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Maryam Jameelah and the Affective Economy of Islamic Revival

Justine Howe¹

Abstract

This article uses Sara Ahmed's concept of "affective economy" to explore the relationship between affect and gender in the transnational Islamic Revival in the 1960s and 1970s. It does so by examining the work of Maryam Jameelah (née Margaret Marcus, 1934-2012), the American Jewish convert to Islam who moved to Pakistan in 1962 at the invitation of A'la Abul Mawdudi, the prominent revivalist leader and thinker. For her English-speaking audiences, Jameelah was a potent messenger for a revivalist ideology that aimed to reinvigorate an Islamic politics in opposition to Western capitalism and materialism. I argue that the affective economy of Jameelah's writing help to explain the mobility of her ideas across national borders. Through affect, Jameelah's writings produce a cumulative set of associations around female bodies that were intended to galvanize Muslim attachments to the umma and to draw absolute boundaries between Islam and the West.

Keywords: Gender; affect; Islam; transnationalism; revival

Introduction

This article uses Sara Ahmed's concept of "affective economy" to explore the relationship between affect and gender in the transnational Islamic revival in the 1960s and 1970s (Ahmed, 2004). It does so by examining the work of Maryam Jameelah (née Margaret Marcus, 1934-2012), the American Jewish convert to Islam who moved to Pakistan in 1962 at the invitation of Abul A'la Mawdudi, the famed revivalist thinker. By her own right, Jameelah became a leading voice of the global Islamic revival, the multi-faceted, diffuse 20th century movement aimed at reinvigorating individual Muslim piety and enhancing the public presence of Islam in politics, culture, and education. Her voluminous writings helped to spread revivalist thought across national borders, to English-speaking publics in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. She served as a potent messenger for a revivalist ideology that aimed to restore Islamic piety and reassert Muslims' religious and political power as a third way between democratic capitalism and Soviet-style communism. I argue that the affective dimensions of Jameelah's writing help to explain the mobility of her ideas on a broad scale during the 1970s and beyond.

By examining the affective economy of Jameelah's work, we gain a new perspective on how and why the female body became such an important mobilizing site for transnational projects of reform and renewal. Through affect, Jameelah's writings produce a cumulative set of associations around female bodies that were intended to galvanize Muslim attachments to the *umma* and to draw absolute boundaries between Islam and the West. This paper argues that what Ahmed calls the "stickiness" of Jameelah's ideas depended on the affective boundaries and affinities that she and other thinkers constructed through female bodies (Ahmed, 2004, p. 120). The appeal of Jameelah's extensive

¹ Justine Howe, Case Western Reserve University, United States. E-mail: justine.howe@case.edu



writings – essays, articles, books, letters, artwork – lay in her ability to generate what I call the “affect of revival,” for transnational Muslim audiences.

A prolific and influential thinker in the 1960s and 70s, Jameelah has been called Mawdudi’s “most important disciple” (Jamal, 2013). She is the only woman to appear in the 2001 volume *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, edited by John Voll and John Esposito (Esposito and Voll, 2001). Her biting critique of Western norms and her passionate apologetics found significant traction in transnational revivalist circles (Baker, 2011). Her books and pamphlets, written in English, have been translated to at least ten languages, including Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, and Persian. Yet outside of Voll’s and Esposito’s chapter and some accounts of her conversion to Islam, her contributions to transnational revivalism have been woefully understudied (Bowen, 2015; Rubin, 2019). With the notable exception of Ellen McLarney’s excellent book on female Egyptian revivalists, there has been less attention to the role those female intellectuals played in shaping transnational revivalist communities (McLarney, 2015). Like female nationalist leaders, revivalist female leaders built a robust print culture and shaped their religious and political worlds, despite often being denied formal positions of authority. As a result, we lack an understanding of how Muslim female thinkers shaped the ideological contours of this global religious movement.

While Jameelah uses many different collective emotions in her work, this article focuses on the role that shame plays in her attempts to unify and mobilize Muslims. In particular, Jameelah invokes shame around female sexuality and women’s domestic responsibilities to draw sharp boundaries around “Islam” and “the West.” This tracks in two ways. On the one hand, Jameelah argues that Muslims ought to feel shame for what she sees as the collective failure to implement essential Islamic requirements around gender. On the other hand, Jameelah’s writing shame “sticks” to both Muslim and non-Muslim female bodies, rendering women as highly visible affective objects through which the fault lines between “Islam” and the “West” become starker.² There is a much longer history around the use of shame to regulate female sexuality that I do not have the space to engage in this essay. Here, I focus on the role that shame plays in Jameelah’s urgent call for a unified Muslim community, or *umma*, to challenge Western dominance. Jameelah is disinterested in the mechanisms through which individuals feel shame or in marshaling Islamic conceptions of shame as they might have been understood among her fellow Muslims. In what follows, I argue that Jameelah’s writing makes considerable use of affect, especially negative affects such as shame to build attachments to revivalist imaginings of the *umma* (Ngai, 2007; Sedgwick and Frank, 1995). Jameelah uses a broad, general conception of shame intended to be recognizable as a collective emotion across the various cultural settings of the *umma*, rather than a specific one recognizable as distinctly Islamic.³ In doing so, shame accomplishes important boundary work for Jameelah as she seeks to entrench a binary

² Jameelah promoted a range of gendered practices promoted by A’la Abul Mawdudi, the leader of the Jamaat-i-Islami party in Pakistan, and one of Jameelah’s major influences. As I discuss below, Jameelah employed Mawdudi’s vocabulary, namely in her use of the term “*purdah*,” (lit., curtain) the prevailing concept in South Asia to delineate female modesty and seclusion norms. Both Muslims and Hindus practiced variations of this concept, but modest dress and gender separation were taken up as a key ideological dimension of Islamic revivalism in Pakistan (and elsewhere, such as Egypt), as essential for restoring a true and authentic Islam to modern Muslim societies. See A’la Abul Mawdudi, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, 1939.

³ One of the most striking aspects of Jameelah’s writing is that she does not engage traditional Islamic conceptions related to shame, modesty, and humility. For example, the concept of *haya* (shyness/humility/modesty) is almost entirely absent from Jameelah’s work, even in discussions of modest dress or seclusion of women from public space, which she refers to as *purdah*. We might expect her to invoke local understandings of female modesty and social belonging. Her discussions of *purdah* are aimed less at inculcating or promoting the practice among Muslim women, much less cultivating the affective dispositions and ritual practices associated with *haya*. Instead, she is entirely focused on the ideological contrast with the “West” in terms of how much “respect” is accorded to women in each society (Jameelah 1976, p. 8-9).



view that demarcates the moral boundaries between Islam and the West. In this sense, Jameelah mobilizes shame to build a transnational community.

A Brief Biography of Maryam Jameelah

How did Jameelah, a young, middle-class Jewish woman from Mamaroneck, NY come to acquire her status as a prominent ideologue of the global Islamic revival? From an early age, Jameelah became disillusioned with the materialism of post-war American life, which she saw as spiritually bankrupt. Her conversion to Islam followed a period of religious and political experimentation through which Jameelah she joined a variety of communities, such as Baha'i, Orthodox Judaism, Ethical Humanism, and eventually, Islam (Baker, 2011, pp.9-10). She took courses on comparative religion at New York University, an experience that only deepened her dissatisfaction with modern Judaism, especially with what Jameelah saw as a capitulation to nationalist and capitalist imperatives over and above universalistic religious ones (Jameelah, 1977, p. x). Jameelah pored over academic, religious, and philosophical texts in the New York Public Library, where she first encountered the work of Muslim revivalist thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb, Said Ramadan, and Mawdudi, as well as prominent converts to Islam, especially Muhammad Asad (d.1992), the Jewish-Austrian convert, whose memoir *The Road to Mecca* played a pivotal role in Jameelah's own conversion (Jameelah, 1990). Jameelah began writing for Muslim periodicals even before she formally converted, in publications such as the *Muslim Digest*, a South African publication with an extensive readership among Muslims in the UK and the US.

In the late 1950s, Jameelah joined various Muslim communities in New York City. She attended Muslim Student Association meetings at Columbia University in the late 1950s, where she noted, with disdain and disappointment that some students did not perform daily religious observances such as prayer and flouted prohibitions such as drinking alcohol. She also attended Friday prayers at the Islamic Mission of Brooklyn, also known as the State Street Mosque, run by Shaykh Daoud Faisal and his wife, Khadija, who were well-established figures among New York's transnational Muslim communities. Jameelah was just one among dozens of converts who passed through the Islamic Mission's doors as early as the 1940s. She formally became a Muslim at the Islamic Mission in 1960 and soon after took the name of Maryam Jameelah (Jameelah, 1990).

Her foray into revivalist circles came through her extraordinary correspondence with the leading Islamist thinker Abul Al'a Mawdudi (d.1979). Jameelah and Mawdudi began exchanging letters in 1960, after Jameelah sent a letter to him about an article he wrote on the afterlife in the *Muslim Digest*. Her first letter to him promised that she would "... devote my life to the struggle against philosophy-secularism and nationalism which are still so rampant in the world today and threaten not only the survival of Islam but the whole human race." (Baker, 2011, p. 45). For his part, Mawdudi corresponded widely in order gain wider audiences, and he expressed admiration for Jameelah's ideas, which he saw as mirroring his own. (Jameelah and Mawdudi, 1992). And in 1962, Mawdudi invited Jameelah to live with his family in Lahore. With her parents' support, she emigrated just a couple months later.

When Jameelah arrived in Pakistan, she had no familiarity with Pakistani society and no knowledge of Urdu. Undeterred by her lack of knowledge of local language and culture, Jameelah immediately took to writing in English-language newspaper articles, pamphlets, and books for the revivalist cause. Her most productive years, and the work for which she is most well-known, came after her subsequent marriage to Muhammad Yusuf Khan, who was a prominent Jamaat-i-Islami activist, in 1972. She became his second wife and had 5 children. During this time, she published more than 10 books and dozens of articles published through the Jamaat-i-Islami presses, giving her ideas wide

distribution in the organization's transnational networks (Esposito and Voll, 2001). Many of her readers other US Muslims, such those affiliated with the revivalist-oriented Muslim Students' Association of the 1970s, which reprinted many of her essays alongside those of Mawdudi and Qutb (Howe, 2020). She maintained regular correspondence with prominent Muslim thinkers of her day on multiple continents and many of her publications were reprinted and distributed back in the United States. In what follows, I examine the role of affect in Jameelah's writings from the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

Affective Economy and Forming Revivalist Communities

Sara Ahmed's theory of affect hinges on the circulation of what she calls the "objects of emotion" that circulate through cultural production, as opposed to seeing emotions as being the preserve of individuals. Ahmed explores how collective emotions work to forge communities through relations of "difference and displacement" (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 118-19). She is interested in how emotions move through social texts and practices. Through their mobility, emotions forge powerful bonds between individuals and a collective, such as the nation. For example, Ahmed explores how hate, as a collective emotion, catalyzes white British and Australian citizens to imagine themselves into a "discourse of pain" in which outsiders threaten to destroy the social fabric (Ahmed, 2004, p. 118). Hate is not simply "out there" as an emotion waiting to be tapped, nor is it an internal emotion generated from within an individual self. Rather, hate is produced through the relationships cultivated between white citizens and groups such as immigrants that are marked as "undesirable."

Shenila Khoja-Moolji makes a similar point about the role of affect in the construction of the Pakistani nation, which suggests the central role of affect in traversing scales of various kinds. Khoja-Moolji argues that the cultivation of affect around certain bodies, or what she calls "figurations" produce "ambivalent attachments" to the state and to the Taliban who compete with one another for sovereignty in contemporary Pakistan (Khoja-Moolji, 2021, p. 5). Affect plays a key role in constructing what Khoja-Moolji calls "feeling publics" (Khoja-Moolji, 2021, p. 15). She focuses on the gendered nature of these affective attachments, particularly the role of masculinities in shaping normative understandings of Muslimness (Khoja-Moolji, 2021, p. 16-17). As I explore below, Jameelah uses the affect of shame to connect the small-scale actions and beliefs of individuals and families to broad civilizational imperatives. In this way, affect does more than connect individuals to others. It also binds individual Muslims to the grand narratives of Islamic and global histories.

While Ahmed and Khoja-Moolji focus on how affect cultivates attachments to the nation-state, this article focuses on how affect helped to form Muslim revivalist and Islamist publics in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on Khoja-Moolji's concept, I argue that the *umma*, or global Muslim community, as Jameelah conceived of it, is a *feeling public*. Central to the revivalist project of the 1960s and 1970s was the idea that Muslim identity had to be strong and robust in order to challenge the formidable global forces of democratic capitalism and Soviet-style communism. Within the Cold War context in which they operated, revivalist leaders argued that the *umma*, or global Muslim community had to be united to forge a third way through Islamic politics. Through affect, Jameelah aimed to cultivate revivalist sensibilities to unify the global Muslim community, particularly English-speaking Muslims spread across vast geographic distances.

In emphasizing affect as constituting affinity to the *umma*, I underscore the contingency of the concept. While the concept of the *umma* has a long history, dating to the origins of Islam, its meaning depends on the context in which it is imagined and acted upon. Jameelah's notion of the *umma* was highly politicized, and closely related to her use of another term, "Muslim civilization." For her, this



term is analogous to the concept of the “Muslim world,” which rose to prominence in the 19th century to denote a distinct, monolithic, and superior Muslim identity that could resist the incursions of European powers (Aydin, 2017). As Cemil Aydin documents, civilizational discourses came back to prominence during the Cold War among Islamist thinkers who wanted to chart an alternative to socialism and democratic capitalism, as well as to critique modernization efforts undertaken through nationalist and internationalist frameworks (Aydin, 2017, p. 198).

The idea of a pan-Islamic identity that transcended or superseded all others, combined with Jameelah’s insistence on Islam as a complete way of life that pervaded every social domain, was by no means a framework that Muslims universally shared. As such, she had to make the case for this elision between the *umma* as an aspirational community and the overtly politicized concept of Muslim civilization. As Jameelah herself lamented throughout her writings, Muslims had attachments to all kinds of other political and religious communities, including the nation-state as well as to other local forms of identity and community that were not so easily subsumed, and in many cases, challenged the notion of the *umma* as the paramount community. Within this context of competing allegiances and identities, Jameelah’s aim was to make her audiences *feel* like they belonged first and foremost to a universal Muslim community.

By invoking the concepts of “*umma*” and its related “Muslim civilization”, Jameelah asserted absolute and irrevocable distinctions between “Islam” and “the West.” From her perspective, the two sides of the binary were monolithic entities with immutable borders. Yet constructing such a binary required considerable work precisely because of the long reach of colonialism that Jameelah took pains to critique. As Jameelah pointed out constantly, Western culture was pervasive in Muslim communities. As she saw it, her job was to extricate a pure Muslim way of life from its contemporary corrupted state. In her writing, affect works in powerful ways to solidify boundaries between Muslims and the “West,” reinforcing an “us” that does not include “them” (Ahmed, 2014). In other words, Jameelah marshals affect to make the boundaries around “Islam” more stark and less permeable.

Shame, Law, and the Boundaries of the Umma

Jameelah’s work has complex affective dimensions that exceed the scope of this essay and as a result, I will focus on the way that Jameelah uses one affect – shame - to build attachments among revivalist communities. Shame plays a key role in Jameelah’s emphasis on regulating female sexuality in public space and her claims that relegating female economic and spiritual capacity to domestic spaces were essential to the task of reviving Islam. The status of women, especially their sexuality, had been an area of intense concern during the colonial period, during which the regulation of women’s bodies became an important aspect of colonial policy as well as religious and nationalist opposition to colonial rule. In the 1960s, revivalist thinkers in Pakistan, Egypt, and elsewhere had made gender an intense site for revivalist thought and activism (Ahmed, 2011; Hoffman-Ladd, 1987; Keddie, 2006; Mahmood, 2006; Rock-Singer, 2017).

Jameelah saw herself as a critic, who took both Muslims and non-Muslims to task for their moral and political failings. She frequently castigated Muslims for what she saw as their failure to ensure that “traditional” gender roles were properly maintained. This collective failure manifests itself on several levels, but Jameelah was principally concerned with the political domain, namely the lack of legal enforcement of marriage and divorce laws:

It is a matter of shame and regret that the family laws are being mutilated in many Muslim countries so that the Holy Prophet, His Companions, and our greatest divines, who nearly

all married more than one wife, would be considered as “criminals” under contemporary legislation! (Jameelah, 1976, p. 7)

In this passage, shame is collectively associated with Muslims as the *umma*, not simply a failure on the part of specific nation-states. Jameelah argues that Muslims generally have capitulated to the Western critique of polygamy as “backward” and “degrading” to women. In failing to maintain practices such as polygamy through the law, Muslims have acquiesced to the “exaggerated individualism” on which the critique of polygamy was made. In this passage, Jameelah does not single out a particular nation or society. Rather, she makes the sweeping claim that there are no modern societies where the legal protections necessary to ensure the maintenance of Islamic gender norms are in place. By her telling, the gender practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions have been “mutilated” by contemporary legislation. In this way, the entire *umma* is subject to the shame of having neglected to preserve essential aspects of their faith. The mutilation of family law stands in for the catastrophic decline of the *umma*.

Jameelah’s use of shame to draw boundaries around the *umma* resonates with Ahmed’s conceptualization of collective shame and its effects. According to Ahmed, the idea that a collective can feel shame stems from its perceived inability to ‘live up to’ its collective ideals. Shame also presents the opportunity for forward motion, toward the restoration of pride in the collective on the part of some national subjects, but not others:

By witnessing what is shameful about the past, the nation can ‘live up to’ the ideals that secure its identity or being in the present. In other words, our shame means that we mean well and can work to reproduce the nation as an ideal...the national ideal is shaped by taking some bodies as its form and not others. The pride of some subjects is in a way tautological: they feel pride at approximating an ideal that has already taken their shape (Ahmed, 2014, p. 109).

Ahmed explains that white Australians experience shame when they perceive that they have failed to live up to the multicultural ideal by inflicting harms on indigenous and non-white people through colonialism. We might expect that such collective feelings of shame would lead to a reckoning over Australian national identity and perhaps an expansion of the national project to include indigenous peoples. But the reverse is actually true. Ahmed demonstrates how this expression of national shame is really a conservative project that restores white Australians’ feeling of pride in their nation and the centrality of their place within that nation. White Australians’ shame in failing to uphold national values reaffirms their attachment to the nation yet does not dislodge their status as the ideal national subjects.

Likewise, Jameelah views collective shame as a productive register through which to restore pride in the *umma*. As Jameelah surveys the state of Muslim gender practices in the 1960s, she sees only the failure to uphold the gender norms of the original community of Muslims during the life of the Prophet Muhammad. In some nation-states, such as Tunisia, polygamy had been outlawed altogether. In other places, such as Egypt and Pakistan, the practice was allowed but only under certain conditions. For Jameelah, these gender norms are foundational to the ideal of the *umma* itself, and thus she measures contemporary Muslims according to whether they adhere to what she considers to be core gender norms. The failure to live up to what Jameelah considers to be the original Muslim gender practices is the source of the *umma*’s shame.

At the same time, the *umma*’s communal recognition of their failure, experienced as shame, was the first step to restoring and reviving Islam. The path forward – the future survival of Islam amid the



unceasing encroachment of “Western” gender ideologies –was not simply about providing the correct interpretation of Qur’an and Sunna. Rather, Jameelah’s writings demonstrate the importance of affect in mobilizing “feeling publics” around certain gender norms. For Jameelah, the *umma* needed to feel shame in order to re-embrace and in fact, double down on these foundational norms. Jameelah thus uses the shame of the *umma* to call for the restoration of original gender practices and in the process, the restoration of Muslim pride in their *umma*.

At the same time, Jameelah’s mobilization of shame limits the universalization of the *umma* ideal to those who uphold her vision of Islam. In Jameelah’s ideological version of Islam, the boundaries of the *umma* had to be more tightly drawn to correlate to the distinctive, monolithic conception of “Muslim civilization” that was the foundation of her Islamic politics. As a result, few Muslims live up to the ideals as she articulated them. For example, Jameelah singles out “modernists” as unlikely to feel shame around the erosion of traditional gender roles in Muslim communities (Jameelah, 1976, p. 6). They are doomed already because they had succumbed to “mental slavery” and capitulated to Western cultural dominance. Modernists had become pawns of Western imperialism by embracing “perverted cultural values” that led to the mixing of proper gender roles such that “a woman is entitled to honour and respect to the extent to which succeeds in performing the functions of a man while at the same time exhibiting her maximum beauty and charm to the public” (Jameelah, 1976, p. 9). In this way, Jameelah used shame to draw stark lines between those Muslims whom she believed were committed to living out the ideals of the Prophet Muhammad and those whom she believed had abandoned the original teachings of Islam.

Those Muslims who uphold “traditional” gender norms and who support laws for enforcing them thus contribute the rebuilding of the past glory of the *umma* and in this way, work to repair the trauma of Muslim decline under colonialism and modernization. By placing gender at the center of Muslims’ shame in the current state of the *umma*, Jameelah set out to make family and women the site through which pride could be restored. In this respect, while she openly critiqued figures like Qasim Amin, who argued for the end to practices such as seclusion and veiling, Jameelah adopted similar assumptions about how women functioned as the linchpin and measure for civilizational progress (Ahmed, 1992, p. 144-168). And, despite echoes of second-wave feminist rhetoric in Jameelah’s writings, especially her attention to how women had been exploited and objectified, she saw a limited set of contributions that women could make to the revivalist project, beyond their domestic responsibilities.⁴ To be sure, women had essential roles in terms of educating children and ensuring that their homes were sites for the preservation of Islamic morality, but they were also very much constrained in the possibilities that Jameelah imagined for them.⁵

Although Jameelah was staunchly opposed to nationalism and spent much of her critique arguing for the supremacy of Muslim identity over nationalist ones, her rhetoric echoed that of twentieth-century nationalist discourses in countries such as Iran and Egypt, where the status of women and the promoting companionate marriage became paramount for constructing national unity. As Beth Baron and others have shown, women national leaders and intellectuals played a key role in centering women in the nationalist project, even as they were often denied full political rights and had a

⁴ Of course, Jameelah recalls that she spent much of her days writing, with little time for cooking, cleaning or childcare. There is much more to say about Jameelah’s engagement with feminist authors and movements in the US and Pakistan, but that discussion is beyond the scope of this essay.

⁵ In this respect, Jameelah’s vision for female agency is quite different from that of the mosque movement described in Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2006), even though Jameelah shared many of the revivalist aims of Mahmood’s participants. Jameelah does not take up Aristotelian notions of ethics and is, as far as I can tell, rather disinterested in how to cultivate an Islamic subjectivity in her audience members. Rather, I am suggesting that her affective register derives from an imperial logic that presumes a universalist set of emotions that are not specifically Islamic.

diminished public role (Badran, 1995; Baron, 2005; Najmabadi, 2005) Similarly, Jameelah placed enormous affective weight on women and the nuclear to uphold her vision of a strong, robust Islam, but saw female social roles as circumscribed to domestic space. This discursive use of women and gender as focal points for different kinds of unification projects underscores the powerful affective affinities that female bodies, domestic space, and the family held in the 20th century.

However, Jameelah's universalism was predicated on divisions within the *umma* that she wished to uplift, rather than paper over. But only certain Muslims – those who share Jameelah's complementarian view of gender roles and the necessity of the law to maintain them – could make this revivalist mission a reality. In this way, the affect of shame does not merely help to instantiate the Islam /West binary, but also establishes certain Muslims as the true inheritors of the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad. Other Muslims, most notably modernists, but also as we will see in the next section, Muslim women themselves, pose existential threats to the survival of the *umma*. While the language of the *umma* at first glance seems to be an inclusive, universal category, the affect of shame creates and solidifies boundaries within the *umma*, distinguishing those committed to the revivalist project as inhabiting a special role in maintaining, preserving and ultimately reestablishing the glory of Islam.

Shame, Domesticity, Dirt

In Ahmed's theory of shame, she argues that certain bodies remain excluded from the national ideal because they fail to reproduce that ideal vision of a nation. Only certain people can take on collective shame because they are the ones who ultimately inhabit the ideal that has been compromised. Because gender is so central to Jameelah's conception of the *umma*, women function as the measure through which social ideals are measured, but they occupy an ambivalent position with respect to shame because they are ideal, yet subordinate members of the local and global Muslim community. The state of Muslim women becomes a proxy for the strength of the Muslim *umma* and non-Muslim women are presented as evidence for the West's moral inferiority in relation to Islam.

Jameelah was primarily interested in the social location of women by constraining their public mobility and visibility through Islamic practices. Unlike other revivalist thinkers and communities, Jameelah was not particularly interested in shaping Muslim women's interior spiritual life nor did she spend much time exploring the vast Muslim discourses on ritual and devotional practice in relation to shame or other emotions as described by McLarney and Mahmood (Mahmood, 2006; McLarney, 2015). Instead, Jameelah wanted to ensure compliance and regulation around public space in order to maintain strict boundaries between male and female social roles as the basis for Muslim cohesion:

While men are the actors on the stage of history, the function of the women is to be their helpers, concealed from public gaze from behind the scenes – a less exciting and more humble role perhaps, but no less essential for the preservation of our way of life (Jameelah, 1976, p. 9).

Like her mentor Mawdudi, Jameelah was a staunch proponent of *purdah*, the practice of maintaining gender separation among men and women who are not close family members and restricting female access to public space. Jameelah understood *purdah* to mean that women should spend most of their time in their homes to avoid unwanted male attention, prevent any violation of sexual virtue, and provide for women's material needs (Jameelah, 1976, p. 21). Women should also ensure that when they do leave the home, that they are dressed modestly and take the steps necessary to avoid attracting the male gaze.



Jameelah largely adhered to Mawdudi's justification for the practice of *pardah*, seeking to intensify the affective dimensions of his vision for a circumscribed role for women and the management of female sexuality as the basis for a strong Muslim society (De Soudy 2015; Iqtidar (2021). Writing to Mawdudi in October 1961, Jameelah attached an article from *Look* magazine, in which she established common affective ground with Mawdudi around female sexuality, reveling in their mutual repulsion for women who fail to uphold modesty standards:

...which to me are so repulsive that I refuse to conform and would rather be struck dead than seen wearing it. American and European fashion designers appear to do all they can to make the modern Western woman look like a street-walker. Even professional prostitutes do not go to the extremes of these so-called "respectable" women (Jameelah and Mawdudi 1992, 17).

The feeling of repulsion was for Jameelah the requisite affective response to ordinary American women donning clothes that were "designed exclusively for commercialized sex" (17). The stakes around modern dress could not be higher for Jameelah, as she conveyed to Mawdudi, that the so-called "emancipation of women" was in fact their degradation as sex objects to be bought and sold. In other words, Jameelah here likened women who embarked on professional careers to prostitutes, and she represented them as the ultimate symbol of licentiousness and immorality. The visibility of women in public was thus evidence for their degradation and fall from the spiritual heights available to them as wives and mothers. By invoking this comparison, Jameelah sought to amplify the moral threat of materialism not just to Islam and Muslims, but more broadly to ethical injunctions around sexuality, sex, and reproduction in American society. Without women focusing their sexual energies within the confines of marriage and for the purpose of reproduction, society was on the precipice of destruction. In this way, the entire fate of civilization rested on the proper enactment of female sexual mores.

Within the space of the home, Jameelah cast the mother's role as reproductive in two primary ways: birthing children and ensuring the "practical implementation" of Islamic norms and practices among her children. Women are thus tasked with the replication of revivalist understandings of Islam, and Jameelah sees this task as their primary religious and political function. Jameelah castigates women who departed from this role, for example, by seeking a career path or pursuing higher levels of education, as destroying the social fabric and moral order of a Muslim society. In this way, women and especially mothers, were key to reestablishing Islamic norms within domestic spaces and thus the home became a highly politicized space through which to reproduce her ideological vision of Islam.

Yet women faced numerous challenges to their ability to live up to this ideal. Jameelah saw threats everywhere to the reproductive potential of women. She frequently labeled these threats as forms of "dirt." Jameelah uses the term "dirt" to refer to two things: a) cultural practices that she observed among Muslims that she believed departed from Islamic ideals; and b) Western culture, especially popular entertainment such as movies and forms of dress, which she saw as a form of imperialism. Both kinds of dirt ought to elicit collective shame. Nowhere was this association between dirt and shame more apparent for Jameelah than in the realm of pop culture – film, music, magazines, in particular – which she repeatedly emphasizes to her audience is nothing more than the wanton display of female sexuality and the objectification of women for the male gaze. Jameelah singles out Marilyn Monroe as the prime example of such dangerous displays, which she argues have the potential to encourage illicit forms of sex, especially prostitution. Jameelah ascribes enormous power to pop culture, arguing that it threatened an Islamic way of life by infiltrating every corner of Muslims' lives. Music and movies are more than mere entertainment; these "vulgar" and "dirty" forms of

entertainment threatened to destroy the “whole moral and social framework” of Muslim societies (Jameelah, 1976, p. 31).

Targeted for their lack of shame around modesty norms, Jameelah inverts the colonial critique levied against Muslims, casting American women as the purveyors of cultural “filth” that had to be eradicated. Modesty here is a universalist concept, applying to Muslim and non-Muslim women, who, according to Jameelah must embrace modest dress and the avoidance of “dirty” pop culture to maintain the social order upheld by female sexuality and the centrality of the domestic space. The affect of shame binds the two cultural contexts that Jameelah insists are distinct and mutually exclusive.

In this binary construction of Islam/West, one of the key markers American and European women’s depravity have no capacity for shame. While they have much to be ashamed of, they do not feel shame because they have descended into the throes of materialism and atheism measured on a civilizational scale. Instead, according to Jameelah, American and European women represent social decline and decadence. Jameelah believed it was impossible for American and European women to feel shame because they are members of a society that embraces atheistic and materialistic impulses that, according to her, drive them to deviate from the proper ethical path. While Muslims are capable of shame, Europeans and Americans are “shameless” (Jameelah, 1977).

The logic here echoes that Ahmed theorizes. While shame can be deployed to produce different kinds of action, such as a woman cleaning her home rather than hiring someone else to do the labor for her, maintaining boundaries around individual behavior was not Jameelah’s end game. Rather, the affect of shame, producing by her invoking the failure of women to uphold Islamic ideals – not any particular women, but categories of women that stand in for entire civilizations – was essential to her project of building attachment to the *umma* among her audiences. In this way, shame forms an integral part of Jameelah’s solidarity-building project among a “feeling” revivalist public which was affectively connected on a civilizational scale.

Jameelah’s use of dirt to describe pop culture also suggests the importance of shame in border-making between Muslims and “Western” culture. It was not just that pop culture is forbidden in her understanding of Islam, but also that as dirt, Western music and movies confound the boundaries that Jameelah imagines between Islam and the West. To use Mary Douglas’s classic formulation, by calling pop culture “dirt,” Jameelah deems it “out of place” and therefore dangerous to what she believed needed to be an utterly distinct and monolithic Muslim civilization (Douglas, 1966). And it is particularly dangerous within the space of a Muslim home, which for Jameelah (and other revivalists) was a primary site for preserving and reviving a Muslim way of life that was constantly under threat.

The domestic domain was the key site for resisting Western imperial incursion and maintaining a proper Islamic home is essential to ensuring that the Islam/West binary remained in place. It was up to mothers to construct a moral defense against the dangers of Western culture. Shame was a primary tool that mothers had at their disposal:

Under no circumstances should she permit “pop” music to be heard in the house because this is the worst possible moral influence on the children. If ever children start singing these vulgar songs that they have heard and learned from their neighbors’ radios and television sets, she [the mother] should hush them and tell them how ashamed they should be heard singing such dirt! (Jameelah, 1976, p. 14)



Jameelah constantly reminds her readers that Islam had no space for “frivolous” pop culture. She rarely devoted much space to legal and ethical arguments against music or movies, preferring instead to declare such entertainment as obviously forbidden. Muslims had no time for this kind of entertainment because they needed to rigorously attend to their ritual obligations and focus on their children’s religious education.

Jameelah was particularly interested in correcting other Muslims when they failed to live up to her *umma* ideal. Here, Jameelah advocates for the role of shaming in the domestic space, as a tool to compel children to conform and as a key practice for the rearing of devout Muslim children. The Muslim mother must ensure the stability of the family, unified in their obedience and devotion to God, and a place where the “instructions” contained in the Qur’an and Hadith would be “practically implemented in their everyday lives” (Jameelah, 1976, p. 11). The domestic space functions as a primary political arena for the preservation of tradition and crucially for Jameelah, for ensuring compliance with Islamic regulations and prohibitions and in the process, ensuring the distinctiveness and superiority of “Muslim civilization.”

This polemic thus reinforces the idea that women were the measure of civilizational worth. Muslim women continued to have the capacity to feel shame as well as to deploy it within their domain of the home. Muslim women are capable to shaming and being shamed because they adhered to Islamic beliefs and devotional practices. Due to the incursions of Western influence, which Jameelah observes in the availability of American films and music in Pakistan, Muslim women are subject to the same kinds of temptations as European and American women (Jameelah, 1968). Yet Muslim women have the potential to embody purity, morality, and the promise of collective salvation. And because they have access to the teachings and practices of Islam, they are more likely to assume their proper place within the home, shielded from the male gaze, and most importantly, to be focused on the task of reproducing correct versions of Islam.

However, Muslim women often did not feel shame when they should. While Jameelah proclaimed herself to be an ardent anti-imperialist, she often used colonial tropes to critique Muslim women in Pakistan and other locations. Like many American and European observers, Jameelah railed against what she saw as the lack of hygiene and cleanliness in Pakistani homes and on the streets of Lahore:

Most Pakistani homes, even those of middle-class people, are dingy and dirty. Too many Pakistani women I know have the dirty habit of continuously littering the floors of their homes, particularly the courtyards and kitchens, with garbage and rubbish. They would rather live in filth than clean it up themselves. Islamic education should teach girls cleanliness and orderliness. Women should not feel ashamed to clean and sweep the house themselves. They should not depend on servants to do it for them (Jameelah, 1976, p. 14).

Rather than being a source of shame, a wife doing household labor embodied Islamic cleanliness and purity. The emphasis on hygiene as an Islamic practice has its roots in colonial-era ideologies that cast the lack of cleanliness as both a moral and public health crisis. As Gregory Starrett shows, British colonial officers and educators imposed Victorian ideals of health on local communities by framing hygiene as an Islamic virtue. Starrett and others have argued that such efforts to recast the meaning of ritual practices such as ablutions (*wudu*) acted to “put Islam to work” thereby instrumentalizing religious practices toward political and social ends as determined by colonial powers (Starrett, 1998).

To this colonial construct, Jameelah adds the American Cold War image of an ideal housewife and maps it onto the Pakistani women that she observes. In Jameelah’s eyes, a woman should complete all the household tasks herself, without the aid of extended family members and without hiring others

do it for her. An ideal Muslim mother was self-reliant and hardworking, wholly fulfilled by her proper role as caregiver and homemaker in the nuclear family, a vision of femininity and domesticity that resonated with Cold War American norms in the suburban milieu in which Jameelah grew up (Corwin Berman, 2011, p. 335-49; Kranson, 2017; May, 2017). Her use of the term “middle-class” signaled an aspirational ideal that had been embraced by American Jews as the heralding upward mobility and recognition. Jameelah railed against American materialism, and yet here she uses the term “middle-class” to suggest that the fulfillment of Islamic norms around cleanliness and self-reliance (as she understands them) are more attainable by Muslims who have accrued the requisite socioeconomic status.

By invoking Cold War gender ideology and imposing it as Islamically normative, Jameelah perpetuates the same kind of cultural imperialism that she claims to detest. Her understanding of household labor and the ideal Muslim wife also suggest Cold War justifications for fostering economic and social progress through development projects in societies that were deemed as “beneficiaries” (Pellegrinin, 2019; Shannon 2019). While Jameelah detested American intervention in Pakistan and elsewhere, by casting domestic practices as “dirty” she belied the same logic wherein Western observers waged moral critiques of the problems plaguing developing societies. Jameelah offered up a different solution through her revivalist vision of Islam, but the diagnosis tracked along prevailing US and European discourses that lifted up areas that Jameelah emphasizes - public health and female education – as sites for social and national progress.

But more importantly, the connection that Jameelah makes between shame and gender roles suggests more precisely how she uses affect to bridge the many divides that she detects among her audiences. The shame that Jameelah invokes is not anchored in a longer history of Islamic notions of shame, but rather constituted by a transnational ideal that she wagers is legible to Muslims living especially in contexts where Anglo-American gender norms were prevalent such as the UK, the US, and South Africa. In this way, Muslim women for failing to adhere to Islamic standards of cleanliness underscores their simultaneous status as the paragons of Islamic civilization. When a Muslim mother and wife did not adhere to such standards, then she contributed to the shame of the entire *umma*. This was the shame that preoccupied Jameelah’s attention. Precisely because women were the guardians of this boundary between Islam and the West, they were also dangerous threats themselves who needed to be subject to intense scrutiny and correction. In this way, the attachments that Jameelah seeks to build to the *umma* and the revivalist project revolved around the continuation of a “durable” colonial logic in which the measure of a society depended on the rendering of women as potent signs of progress rather than as full human beings (Stoler, 2016).

Conclusion

By focusing on shame in Maryam Jameelah’s writings on gender, this article has explored the role that affect played in the formation of revivalist publics in the mid-late 20th century. As an affect, shame does not merely help to instantiate the Islam /West binary, but also establishes certain Muslims as the true inheritors of the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad. While the language of the *umma* at first glance seems to be an inclusive, universal category, Jameelah constructs boundaries within it. By tracing the affective dimensions of Jameelah’s work, we can see the ambivalent dynamics of boundary-making between the constructs of “Islam” and the “West.” Affect also renders visible the boundaries that Jameelah delineates among Muslims themselves, even as she invokes purportedly universal categories such as “*umma*” and “Muslim civilization.”



Affect also helps to explain how ideologies of revival traversed multiple cultural contexts. While many of Jameelah's ideas were far from new or innovative, I want to suggest in that affect gave her writing considerable appeal for English-speaking readers in American and European contexts, where the family and gender roles were simultaneously being cast in stark affective terms in the late 1960s and 1970s. Her writing on gender is propelled by a sense of urgency that offers no relief from the pale of impending destruction. The task of reading Jameelah is distinctly unpleasant, and her use of shame raises the possibility for religious and political solidarity based on negative affects. For her the restoration of a robust Islamic society was both a discursive and ethical project, but also an affective one, predicated on building a negative emotional register, with women at the center.

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