Abstract

ELIZABETH GEHRINGER. A Therapeutic Treatment for Trauma and Violence: Islamic Feminism in Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero* and Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. (Under the direction of Professor Rebecca Walsh.)

This essay investigates how trauma studies as a field, with particular attention to sexual abuse and other forms of violence, operates within two literary texts. Nawal El Saadawi’s *Woman at Point Zero* and Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* tour the reader through a succession of traumatic events the Arab women within call life. Saadawi and Hosseini’s heroines, Firdaus, Miriam, and Laila, endure powerful acts of violence within their extremist Egyptian and Afghan communities. Trauma studies as a field has not yet accounted for a specific treatment for victimized Arab women within these specific Islamic contexts; however, trauma studies and its methodologies provide a vehicle for a better understanding of these women’s circumstances. In a culture that values extremist, Islamic patriarchy and normalizes sexual abuse and other forms of violence, victimized Arab women are not privileged with the suggested clinical approach as a form of therapy and treatment. In an effort to heal from within, heroines Firdaus, Miriam, and Laila must find their own form of treatment.

Literary scholars of Saadawi and Hosseini’s work engage with a feminist discourse in an attempt to sympathize with these Arab women’s struggles. Similarly, I approach Saadawi and Hosseini’s texts through a feminist lens; however, this essay specifically focuses on Islamic feminism found within *Woman at Point Zero* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. I argue Firdaus, Miriam, and Laila turn to Islamic feminism, a social, feminist movement rooted in a reinterpretation of the holy Qur’an, in an effort to cope with their traumatic experiences.