a way that, say, political norms are not—he agreed that electoral democracy, despite being a Western import, was compatible with Islam—is itself worth questioning and historicizing. And the fact that we were both Muslim, and I was younger and a convert, meant he felt free to encourage me to embrace what he saw as a more religiously authentic perspective on gender issues.

Conversations about women and Islam, as well as gender and sexuality in Islam, have only become more charged in subsequent

11. For an exploration of white convert privilege, especially for men, in Muslim religious organizations, see Mahdi Tourage, "Performing Belief and Reviving Islam: Prominent (White Male) Converts in Muslim Revival Conventions," *Performing Islam*, 1:2, 2013: 207–226 and Walaa Quisay, *Neo-traditionalism in Islam in the West: Orthodoxy, Spirituality and Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023). An account of white converts in academic Islamic studies remains to be written. I suspect that as the children and grandchildren of post-1965 immigrants to the U.S. enter the profession, and as the proportion of Black scholars increases, we make up a diminishing proportion of Muslims in the field.

12. See Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2021).

years. In America, broad cultural shifts have increased awareness and acceptance of gender beyond the male-female binary and normalized same-sex marriage and, to a lesser extent, a range of queer sexualities. There is also rising backlash to these changes alongside a frightening curtailment of reproductive autonomy. Scholars who are nonbinary and/or trans are becoming a more visible presence in Islamic studies. In this book, my focus is mostly on women, with occasional reference to nonbinary scholars, as I discuss in more detail in the methodological appendix. I recognize, though, that *women* is not and never has been a natural and universal category, and gender is by no means the only useful lens through which to understand academic bias, discrimination, and privilege. I make a point of discussing, for example, the overrepresentation of white and non-Muslim women in many contexts. However, in addition to its salience as a potential site of feminist solidarity, gender is a particularly meaningful category when analyzed in conjunction with scholarship on women, gender, and sexuality.

Conjoined with the troubled cultural politics of gender and sexuality in the contemporary United States is the long-standing hypervisibility of women and gender in Islam as a topic of interest. Everyone from Islamophobic politicians to local interfaith group members to lay Muslims has perspectives and preconceptions and strong feelings. And because of the salience of such issues to contemporary life, as well as the interplay of social media and public scholarship, a lot of academic conversations on these topics cross over, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill. Even where the conversation is mostly confined to specialized publications and academic contexts, conversations on women and gender are fraught. Sometimes, the topics are avoided or treated as undeserving of serious scholarly attention. Sometimes, people take them up superficially, without engaging the substantial work that others—mostly others who aren't men—have done over the decades. Though many factors play a role, gender bias within academic Islamic studies is a crucial part of the story. Sexist bias and its detrimental effects on scholars and scholarship are the subject of this book, which aims

to lay the groundwork for productive conversations about, and transformative approaches to, the gender politics of academic Islamic studies.

Islamic studies has been shaped by histories and contemporary manifestations of colonialism and imperialism as well as anti-Muslim hostility in myriad forms, in and beyond the United States, where I am based and where I focus my analysis. I began working on this book casually during the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election and in earnest after Donald Trump was inaugurated. By the time I submitted this manuscript past the halfway mark of Joe Biden's presidency, debates over putting Muslims in camps or making us register seemed a bit like a fever dream. Yet the political situation for American Muslims remains somewhat precarious, especially those from or with heritage ties to places perceived as threats to U.S. security interests. It falls outside the scope of this book to catalog these effects or predict their long-term trajectory. I can only note the fast-moving and complicated rhetorical and political dynamics that shape scholarship and teaching, including the emerging restrictions on what can be taught about gender, race, and sexuality in a variety of public and private institutions. Even as some things about the academy remain stubbornly resistant to change, colleges and universities across the country are undergoing significant and rapid transformation, both for good and for ill.

The United States academy is, of course, not hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world. Ideas, texts, and money cross borders. So do people, some more easily than others. Scholars born elsewhere train here. Scholars trained elsewhere teach here. Transnational collaborations are less common than some might wish but they are far from rare. Key European publishers have New York branches. American scholars publish in German journals, though nearly always in English. The Fulbright Program sends American scholars to Egypt and Indonesia and sponsors students and scholars from there to come to the U.S. Given that a PhD from an American institution is an advantage in some job

markets, its norms matter. To the extent that English language scholarship dominates global academic Islamic studies, and its conferences and publishers have prestige, the U.S. has an outsized role. Non-anglophone scholars and scholarship are often neglected or excluded, especially in certain subfields. Discrimination here reverberates globally.

Still, higher education within the U.S. is highly stratified and internally differentiated to the point that generalizations about the American academy are suspect.[13] Elite private research universities and selective liberal arts schools operate differently from community colleges and large public institutions. And within the same school, faculty working conditions can diverge sharply. Tenured faculty teaching two courses per semester and adjuncts teaching 4/4 loads on annually renewable contracts have little common ground.

One factor distinguishing the U.S. from other Western academies is its demographics. For example, in North America, a substantially larger proportion of Islamic studies scholars is Muslim than in most of Europe—though substantially less than, say, in Iran or Indonesia.[14] Though too many events and publications

13. Raewyn Connell notes wide variation in practices among institutions within and among countries but concludes that "there is a great deal of overlap in what different universities and their workers actually do." *The Good University: What Universities Actually Do and Why It's Time for Radical Change* (London: Zed, 2019), 5.

14. I could not find firm statistics on the proportion of Muslims in Islamic studies or within religious studies, but the increase in recent decades is obvious and, for some, distressing. For one perspective, see Omid Safi, "Reflections on the State of Islamic Studies," *Jadaliyya*, July 21, 2022, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30175/Reflections-on-the-State-of-Islamic-Studies. Though it tracks a different population, Deeb and Winegar's study of Middle East/North Africa-focused anthropologists in the U.S. academy estimates "an approximately 25 percent increase in region-related scholars"—which they gloss as "those with heritage ties to MENA"—"since the late 1960s" and "that at least 40 percent of those in PhD programs in the United States today are region-related" (*Anthropology's Politics*, 7). They also observe that "today, the subfield [of MENA anthropology] is 61 percent female and 39 percent male, with a notable increase in the number of women since 1990" (8). In

continue to exclude Black scholars, it is unusual to have an Islamic studies conference or volume in the U.S. that is all white or comprised entirely of non-Muslims. Consequently, the gender politics of academic Islamic studies are affected by and inflected with the gender politics of heterogeneous American and global Muslim communities. These dynamics shape the production and reception of scholarship on women, gender, and Islam.

The study of Islam and Muslims has always been political. Although one cannot reduce area studies to an "epiphenomenon of the Cold War" or Orientalism to an epiphenomenon of colonialism, early philological studies were often facilitated by European occupation of places where Muslims lived.[15] Numerous postwar anthropologists were funded by Cold War money; today,

---

comparison, Eyal Clyne estimates around 150–300 Israeli scholars of the Middle East/Arabs/Arabic/Islam, "almost all Jewish, and mostly men" (*Orientalism, Zionism and Academic Practice: Middle East and Islamic Studies in Israeli Universities* [Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019], 17). For the United Kingdom, see Alison Scott-Baumann, Mathew Guest, Shuruq Naguib, Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, and Aisha Phoenix, *Islam on Campus: Contested Identities and the Cultures of Higher Education in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 171. On Islamic theology in the German university system, see Jan Felix Engelhardt, "On Insiderism and Muslim Epistemic Communities in the German and US Study of Islam," *The Muslim World*, 106:4, 2016: 740–758. According to Irene Schneider, in 2018 women held five of twenty-three professorships in Islamic theology at seven distinct institutions (21.7%), slightly lower than women's 25% share of such positions across disciplines. The numbers are too small for the difference to be statistically significant. Schneider, "Gender Equal Islamic Theology in Germany," in Dina El Omari, Juliane Hammer, and Mouhanad Khorchide, eds., *Muslim Women and Gender Justice: Concepts, Sources, and Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 62–85 at 78.

15. Zachary Lockman, *Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 258 (see also xii, x); Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945* (London: Routledge, 2009), 86, 218–9. On the intertwining of scholarly, missionary, and imperial interests, see Avril A. Powell, *Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Religion, Education, and Empire* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2010).

it's anti-terrorism grants.[16] Dismissive talk of identity politics, which Reni Eddo-Lodge defines as "a term now used by the powerful to describe the resistance of the structurally disadvantaged," is largely absent when ROTC cadets study Arabic and Islam in preparation for possible deployment.[17] Instead, those comfortable with the status quo invoke the ideal of disinterested pure scholarship when those from marginalized and minoritized backgrounds contest it.

Issues of insiders and outsiders bedevil other fields as well. Divisions between scholars and practitioners, or academics and activists, are inseparable from debates over objectivity, feminism, and other pre-commitments.[18] Religious studies' wrangling over these issues is conditioned by its history of boundary struggles with theology. The study of Islam has become a key place where those uncomfortable with the necessarily political implications of scholarship have found their nemeses. Some criticisms of Muslim feminist work, for instance, come from committed secularists skeptical about normative projects. Yet other critics are Muslim men who locate themselves simultaneously within academia and within a scholarly tradition, usually Sunni. Muslim men aren't uniquely patriarchal, of course. Throughout this book, I show how various androcentric and misogynistic academic practices overlap with each other and sometimes align with white supremacist norms and discourses.

Four chapters illustrate the interconnected ways that sexism functions in academic Islamic studies. Chapter 1 shows how

16. Deeb and Winegar, *Anthropology's Politics.*

17. Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 215.

18. See, e.g., Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús, "Confounded Identities: A Meditation on Race, Feminism, and Religious Studies in Times of White Supremacy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 86:2, 2018: 307–40. After 9/11, according to Deeb and Winegar, "MENA became not just one, but *the* primary lens through which anthropology's tensions were reproduced, navigated, and debated" (*Anthropology's Politics*, 140–41).

subfields within Islamic studies are gendered, by which I mean both that they are numerically skewed in terms of who's in them and that they are treated as masculine or feminine—with work on women and gender consistently relegated to the periphery of Islamic studies. Chapter 2 looks at the citational politics of recent work, showing how despite the remarkable growth and depth of scholarship on Islam and gender, men continue to overlook scholarship by people who aren't men, even in work that purports to discuss gender issues, especially when it touches on the Muslim textual/intellectual tradition. Chapter 3 looks at public scholarship and representation in the media, considering the dynamics that both encourage scholars to talk about Islam and Muslims to broader audiences and make such engagements perilous for women, especially when the topic is gender or sexuality. Chapter 4 discusses curricula, noting widespread exclusions of women's scholarship and gender as a topic in syllabi while acknowledging that the classroom is a space where sustained, transformative learning can occur. Short interludes between the chapters provide glimpses into these broader dynamics and the feelings they engender, including irritation, frustration, disappointment, and rage. A conclusion proposes practical strategies to help those who research and write and speak and teach about Islam and Muslims avoid some of the sexist pitfalls described in this book.

The inclusion of such strategies, however, is not meant to imply that our problems will be solved if only each of us tries harder. Heroic individual exertion is not a panacea for structural problems. Second wave feminist Marilyn Frye used the image of a birdcage to describe the interconnected elements of an oppressive structure. Study any particular wire as long as you like; you'll conclude that it doesn't stop the bird from flying away. One glance at the whole, however, suffices to show how the bird is trapped.[19] The metaphor aptly captures women's disadvantage in academic

19. Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (New York: Crossing/Ten Speed, 1983), 1–17 at 4–5.

contexts.[20] As Frye observes, "the locus of sexism is primarily in the system or framework, not in the particular act."[21]

*The Woman Question in Islamic Studies* describes, analyzes, and suggests ways of improving existing systems. Highlighting the intertwined ethical and intellectual harms that result from others' failures to cite women and to engage work on women/gender, it provides an evidence-based discussion of how we do our scholarly work, how our current approaches hinder scholars who aren't cis men and harm the scholarship produced, and how we can all do better.[22] One of its goals is simply improved awareness. As Kate Manne points out, there is "significant value in the social support itself" of women coming together, as well as in the "enhanced pattern recognition" that comes from "being forewarned about how misogyny works."[23] Some scholars may not recognize the scope of the problem; calling their attention to harmful practices will suffice for them to adjust their own habits and to support broader transformation. Others may resist, doubling down on the spurious rhetoric of objectivity, relevance, and merit. "Misogyny is a self-masking phenomenon," Manne notes, so "trying to draw attention to the phenomenon is liable to give rise to more of it."[24] Still, if

20. For example, Chavella Pittman ("Race and Gender Oppression in the Classroom: The Experiences of Women Faculty of Color with White Male Students," *Teaching Sociology*, 38:3, 2010: 183–196) and Jennifer Thompson ("The Birdcage: Gender Inequity in Academic Jewish Studies," *Contemporary Jewry*, 39, 2019: 427–446) have used it to explain, respectively, the classroom experiences of women faculty of color and the constraints on professional advancement for women in Jewish studies.

21. Frye, *The Politics of Reality,* 19.

22. Sarah Imhoff described the pairing of an "ethical problem" and an "intellectual problem" as a way of thinking about all or mostly male collective publications. See Kecia Ali, Alison Joseph, Sharon Jacob, Sarah Imhoff, Toni Bond, Natasha Heller, and Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, "Manthologies," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. 36:1, 2020: 145–158 at 149.

23. Kate Manne, *Down Girl*: *The Logic of Misogyny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 239.

24. Manne, *Down Girl*, xix.

enough come on board, the steady accrual of individual efforts and policy changes will shift our professional defaults. I pretend no objectivity here. Although I wholeheartedly favor bending wires to let birds escape, I ultimately hope to abolish birdcages.

In this book, I share some personal stories. I recount events to the best of my recollection, relying on my own files, archives, and emails for corroboration. I invent nothing but I sometimes omit or obscure details to protect others' privacy. When reporting spoken comments or unpublished correspondence, I don't name those involved. When quoting or discussing published writing, I generally do. As for social media, I draw from my own tweets freely but quote others only with permission.

There are pluses and minuses to naming names. Either way, someone will object. In a scathing assessment of Islamic legal studies, Ayesha Chaudhry refers only obliquely to the works she discusses, although specialists will find them easily identifiable.[25] Some have criticized that decision. Speaking at a conference panel after Chaudhry's essay appeared, a male full professor deemed her work "dangerous" in its vagueness. When it was my turn to talk, I noted that another male full professor had just published an article that deemed my criticisms of similar phenomena, in which I named (tenured) authors, "dangerous."[26] Chaudhry erred by

25. Ayesha S. Chaudhry. "Islamic Legal Studies: A Critical Historiography." In Anver M. Emon and Rumee Ahmed, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5–44. On choosing not to cite specific figures, see also Lena Salaymeh, "Imperialist Feminism and Islamic Law," *Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, 17, 2019: 97–134 at 103–104.

26. Sherman Jackson, "The Alchemy of Domination 2.0," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 35:4, 2018: 87–117 at 94. The lecture to which he refers is my Ismail Al Faruqi Memorial Lecture for the International Institute of Islamic Thought in November 2017 (available at IIITMedia's YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai5XF-bP3KEis). It is forthcoming with commentary as Kecia Ali, "Muslim Scholars, Islamic Studies, and the Gendered Academy: Contingent Reflections," in Ebrahim Moosa, ed., *Contingency in Contemporary Muslim Theology: Madrasa Discourses* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

omitting references, leaving her claims unsubstantiated.[27] On the other hand, by naming scholars and referencing specific works, I made people "targets" of my "invective," creating a "silencing effect" and a climate of fear for others who might be singled out.[28] We're damned if we do, damned if we don't. There's no right way to do it because the problem is that we're trying to do it at all. Any attempt to reckon with the damage done by the persistent devaluation of women's scholarship gets derailed quickly by a turn to imagined consequences for those whose reputations might be besmirched if they are called to account for their omissions.[29]

In what follows, I have tried to walk a middle path. I provide references to my evidence in my analyses of scholarly inclusion and exclusion. Singling out specific works as examples of poor citation practices can, as Chaudhry suggests, give the impression

27. Sohaira Siddiqui, who offers a nuanced and thorough engagement with Chaudhry's method and claims, criticizes her "basic failure to substantiate her argument with evidence and footnotes." "Good Scholarship/Bad Scholarship: Consequences of the Heuristic of Intersectional Islamic Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 88:1, 2020: 142–174 at 168. Ahmed El Shamsy also faults Chaudhry for failing to include "substantiating footnotes" in favor of "occasional anonymized examples." "How Not to Reform the Study of Islamic Law: A Response to Ayesha Chaudhry," in Intisar A. Rabb and Mariam Sheibani, eds., "Roundtable on Islamic Legal History and Historiography," *Islamic Law Blog*, December 10, 2020, https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/12/10/legalhistoryroundtable/.

28. Jackson, "The Alchemy of Domination 2.0," 87, 93, 94, 99. Although all the people I mention in the sources he cites are tenured men, Jackson writes of "the silencing effect that has already invaded the psychological space of numerous junior scholars and graduate students, male and female" (94). Won't someone please think of the children!

29. Discussing only the work of securely employed associate and full professors has been my policy from the start of this book project, expressed clearly when I've spoken about the work, and adhered to, save a couple of unintentional lapses, in talks, blogs, and tweets. Still, some have claimed hyperbolically that I'm aiming to ruin people's—by which they always mean men's—livelihoods. I'm not. On the ways that attempts to hold men accountable often result in claims that the men are now due sympathy for having been injured, see Manne's discussion of "himpathy" in *Down Girl*, 196 ff.

that the problem is individual malefactors rather than robustly self-reinforcing systems. I try to minimize this effect by showing how various forms of exclusion depend on and shore up other exclusionary practices. In analyzing book series and edited volumes, I emphasize patterns, while providing bibliographic details for reference. In other instances, as when I discuss syllabi from various data sets, I do not name faculty. Patterns matter alongside, and significantly constrain, the specific choices that individuals make. Yet some choices are at the very least questionable and deserve scrutiny. Also, not to put too fine a point on it, publications are by definition public. It says so right in the word. Still, the objective is not to apportion blame but to call our attention to existing norms and use this increased awareness to shift both individual and collective habits.

My discussions of publications and citations make no attempt at comprehensive coverage. I combine broad surveys with more focused analyses of a smaller set of texts. I rely mostly on qualitative analysis, accompanied by some quantitative reckoning with specific books, book series, and syllabi. Large-scale bibliometric analyses proved impractical for a variety of reasons, explained in the methodological appendix, but my examples are neither mere anecdote nor cherry-picked outliers. My findings here echo those in the statistically robust mixed-methods survey of gendered citation and author description in religious studies book reviews that Lolo Serrano and I conducted.[30] I encourage those who wish to contest my findings to demonstrate, with adequate evidence, that the imbalances I demonstrate aren't widespread, rather than simply claim that I've failed to meet some arbitrary standard of proof.

Islamic studies is a small field. I know many of those whose work I write about. In some cases, we are cordial acquaintances; in others,

30. Kecia Ali and Lolo Serrano, "The Person of the Author: Constructing Gendered Scholars in Religious Studies Book Reviews," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 90:3, 2022: 554–578.

colleagues who have had long-standing, friendly relationships. A few have been advisors and mentors over the decades. I discussed my concerns and criticisms with several of them as I worked on this book. Reactions included chagrined acknowledgment, the abrupt severing of communication, and hostile rejoinders in person, online, or in print. As a tenured full professor, I am buffered from professional repercussions in ways that more precariously situated scholars, dependent on behind-the-scenes evaluation processes for hiring, publication, grants, and tenure, are not. It is precisely those vulnerabilities, magnified by increased reliance on algorithmic citation metrics, that make this work necessary.[31] I hope that even those who are unhappy about my analyses will understand my reasons for pursuing them.

Though I have been, in Kelly Baker's words, "scorched-earth angry" about some of the phenomena I discuss, my aim is not to ostracize anyone.[32] Although I critique specific works, mentioning several of my own failures along the way, none of these problems is reducible to individual lapses. What matters is not the purity and perfection of any single person's practice or the failings of any one book or article. We must think in terms of patterns, not merely incidents. Collectivities, not just individuals. Systems, rather than only cases. Structures as well as choices. I have tried to depict the forest by means of a few well-chosen trees. I describe some specimens in detail, down to the veining on a handful of leaves. I do not suggest that those trees are diseased and must be uprooted, much less advocate wildfire or clear-cutting. Rather, I want to focus on what kind of soil allows those trees to flourish.

31. Focusing on search engine results rather than scholarly citations, Safiya Umoja Noble shows how algorithms amplify existing biases and magnify inequalities. See *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

32. Kelly J. Baker, *Sexism Ed: Essays on Gender and Labor in Academia* (Chapel Hill, NC: Raven Publishing, 2018), xvi. Baker writes about "the structural sexism of the academy" (xix), using her experiences as a lens for telling a larger story about religious studies specifically as well as the U.S. academy broadly.

What happens when their roots commandeer more than their share of nutrients? When their canopies block other saplings' access to sunlight? I want to understand the unhealthy imbalances of the current landscape in order to imagine and to begin to cultivate a healthier, sustainable scholarly ecosystem in which all inhabitants can thrive.