I WANT MAIMED FEMALES FOR U.S. ARMY: THE U.S. MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF MAIMED AFGHAN WOMEN DURING THE U.S.-LED WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This research examines discourses which shape the main core of the U.S. mainstream media representations of Afghan maimed women during the time of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan to reveal the political implications of the representations with regards to the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan. Here, the term "maimed women" refers to those Afghan women who are mutilated by their male relatives during this period of time. By employing close reading as a key methodological tool, I analyze discourses in media representations of a maimed Afghan woman, Aisha (Aesha) Mohammadzai, and compare her representations with the representations of other Afghan maimed women, to examine how the entanglement of humanitarian, colonial and ableist discourses shape the main core of my interpretation of representations, and argue that this entanglement promotes the U.S. humanitarian achievements with the aim of disguising the political/economic interests of the U.S. war in Afghanistan. To develop this, I employ, first, contemporary humanitarian critiques which reveal that the discourse of rescuing and protecting human's life shape the logic of contemporary humanitarianism; second, feminist postcolonial scholarships which argue that rescuing and civilizing non-western women by western men is embedded in colonial discourses; and third, critical disability studies which discuss that ableist discourses are shaped based on equating disability with insufficiency and primitiveness which have to be constantly corrected, improved, and normalized. Although the existing postcolonial feminist critiques argue deeply and insightfully ideologies and practices embedded in the contemporary humanitarianism with regards to colonial discourses, few studies discuss the role of ableist discourses as one of the pillars which shape the logic of victimizing and objectifying indigenous women in the contemporary humanitarianism. The aim of this research is demonstrating that Aesha (and other maimed Afghan women) is objectified and victimized at the intersection of humanitarian, colonial and ableist discourses by the U.S. mainstream media representations.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

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Signed _____ (Marzieh Azhini)

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Introduction

After almost two decades of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, this chapter of our contemporary history was officially closed when the last U.S. military plane departed from Afghanistan on August 30, 2021. I remember that day very clearly. I was sitting in my room in Tehran and shocked by news which showed how fast the Taliban conquered the country, city by city. I was wondering what the point of fighting, dying, and becoming impaired and displaced for twenty years would be, if the Taliban would regain the power? I had no answer, I was crying and continuing to browse in the Internet to find more information, more images, and a very faint hope. Suddenly, I encountered with an article which had been recently published by the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, which expressed international fears about Afghan women's situations, if the Taliban rampaged back to the power.[1] The article had few pictures of a woman with a severed nose that absorbed my attention, later when I embarked on this research I learnt that the woman was Aishe (Aesha) Mohammadzai (I will introduce her soon). That photos occupied my thoughts for a long time and raised more questions day by day: What is the history, the story of that mutilated woman? Why is that woman chosen to be depicted? What is the relationship between her disfigurement and the local patriarchy in Afghanistan? What is the role of her disfigurement as regards the power relations between the Taliban and the United States and its alliances? This thesis is motivated by the quest to find answers to these questions.

Since then, time to time I have been reading, the U.S. mainstream media has been still debating that Afghans need humanitarian interventions,[2] the government of the United States has announced

[1] Henry Holloway, "FACE OF PAIN: Afghan woman had her NOSE and EARS chopped off by the Taliban after being forced to marry fighter at 14," *The Sun*, August 17, 2021, https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/15891876/afghan-woman-taliban-horror-chopped-off/.

[2] Charli Carpenter, "Afghans Need a Humanitarian Intervention Right Now," *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2021, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/12/afghans-need-a-humanitarian-intervention-right-now/.

its additional humanitarian Assistance for people in Yemen,[3] and Iraqis have still been struggling with the consequences of the U.S.-led war which began in 2003, after President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair called for "humanitarian assistance" in Iraq.[4] Day by day, by going further and further in this research, I have been more and more realizing that to what extent in our contemporary time the political conflicts and economic interests have been disguised by humanitarian masks. Although dealing with news about disfigured women and how they have been misused in different forms, has been emotionally extremely tough and challenging for me, understanding more about our contemporary humanitarian moment has motivated me to continue this research. I hope my thesis can shed light on this complicated era.

Through the first stages of my research, I listed the names of Afghan women who had been mutilated, tortured, and physically impaired by their male relatives to collect my research material. For instance, as western media narrated, Sutara was an Afghan woman who engaged at the age of eleven, whose lips and nose were sliced off by his husband in 2013.[5] Akhtara was an Afghan acid attack victim and maimed by her nephew, who first killed her husband because he wanted to marry her, and then threw acid on her face in 2013.[6] In the same year, Shakila Zareen, who was forced by her brother-in-law to marry at the age of sixteen, was shot in the face by her husband.[7] Reza Gul was another Afghan child bride, who was tortured for six years by her husband, who at the

[3] Antony J. Blinken, "United States Announces Additional Humanitarian Assistance for the People of Yemen," *U.S. Department of State*, March 16, 2022, https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-additional-humanitarian-assistance-for-the-people-of-yemen-3/.
[4] Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, "Introduction: Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention," in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*, eds. Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (New York: Zone Books), 13.
[5] "Two tales of brutality to women in Afghanistan," *BBC*, December 18, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25398935.
[6] "Afghan acid attack victim shares her ordeal, shows her wounds," *Indiana TV News Desk*, November 26, 2013, https://www.indiatvnews.com/crime/news/scars-of-akhtara-crime-news-4522.html.
[7] Joel Ballard, "She fled to Canada after her Taliban-connected husband shot her in the face. Now her family needs protection," *CBC News*, last updated: August 26, 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/woman-who-fled-taliban-needs-help-1.6154846.

end cut her nose off in 2016.[8] Zarina was a twenty-three year old Afghan woman, whose ears were cut off by her husband in 2017, because he was suspicious about her relationship with other men.[9] These women are just few examples that have been appearing in western media during the last two decades. Among them Aisha (Aesha) Mohammadzai was the most popular mutilated Afghan woman in western media. She - who appeared on the cover of the *TIME* magazine on August 9, 2010 - was the first mutilated woman whose life absorbed worldwide concern about women's lives in Afghanistan. In contrast with other women, including those are listed here, who have mostly just appeared once and disappeared and been forgotten very soon, she was followed and narrated for a couple of years by western media. Consequently, I decided to focus mainly on the representations of her case in this research and use close reading as a methodological tool to analyze her representations, and time to time refer to other narrated women to support and supplement my discussions in the analytical chapters. I made this decision due to two major limitations that I have had: first, I had a lack of time, second and more importantly, as I mentioned earlier there has not been enough information about other women in western media. Having said that, representations of Aesha were strong enough to keep continuing the research that I had started. She was followed and narrated since she was living in a shelter in Afghanistan until she went through her last stages of reconstructive surgeries in the United States. Her covered life span with various phases, including being rescued, coming to the United States, being integrated in the new geographical context, going under the reconstructive surgeries, all and all, make me able to scrutinize various discourses - from the local patriarchy to the humanitarianism - which play roles

[8] "Reza Gul: The Afghan woman whose husband cut off her nose," *BBC*, January 28, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35408623.
[9] Samuel Osborne, "Afghan woman has ears cut off by 'suspicious' husband in middle of the night," *Independent*, February 1, 2017, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/afghan-woman-21-zarina-ears-cut-off-suspicious-husband-sin-balakh-kashinda-a7558356.html.

in my interpretation of media representations of maimed Afghan women. Moreover, since the aim of my research is analyzing the U.S. mainstream media representations to understand the embedded discursive constructions and political implications of these particular representations, not to be statistically representative, so Aesha's case, supplemented by other cases, could make me able to discuss the most influential discourses which shape the representations in my interpretation.

Before giving the general picture of this research, I introduce Aisha (Aesha) Mohammadzai. To note, here I do not give facts rather refer to the American and British media portrayals/narratives of Aesha, because they are the only accessible sources that I have had to know more about her. Bibi Aisha, with the legal name of Aesha Mohammadzai in the United States, is an Afghan woman. Based on what has been narrated in Western media, she was just twelve years old, when she was promised to an older man – according to some narrations, to a Taliban fighter in a compensation for a debt, and forced to marry him at the age of fourteen.[10] Her husband had abused her for four years, until she ran away from his house at the age of eighteen. After being arrested by the authority and spending five months in a jail, she was sent back to her husband.[11] As a punishment, under the command of a Taliban chief, Aisha's husband and her brother-in-law chopped her nose and ears off and "left her on the mountainside to die."[12] She passed out from the pain and after awaking she crawled to her grandfather's house,[13] but was refused help and "ended up having to find medical

[10] Ben Rossington, "Smiling again: Mutilated teenage Afghan bride has surgery to replace her nose," *Daily Mirror*, February 26, 2013, https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/aesha-mohammadzai-afghan-teenager-nose-1732800.

[11] Leon Watson, "'I am so happy with my new face:' Brave Time cover girl Aesha shows off results of incredible surgery after Afghan husband sliced off her nose," *Daily Mail*, updated February 27, 2013, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2284616/Aesha-Mohammadzai-Brave-Time-cover-girl-tortured-Afghan-husband-appears-Daybreak.html.

[12] Aryan Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban," *TIME*, August 09, 2010, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2007407,00.html.

[13] Ryan Grenoble, "Aesha Mohammadzai Photos: Afghan Woman Who had Nose, Ears Cut Off By Taliban Recovers," *The Huffington Post*, February 27, 2013, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/aesha-mohammadzai-nose-ears-

aid at a U.S. military base."[14] After spending nine months in a woman's shelter in Kabul[15] run by Women for Afghan Women – a non-governmental organization founded in New York in 2001 "in response to the brutal conditions Afghan women and girls were suffering under Taliban rule"[16] – Aesha moved to California in August 5, 2010, for undergoing reconstructive surgeries,[17] offered freely by a U.S. humanitarian medical group.[18] Since the surgery was postponed until a later time due to her unstable mental condition,[19] she moved to Queens, New York to stay in the U.S. office for Women for Afghan Women organization and later in her apartment.[20] After spending less than a year in New York, she moved to Frederick, Maryland to live with an American-Afghan family, where she finally received the reconstructive surgeries that was promised her since the first day of being in the United States in December 2012.[21]

This thesis examines how the intersection and the entanglement of various discourses, including the contemporary humanitarianism, and colonial and ableist discourses shape the main core of the U.S. mainstream media representations of maimed Afghan women. Here, "maimed Afghan women" refers to those Afghan women who are mutilated by their male relatives, during the time of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. I borrow the term "maim" from queer theorist Jasbir

taliban_n_2773994.

[14] Holloway, "FACE OF PAIN."

[15] Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, "Afghan Girl Bibi Aisha's Father-in-Law Arrested for Face Mutilation," *The Daily Beast*, updated July 14, 2017, https://www.thedailybeast.com/afghan-girl-bibi-aishas-father-in-law-arrested-for-face-mutilation.

[16] Women for Afghan Women, "Women for Afghan Women's Facebook page," *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/womenforafghanwomen/.

[17] Lauren Frayer, "Disfigured Afghan on Cover of Time Heads to US," *AOL News*, August 5, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20101022124150/http://www.aolnews.com/world/article/disfigured-afghan-on-cover-of-time-heads-to-us/19582078.

[18] Jessica Ravitz, "Saving Aesha," *The CNN*, December 2012, https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2012/05/world/saving.aesha/.

[19] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

[20] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

[21] Jessica Ravitz, "For Aesha, healing comes in many forms," The CNN, updated December 20, 2012, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/16/us/aesha-surgery-healing/index.html.

K. Puar. She employs this term to discuss that Israeli Defense Forces shoot Palestinians in a way to maim rather than kill them.[22] She argues this practice as an approach to control the Palestinian population by letting them alive but perpetually debilitated.[23] I employ this term, since Afghan women are also maimed, not killed, to be controlled according to the local patriarchal structures.

To develop my argument, in the first chapter of my thesis, I provide a constellation of theories and literatures on which my thesis builds. The first part of this chapter is allocated to the contemporary humanitarianism to understand how it works, why in this context there should be some groups as a target of rescuing and protecting, who this group can be, what the role of this rescuing is in the time of the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan, and in which ways this discourse affects media representations. Then, I engage with feminist postcolonial critiques on the western created category of the "Third World Women," and the dichotomy of non-western "uncivilizability" and western "civilizability" to understand why and how this category and this dichotomy are created and deployed in representations, and what role this category plays as regards the U.S. humanitarianism. Then, I discuss critical and feminist disability studies, since they make me able to examine what the contribution of the disfigurement and of disfigured women to the U.S. invasion are, and how the ableist discourse leads to the certain way of representations of maimed women. In the last part of this chapter, I engage with literatures about media representations of disabled bodies, since they assist me to understand how disabled bodies are represented in general, and how they are deployed in political conflicts, in particular. I develop my argument based on these theoretical frameworks and literatures since they connect to each other and overlap when a population is victimized, objectified, and dehumanized. In other words, the constellation of these

[22] Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2017): x.
[23] K. Puar, *The Right to Maim*, x.

literatures and theories - which each of them argues a part of ideologies, policies, and approaches within which a population is objectified, victimized, and dehumanized - makes me able to argue objectifying maimed Afghan women in the U.S. mainstream media representations on an intersectional ground.

In the second chapter, based on the western discourse of rescuing non-western women, which are introduced by the humanitarian and postcolonial scholars, I argue how and why some specific portrayals of Aesha (and other maimed women) are represented in media, and how they can be understandable in relation to the U.S. war in Afghanistan. To do this, I analyze discourses in an article published by the *TIME* magazine on August 9, 2010. In the last chapter, by building my argument at the intersection of the critiques on the western humanitarian discourse of improving the life of non-western women – argued by critics of humanitarianism and feminist postcolonial scholars, and on ableist discourse of correcting, normalizing, and improving disabled bodies, argued by critical disability scholars, I reveal how and why Aesha is converted into a feral child in my interpretation of media representations. Here, again the aim of analyzing discourses is to understand political implications of representations in relation to the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. Therefore, I analyze discourses in an article, "Saving Aesha," and one of its follow-ups "The Evolution of Aesha," both published in December 2012 by the *CNN*. By accomplishing these three chapters, hopefully I am able to shed light on the intertwined relationship between humanitarian, colonial, and ableist discourses, and demonstrate why they cannot be argued separately and each of them should be discussed as a part of the bigger logic which objectifies , victimizes, and dehumanizes maimed Afghan women in the U.S. war context.

Chapter 1: The network of theories and literatures

This chapter discusses a constellation of theories and literatures which shape the foundation of this research and assist me to understand the logic of the U.S. mainstream media representations of female maimed bodiedness during the time of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. First, I scrutinize theories that discuss the intertwined relationship between humanitarianism and war. These theories help me to understand why representing humanitarian actions are crucial in contemporary wars, and what the main attributes of the contemporary humanitarianism are. Then, I engage with feminist postcolonial studies which criticize the western created categories of oppressed women and male oppressors in the Global South, and with feminist scholarships which argue how indigenous women are objectified and victimized since the international military campaign "The Global War on Terrorism" – called also "War on Terror" - inaugurated in 2001. These critiques open a window into how these categories of oppressed women and male oppressors are deployed in the U.S. humanitarian and military contexts. Third, I discuss critical and feminist disability studies which elaborate on how disabled people are discriminated. This group helps me to demonstrate what roles the "disfigurement" of maimed Afghan women play in the process of "Othering" them through representations. Last but not least, I study literatures about media representations of disabled bodies. These literatures assist me to know the most typical stereotypes and figures which appear in media representations, the changes in these stereotypes through the time, and to understand why their representations in certain ways are crucial in the time of political relations and conflicts. This constellation, where each group of studies argues a part of the general logic within which maimed Afghan women are victimized and objectified, makes me able to provide an intersectional approach for my analytical chapters.

1.1 Contemporary humanitarianism and disguising the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan

Although the U.S. military invasion and presence in Afghanistan were not officially declared as a humanitarian intervention, rather conceived as an act of self-defense in response to the terrorist attacks against the United States in September 2001,[24] the language and rhetoric of humanitarianism have widely formed the U.S. policy in Afghanistan.[25] Having said that, inflating of military invasions with humanitarian discourses is not limited only to the war in Afghanistan, rather as anthropologist Didier Fassin points out, is the common attribute of all military policies in the era of the contemporary interventionism. He indicates that no war happens "now without its humanitarian corridors and its humanitarian workers. And no Western military intervention into another country is now without its justification on humanitarian grounds."[26]

As Fassin and his anthropologist colleague Mariella Pandolfi argue, "morality," and "moral obligation" play essential roles in the contemporary humanitarian context, and make the substitutions for political principles.[27] They put emphasis on the "moral obligation" to discuss the distinction between the old and the contemporary interventionism. The main difference is "a shift from legality toward legitimacy, or rather from a focus on international law to the invocation of the humanitarian argument."[28] As an example of the contemporary humanitarianism they discuss how the last president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel and Prime Minister Tony Blair called for "humanitarian intervention" in Kosovo in 1999.[29] In contrast with the old version, when

[24] Fatima Ayub and Sari Kouvo, "Righting the Course? Humanitarian Intervention, the War on Terror and the Future of Afghanistan," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)* 84, no 4 (July 2008): 641. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25144869.
[25] Ayub and Kouvo, "Righting the Course?" 647.
[26] Didier Fassin, "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life," *Public Culture* 19, no. 3 (2007): 508. doi 10.1215/08992363-2007-007.
[27] Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, "Introduction: Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention," in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*, eds. Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (New York: Zone Books), 12.
[28] Fassin and Pandolfi, "Introduction: Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention," 13.
[29] Fassin and Pandolfi, "Introduction: Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention," 13.

interventions happened in the name of supporting weak states and liberation movements – such as India's intervention in the Bangladesh War of 1971 in support of Bangladeshi nationalists - this example demonstrate how the contemporary interventionism works under the banner of "protecting a population and saving lives."[30]

To clarify which groups, populations, or lives have been the target of supporting by the U.S. humanitarianism during the time of its presence in Afghanistan, first I refer to the speech of the United States' then First Lady, Laura Bush, which was published in November 16, 2001, shortly after President George W. Bush declared the global "War on Terror," and as some American critics of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan indicate, after two months of bombing campaign, just when it was perceived that the Taliban were defeated and no more fight needed.[31] In this speech she emphasized the necessity of kicking off "a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al-Qaida terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan."[32] A year after, in December 2002, the former U.S. secretary of State Colin Powell introduced the mission "Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)" which "was based on four major elements related to economics, education, politics, and women's empowerment."[33] In 2003 when George W. Bush called for "humanitarian assistance" in Iraq[34] – as a part of the campaign "War on Terror" - he stated, "in many Middle Eastern countries, poverty is deep and it is spreading, women lack rights and are denied schooling,"[35] then he added, "[t]he future of Muslim nations will be better

[30] Fassin and Pandolfi, "Introduction: Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention," 12.
[31] Miriam Cooke, "Saving Brown Women," *Signs* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2002), 486.
[32] "Radio Address by Mrs. Bush," *The White House (President George W. Bush)*, November 17, 2001, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html.
[33] Bakhtiyar Mirkasymov, "The US Greater Middle East Initiative," *Policy Perspective* 4, no. 2 (July-December 2007), 2.
[34] Fassin and Pandolfi, "Introduction: Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention," 13.
[35] "President Bush discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," *The White House (President George W. Bush)*, November 6, 2003, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html#:~:text=Sixty%20years%20of%20Western%20nations,at%20the%20expense%20of%20liberty.

for all with the full participation of women."[36] Consequently, indigenous women, as a population to be protected and saved in Afghanistan - as well as in Iraq - have formed the main core of the U.S. humanitarianism in the time of "War on Terror." These examples demonstrate how the U.S. humanitarianism shapes its pillar on the ground of gender-based discrimination and oppression in the Middle East. Therefore, if we want to understand how the U.S. humanitarianism works we should provide gender analysis of representations. These examples clarify how humanitarian language and rhetoric emerge to conceal political and economic interests of continuing/embarking on wars in our contemporary time. In this research, mainly in chapter 2, I discuss how the U.S. mainstream media (mis)uses Afghan women in general, maimed women, in particular, and the brutality of the local patriarchy to create a humanitarian disguise for the U.S. military invasion.

1.1.1 Producing victims at the intersection of emergency and representations of suffering

"Emergency" plays an essential role in the humanitarian context. As media studies scholar Pooja Rangan argues, emergency requires acting now and conveys this idea that there is no time to think, there is no time to waste.[37] Moreover, since "the casualties of emergencies are often subjects who have been deprived of their civil rights and protections,"[38] creating emergency sphere around an event conveys this massage that actions are taken not due to political interests, rather humanitarian responses. These notions of emergency resonate with my research since, as I will discuss in chapter 2, Aesha's mutilated body (and the maimed-bodiedness of other women) – who has had no protection, no civil rights, and been subjected to various kinds of domestic violence and misused by the local patriarchy, besides her corporeal disfigurement which affects immensely her life in its

[36] "President Bush discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East," *The White House*.
[37] Pooja Rangan, *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 10.
[38] Rangan, *Immediations*, 10.

very basic biological level – is deployed by the U.S. mainstream media to convey this idea that how urgent taking humanitarian (not political) actions to save women's lives in Afghanistan is.

Another attribute of emergency which makes a connection to my research is its intertwined relationship with representations of suffering. By referring to sociologist Craig Calhoun, Rangan explains how "emergency as a particularly modern imaginary engendered by the human suffering caused by the escalating incidence of catastrophe, war, conflict, and state violence."[39] Representations of suffering have a huge impact on creating the emergency sense of taking humanitarian actions. The issue that I seek to examine in my both analytical chapters is how suffering of becoming mutilated is represented in the U.S. media narrations. In other words, I seek to examine that whether depicting or narrating the face or the "mutilation story" of Aesha – which at first glance might seem as the representations of suffering to spark the emergency of the humanitarian intervention – could grasp and show the essence of suffering experienced by her.

So, it is required to elaborate on what "suffering" means and this is the moment that I engage with Judith Butler's insightful book, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. In this book they explain how "a livable life and a grievable death"[40] establish an exclusionary mechanism which indicates who counts normatively as human.[41] Their notion of "grievable life" is built based on the term of "face" which Butler borrows it from philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, and the "vulnerability of face." Butler employs "face" to discuss how "others make moral claims upon us, address moral demands to us, ones that we do not ask for, ones that we are not free to refuse."[42] Consequently, the recognition of the "face" happens when "I" encounter with the "Other," when

[39] Rangan, *Immediations*, 10.
[40] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), xiv-xv.
[41] Butler, *Precarious Life*, xiv-xv.
[42] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 131.

"I" have a temptation to jeopardize the life of the "Other,"[43] and when "I" recognize the precariousness of that life. Therefore, the recognition of the "vulnerability of face" of the "Other" makes a pause in the process of (or aborts) the violent act of killing.

Then, Butler discusses how the events of 9/11 inaugurated a new process of defacing some faces through representations. They bring up this idea that "personification does not always humanize […] personification sometimes performs its own dehumanization."[44] They explain this dehumanization in two different levels. On the one hand, defacing/dehumanizing by giving demonized faces to some, such as Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, or in Butler's word, by representations of "the human face in its deformity and extremity, not the one with which you are asked to identify."[45] On the other hand, defacing/dehumanizing by representing some faces, without representing the suffering which that faces have experienced; for instance, media representations of Afghan girls who have stripped off their burka, makes Butler indicate "[w]here is loss in the face? And where is the suffering over war? Indeed, the photographed face seemed to conceal or displace the face in Levinasian sense, since we saw and heard through the face no vocalization of grief or agony, no sense of precariousness of life."[46] Bearing in mind that Butler does not uncritically engage with representations of precariousness and suffering, when they argue how it can be problematic and act as a process of dehumanization by emphasizing that "[f]or representation to convey the human, then, representation must not only fail, but it must *show* its failure. There is something unpresentable that we nevertheless seek to represent, and that paradox must be retained in the representation we give."[47] This is the moment that Butler's work resonates

[43] Emmanuel Levinas, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 24.
[44] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 141.
[45] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 143.
[46] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 142.
[47] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 144.

with my research. They warn that the threat of dehumanizing through the process of representations, whether by demonizing faces, not representing the suffering of faces, or pretending that representations fully grasp what has happened to sufferers.

I use Butler's discussion about dehumanization through the process of representations to explain how representing maimed Afghan women dehumanize them. In both analytical chapters, I will discuss that the U.S. media representations of Aesha dehumanize her by not representing the essence of her suffering. This might seem paradoxical. On the one hand, Aesha's mutilated face and her "mutilation story" – as the signs of her suffering appear in media; on the other hand, I claim that media does not represent the suffering that she has experienced. In my analytical chapters, I will return to this paradox by examining that whether media representations of Aesha acknowledge Butler's notion of suffering, and demonstrate, her suffering is represented just only to fulfill the requirements of the U.S. contemporary humanitarianism, not to depict her suffering in Butler's notion.

Criticizing representations of suffering becomes crucial when we encounter with how human suffering is misused and how in the process of representations, sufferers become objectified. As Didier Fassin explains, humanitarian intervention "takes as its object the defense of causes, which presupposes not only leaving other causes aside but also producing public representations of the human beings to be defended (e.g., by showing them as victims rather than combatants and by displaying their condition in terms of suffering rather than the geopolitical situation)."[48] Establishing on his argument, in chapter 2, I will examine how Aesha is represented as a "pure"

[48] Fassin, "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life," 501.

victim to fulfil the humanitarian logic, and how she is objectified through this process of victimization.

The last issue that I think should be addressed in this section is how Aesha as a mutilated woman is victimized in the humanitarian context. I build the foundation of this discussion based on Fassin's distinction between "those who are subjects (the witnesses who testify to the misfortune of the world) and those who can exit only as objects (the unfortunate whose suffering is testified to in front of the world)."[49] In my research, Aesha is the unfortunate being whose "mutilation story" creates narrations to be told not by her rather by the U.S. media, and not for narrating what has happened to her rather to create the U.S. humanitarian logic. Let's refer again to Butler when they remind us to ask the names of thousands of Palestinians and Afghans who have died by the United States support/war: "Do they have names and faces, personal histories, family, favorite hobbies, slogans by which they live?"[50] By adding to that, I ask: does this (maimed) face, who has name and personal history (in western media) have voice, agency, subjectivity and first-person perspective? Asking about agency guides me to engage with the second group of literatures which shapes the skeleton of this research: postcolonial critiques of western created category of "Third World Women," – which argue how women in this category are deprived from having agency – and feminist studies that discuss how women during "War on Terror" are objectified and victimized.

1.2 Victimizing, rescuing, and civilizing "Third World Women"

In "Can Subaltern Speak?" feminist scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak finds the roots of western rescue missions of indigenous women in the colonial time, in nineteenth century. To describe the

[49] Fassin, "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life," 517.
[50] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 32.

British abolition of suttee, she offers the phrase of "white men are saving brown women from brown men."[51] The same claim emerged in the context of British occupation of Egypt in the decade of 1880s, when the occupation was justified under the banner of rescuing Muslim women from Muslim men.[52] Middle Eastern studies scholar Miriam Cooke finds a connection between these British colonial projects and the U.S. imperialist mission in Afghanistan. As she points out, the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan is justified according to this Spivak's phrase – invasion in the name of saving indigenous Afghan women and of reviving their rights – and as a part of the U.S. civilizing mission in South Asia.[53] She discusses that "burka recalls suttee and the four-stage gendered logic of empire: (1) women have inalienable rights within universal civilization, (2) civilized men recognize and respect these rights, (3) uncivilized men systematically abrogate these rights, and (4) such men (the Taliban) thus belong to an alien (Islamic) system."[54] She argues that in this context women are rescued not because they are perceived more similar to civilized western citizens, rather because they are perceived more docile and civilizable.[55]

Some critics of the "War on Terror" argue that "protection scenario", i.e. non-western women are rescued from danger by western men, and "civilizing mission" form an alliance to not only "justify the destruction of a country's infrastructure,"[56] but also make a skeleton for the "U.S. empire building;"[57] the empire which builds on an "Orientalist" ground. Feminist anthropologist Nadje Al-Ali and international politics scholar Nicola Pratt argue that reviving "democracy, human

[51] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *in Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994): 93.
[52] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992, 153.
[53] Cooke, "Saving Brown Women," 485.
[54] Cooke, "Saving Brown Women," 485.
[55] Cooke, "Saving Brown Women," 486.
[56] Carol A. Stabile and Deepa Kumar, "Unveiling Imperialism: Media, Gender and the War on Afghanistan," *Media, Culture and Society* 27, no. 5 (2005): 771.
[57] Eisenstein, *Against Empire*, 8.

rights, and women's rights" in the context of "War on Terror" construct an "us versus them" which "distinguish the United States and its Western allies from the "rest." They are used as markers of "civilization" as well as reasons for "civilizing" others."[58] Consequently, in the discourse of civilizing non-western women, a kind of "Othering," which emanates from colonial discourses, can be found.[59] As theorist and gender studies scholar Zillah Eisenstein puts it, here the "civilized behavior is positioned against the uncivil savage, with primitive and inferior traditions."[60] In this logic, non-western women, who are seen as "Others," are dehumanized, as well as victimized; therefore, the third segment which completes the picture of rescuing and civilizing is victimizing. In other words, some groups should be there as victims to be rescued and then civilized. Here, literatures which discuss how indigenous men and women in the Global South, and their relationship are perceived in the Global North, are instructive.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty is one of the feminist pioneers who criticizes western created monolithic, homogenous and universal category of "Third World Women." In her article, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," she elaborates on "[t]he relationship between "Woman" a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) – and "woman" – real, material subjects of their collective histories"[61] to explain how colonial "constructed" Women of the Global South are distinguished from the "real" diverse women of the Global North. This category represents Southern women as universal dependents, victims of male

[58] Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (University of California Press, 2009): 6.
[59] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist Associations* 104, no. 3 (September 2002): 784.
[60] Zillah Eisenstein, *Against Empire: Feminisms, Racism, and the West* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2004), 75.
[61] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarships and Colonial Discourses," *Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism* 12, no. 3 (1984): 334. https://www.jstor.org/stable/302821.

violence, of familial systems and of religious ideologies.[62] On the same critical ground, sociologist Sara R. Farris discusses how "current media and political discourses focus on male Muslims as oppressors […] while women from these [Muslim] countries were often depicted as victims of a backward culture."[63] Al-Ali and Pratt discuss this kind of victimization in the context of "War on Terror," by arguing that female Muslims and Arabs "are generally portrayed as victims of "barbaric" or "backward" religious/cultural practices, such as the wearing of the veil, arranged marriages, and honor killings."[64] To note, victimizing indigenous women and portraying an "oppressed" figure of them in Western media during the time of "War on Terror" can be seen as a practice which fulfill the requirements of the ongoing wars. Media studies scholars Carol A. Stabile and Deepa Kumar insightfully discuss that in contrast with invisibility of Afghan women in broadcast media before 11 September 2001, after the attacks, the coverage of them is increased dramatically.[65] They argue, this coverage - by combining "the protection scenario with an Orientalist version of Afghan history" - conveys this idea that women's oppression started when the Taliban gained power, [66] and totally conceals the rise of fundamentalism in Afghanistan in 1989 as a result of the earlier U.S. intervention in the Middle East.[67] These literatures which elaborate on the intertwined relationship between victimizing, rescuing, and civilizing women in the Global South will assist me in both analytical chapters, when I will discuss how Aesha (and other maimed women) is rescued from his male relatives, and how the lives of Afghan women are

[62] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 338-342.
[63] Sara R. Farris, "Femonationalism and the "Regular" Army of Labor Called Migrant Women," *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* 2, no 2 (Fall 2012): 186. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/historypresent.2.2.0184.
[64] Al-Ali and Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation?*, 8.
[65] Stabile and Kumar, "Unveiling Imperialism," 772.
[66] Stabile and Kumar, "Unveiling Imperialism," 772.
[67] Stabile and Kumar, "Unveiling Imperialism," 773.

represented as threatened entities in need of "white" protection in chapter 2, and how Aesha is taught to be civilized in chapter 3.

Civilizing makes a bridge between my research and critical disability studies, since the later argues how disability is perceived as "unruliness" in need of being controlled and corrected. More importantly, the disfigured corporeal condition of maimed women necessitates to engage deeply with this group of literatures. By keeping in mind that postcolonialism as a critical discourse "can offer a crucial point of departure for the analysis of disability representations when they are manifested in, or projected onto, non-western cultural contexts,"[68] now I engage with the third group of literatures: critical disability studies.

1.3 Dehumanizing disabled bodies

In "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," feminist disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues why disability must be considered as an essential part of feminist scholarships. She argues that "[f]eminist disability theory augments the terms and confronts the limits of the ways we understand human diversity, the materiality of the body, multiculturalism, and the social formations that interpret bodily differences."[69] This intertwined structure of physical/biological corporeality and social/cultural structures is relevant to my research. In my analytical chapters I will discuss how maimed bodiedness of Aesha is considered as an entity which shapes her various socially constructed bodies, from being perceived as "pure" victim in the U.S. humanitarian context to a "feral child." I will discuss how these socially

[68] Clare Barker, "Interdisciplinary Dialogues: Disability and Postcolonial Studies," *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal* 6, no. 3 (November 3, 2014): 2.
[69] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *NWSA JOURNAL* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 1.

constructed bodies are shaped at the intersection of gender, disability, and race by attaching different meanings and ideologies to this intersection.

Garland-Thomson's argument of attached meanings and values to human corporeality, resonates with "normalcy," which is discussed by queer and disability studies scholar Robert McRuer. As he puts it, by introducing of "normalcy" into the binary of ability/disability, able-bodiedness equates with being "normal" and other forms of body are considered as "abnormal."[70] Creating a norm for the human body, produces the "deviant" and "idealized" forms of body, and simultaneously promotes the way that bodies should be.[71] Therefore, ableism, like racism, creates "an internalization or self-loathing which devalues disabled people,"[72] whereby they are discriminated, oppressed and stigmatized as a result of being different from a perceived "normal" body.[73] In addition, being disabled is interwoven with being impure and characterizes an ambiguous personhood.[74] In other words, disabled people are perceived as "neither "full person" nor "nonperson";"[75] so, they are "not only devaluated but dehumanized."[76]

Due to a value system which is embedded in ableism and label disabled bodies as "deviant" because of their corporeality, in an ableist paradigm, disabled bodies are always perceived as the "Others." These arguments about the dehumanized figure of disabled bodies beg to rethink about Afghan women's maimed bodiedness. On the one hand, as discussed in the previous section,

[70] Robert McRuer, "Compulsory Able-bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York and London: Routledge, 2006): 302.
[71] Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), 34-35.
[72] Fiona Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Abledness* (New York: Palgrave macmillan, 2009): x.
[73] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 2013): 75.
[74] Susan Reynolds Whyte and Benedicte Ingstad, "Disability and Culture: An Overview," in *Disability and Culture*, eds. Benedicte Ingstad and Susan Reynolds Whyte (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995): 10.
[75] Ida Nicolaisen, "Persons and Nonpersons: Disability and Personhood Among the Punan Bah of Central Borneo," in *Disability and Culture*, eds. Benedicte Ingstad and Susan Reynolds Whyte (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995): 38.
[76] Reynolds Whyte and Ingstad, "Disability and Culture," 10.

postcolonial thoughts elaborate how women from the "Third World" are stigmatized as a universal oppressed group, and on the other hand, critical disability studies demonstrate how disabled bodies are dehumanized by a value system which is embedded in the logic of ableism. Therefore, as I will discuss in detail in my analytical chapters, the U.S. media makes maimed women the "Others," because it highlights the stigmatized figure of "Third World Women" and the dehumanized figure of disabled persons.

One way of dehumanizing disabled people is treating them in a way as if they were "incomplete," "insufficient," and "incompetent," so they should constantly improve to be closer to the normative definition of "complete," "sufficient," and "competent" abled humans. This constant process of improving is theorized by critical disability scholars under the name of "compulsory feralization."

1.3.1 Compulsory feralization, the necessity of correcting the perceived primitiveness, and wearing prostheses

Critical disability studies scholars David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder develop the concept of "compulsory feralization" to discuss that the behavior towards disability and disabled people have roots in the early-twentieth-practice of compulsory sterilization to argue how disabilities are perceived as "examples of human insufficiencies in need of professional mediation."[77] As they put it, in this context, "disability becomes a regressive throwback to prior, primitive, subhuman state."[78] In other words, in this context, the attached insufficiencies to disabled people are perceived as the insufficiencies of the primitive forms of human beings. Equating disability with primitiveness and insufficiency in need of constant corrections, improvements, and completeness

[77] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, "Compulsory Feral-ization: Institutionalizing Disability Studies," *PMLA* 120, no 2 (March 2005), 627.
[78] Mitchell and L. Snyder, "Compulsory Feral-ization," 627.

mark disabled people as "perpetually available for all kinds of intrusions, public and private."[79] These intrusions can appear in various forms, from medical mediations to assigning rehabilitation counselors, private advocates and guardians.

These concepts and arguments shape the main theoretical foundation of my discussion in chapter 3. Based on the concept of "compulsory feralization," I will demonstrate how Aesha is treated like a feral child who should be bodily and socially a "complete" civilized human with various forms of intrusions. As I mentioned earlier, there is an intertwined relationship between feralization, civilizing, and colonial discourses. In "Feral Biopolitics: animal bodies and/as border technologies," gender studies scholar Hyaesin Yoon discusses that "the feral has often been deployed as a more or less explicit trope for migrants, people of color, people with disabilities, and inhabitants of the global South – as well as other groups whose mobility, inhabitance, and reproductivity are unwelcome and politically problematized."[80] Based on this, I will discuss, how the entanglement of Aesha's race and maimed bodiedness makes her an uncivilized feral child who should be tamed.

One of the implication of correcting and completing disabled bodies in the context of "compulsory feralization" can be seen in the public tendency to wear – let's say obligatory - prostheses, which is widely criticized by feminist and disability scholars. Feminist critic Audre Lorde finds particularly the prostheses which are designed only for appearance, such as false breasts, seriously problematic.[81] In contrast to other artificial limbs which assist to perform some specific tasks, such as walking or chewing, prosthetic breasts affirm this idea that "as if the only real function of

[79] Mitchell and L. Snyder, "Compulsory Feral-ization," 629
[80] Hyaesin Yoon, "Feral Biopolitics: animal bodies and/as border technologies," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 22, no. 2 (Published online: 17 May 2017), 137.
[81] Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals: Special Edition* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980), 55.

women's breasts were to appear in a certain shape and size and symmetry to onlookers, or to yield to external pressure."[82] Consequently, Lorde argues that the attitude toward the necessity for wearing prosthetic breasts is born out of the idea which objectify, sexualize, and depersonalize women.[83] Building on the above arguments, in chapter 3, I will discuss in detail the connection between feralization and wearing prostheses; besides how Aesha is forced to wear a fake prosthetic nose for the sake of female beauty.

1.4 Media representations of disabled bodies

Representing disfigurement and disfigured bodies in media can play essential roles in political conflicts and power relations, since various meanings can be attached to their disfigurements. As an example, the impairment of a soldier can be represented in a way to create patriotic feelings to continue a fighting, or contrarily, convey the idea that how pointless fighting is. The aim of this last section of this chapter is engaging with literatures that discuss media representations of disabled bodies, particularly in the time of conflicts. To do this, first I provide a general picture of how disabled bodies are represented in media of some geographical parts of the global North and of the global South to know the typical emerged stereotypes through the time; then, I scrutinize an analytical work which explicitly examines media representations of disabled bodies as regards power relations between countries.

In *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson insightfully focuses "on how disability operates in culture and on how the discourses of disability, race, gender, and sexuality intermingle to create figures of otherness from the raw materials of bodily variation specifically at sites of representation such as

[82] Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, 55.
[83] Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, 55.

the freak show, sentimental fiction, and black women's liberatory novels."[84] She indicates that with an exception of autobiographical texts, representations tend to "objectify disabled characters by denying them any opportunity for subjectivity or agency."[85] This work resonates with my research because it demonstrates how representations deprive disfigured bodies from having a subjective voice and agency. In her later works, Garland-Thomson observes a shift from stigmatized and exclusionary representations of disabled bodies towards more inclusive and authentic ones. She sees this shift as a consequence of disability rights movements.[86] Shifting from exclusionary to more inclusionary representations of disabled bodies in the U.S. context affirms also by communication studies scholar Michael S. Jeffress, when he explains how the 2020 Netflix documentary film, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* "shows authentic representations of people with disabilities."[87] Haller et al. indicate the same positive shift in the Canadian context, as well. As they discuss, although the Canadian news media includes time to time some negative models of disabled bodies such as, "portraying disability issues from a medical or charity perspective or presenting people with disabilities as "supercrips","[88] most news media coverage narrates the authentic and inclusionary perspective of disabled people.

These researches demonstrate that disability rights movements have positively affected representations of disabled bodies. Here, a related issue - which I seek to address it in my research – is raised. Do the effects of disability rights movements lead to granting all people with disability

[84] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 6.
[85] Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 11.
[86] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Disability and Representation," *Modern Language Association* 120, no. 2 (March 2005): 522. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25486178.
[87] Michael S. Jeffress, "Introduction," in *Interdisciplinary Disability Studies: Disability Representation in Film, TV, and Print Media*, ed. Michael S. Jeffress (London and New York: Routledge, 2022): 1.
[88] Beth A. Haller et al., "The place of News media Analysis within Canadian Disability Studies," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 1, no. 2 (May 2012): 65. DOI:10.15353/cjds.v1i2.42.

these inclusive figures? Anthropologist Parin Dossa insightfully argues that there is a logic of "exclusion and the social erasure of racialized individuals with disability,"[89] and as I will discuss in my analytical chapters, this racialized exclusion can also be observed in media representations of disabled bodies. In other words, although in the United States disability rights movements have strong history and roots in comparison with other countries, which have positively affected on media representations of disabled bodies, I demonstrate that there is a racialized policy of exclusion which at the end determines who is excluded from having the inclusionary and authentic representations. Mostly immigrants and people of color with disabilities are the ones who are deprived of having the inclusionary, non-stigmatized figures. Building on Jasbir K. Puar's argument, where she discusses that current disability rights frameworks - which are formed based on "social accommodation, access, acceptance, pride, and empowerment"[90] - are not able to disclose the Israeli geopolitical biopolitics of debilitation in Palestine, I discuss why this framework cannot account for disabled people in some geographical zones, particularly in war-torn countries, where hospitals are destroyed, and medical supplies and resources are scarce, or where disability rights movements do not have strong roots.

Mass media scholars Mauryne Abwao and Mishra Suman by analyzing the disability stories which are covered by one of the Kenya's newspaper, *Daily Nation* in 2016 and 2017 demonstrate that most of the stories preserved traditional stigmatized figures of disabled people, by highlighting "social pathology, medical, supercrip, and economic costs surrounding disability."[91] The same argument is posed by psychologist and literary scholars Suhail Mahmoud Al-Zoubi and Samer

[89] Parin Dossa, *Racialized Bodies, Disabling Worlds: Storied Lives of Immigrant Muslim Women* (University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009), 5.
[90] Puar, *The Right to Maim*, x.
[91] Abwao and Mishra, "Media, culture, and news framing of disability in Kenya's *Daily Nation* newspaper," 246.

Mahmoud Al-Zoubi who discuss how disabled people are represented in Arabic drama.[92] These two works elaborate that stigmatized figures of disabled bodies become the dominant figure in some non-western contexts. Although my research deals with western, or better to say the U.S. context, which is benefited from disability rights movements, as I mentioned earlier, I discuss that a racialized hierarchy, which determines who benefits from and who is deprived of the achievements of disability rights movements, is embedded in representations of disabled people in the U.S. context. Those who are given a chance to benefit from disability rights movements, are represented as authentic figures, and those who are deprived – just like those who are represented in the mentioned non-western contexts – are stigmatized and even dehumanized.

The last literature, which is reviewed here, is allocated to media representations of disabled bodies across borders, where representations convert the corporeality of disabled bodies into a political tool to satisfy power relations between countries. In "Knowing North Korea through Photographs of Abled/Disabled Bodies in Western News," media studies scholar Micky Lee discusses how both North Korean government and Western media deploy the corporeality of North Korean native people to promote their political ideologies. On the one hand, North Korean government demonstrates the strength of the country by highlighting the images of abled male bodies in military parades; and on the other hand, western press promotes the notion of brutality which is embedded in the North Korean government by emphasizing the stories of disabled North Korean defectors.[93] Lee's analytical work offers an outstanding idea about the politics behind media representations of disabled bodiedness across borders. She investigates – as I will do in chapter 2

[92] Suhail Mahmoud Al-Zoubi and Samer Mahmoud Al-Zoubi, "The portrayal of persons with disabilities in Arabic drama: A literature review," *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 125, (2022): 7.
[93] Micky Lee, "Knowing North Korea through Photographs of Abled/Disabled Bodies in Western News." In *Disability, Media, and Representations: Other Bodies*, ed. Jacob Johanssen and Diana Garrisi, Routledge (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 95.

- that in political conflicts the corporeality of individual citizens are deployed by foreign media to convey various ideologies and fulfil the requirements of conflicts. As I will show in the case of Afghanistan, the aim of representing disfigured bodies is mainly highlighting the brutality of the Taliban, as well as the local patriarchal structures, to justify the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. In my analytical chapters I seek to demonstrate how crucial representations of disfigured bodies are in international conflicts, and shed light on the issue that how disabled bodies are represented immensely depends on which side of conflict represent them, and on the context where they are represented.

In conclusion, the network of these theories and literatures demonstrates how multidimensional the objectives of representing mutilated faces and of narrating mutilation stories can be. Scholarships and theories of the contemporary humanitarianism help me to understand how wars are disguised by humanitarian masks and how the figures of victim in need of protection are produced and proliferated by humanitarian discourses to justify wars. Feminist postcolonial critiques show me how the roots of humanitarian victimhood can be found in the colonial era, and how women and men in the Global South are universalized and somehow dehumanized under a western gaze to play the roles of oppressed females and male oppressors, the categorization which on the one hand, connects me to humanitarian logics of saving lives, and on the other hand, sheds light on the western logic of civilizing people of non-western countries. Moreover, they discuss that the rhetoric of saving and of civilizing indigenous women in the general context of "War on Terror," can be seen as a phase of the U.S. Empire building which shape the power relations in national and international contexts. Then, critical and feminist disability studies demonstrate how meanings and ideologies are attached by various discourses to disabled bodies, and how these bodies are perceived as an "incomplete," "insufficient," and "primitive" creatures that should be

corrected, improved, and completed for the sake of being compatible with social norms, beauty, and western civilization. Last but not least, studies related to media representations of disabled bodies demonstrate that disabled people are stigmatized and excluded in media. In addition, they show that disability rights movements can positively affect the representations of disabled bodies, there is a racialized mechanism which deprives some disabled people from benefiting the positive effects of disability rights movements, the stigmatized traditional stereotypes can be preserved in some non-western contexts, and how crucial representations of disabled bodies can be – because of the meanings which can be attached to their disability - in the time of international conflicts. At the end, by establishing my argument on this network, where each group of it explains a part of the process of objectifying and victimizing maimed Afghan women, I am able to explain in the following chapters, why and how Aesha (and other maimed Afghan women) is objectified and victimized in the U.S. mainstream media representations.

Chapter 2: Bibi Aisha and the necessity of saving "Brown Women" in Afghanistan

Aisha's story absorbed international gaze, when she appeared on the cover of *TIME* magazine on August 9, 2010 – a year after her mutilation. A cover line, "What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan," was put on next to her disfigured face (Figure 1). In contrast to her highlighted presence on the cover, her story was narrated only as a small part of a relatively long cover story.

Figure 1: Bibi Aisha on the cover of *TIME* magazine[94]

As Aryn Baker, the author of the cover story mentioned, after nine years of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, the necessity of exit weighted day by day. She argued any hasty decisions that do not take into account the consequences of this exit – including sacrificing human rights in general, and women's rights in particular, must be avoided. Consequently, she allocated the opening of her article to Aisha's "mutilation story," to get onto the subject of the possible future of living conditions for Afghan women under the Taliban rule - if one of the solutions to leave Afghanistan would be negotiating with the Taliban.

[94] Richard Stengel, *The Plight of Afghan Women: A Disturbing Picture*, photograph, TIME, July, 29, 2010, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2007415,00.html.

In this chapter by analyzing discourses in the cover story published by the *TIME* magazine (and analyzing some other media representations to support my discussions), first, I examine the role of the female indigenous disfigurement in the context of the U.S. humanitarianism. Then, I discuss connections/disconnections between representations of Aisha, the disfigured Afghan woman and other women without visible impairments, and their positionality in the U.S. humanitarian interventionism. At the end I seek to shed light on the intertwined role of the feminine victimhood and of the local patriarchy to complete the puzzle of the U.S. humanitarian discourse.

2.1 Bare life bearers versus qualified life bearers

To initiate analyzing the cover story, first, I discuss how the article seeks to develop this idea that negotiating with the Taliban should be equated with sacrificing of "women's lives," and of "women's rights" in Afghanistan. After narrating Aisha's "mutilation story," Baker adds more examples from Afghan women's lived experiences to demonstrate, Aisha is not the only woman whose life is in danger, rather the situation for the vast majority of Afghan women would be under threat if the Taliban would return to power. As an example, she explains that female teachers are warned by the Taliban to leave their jobs, otherwise they will kill them "in such a harsh way that no woman has so far been killed in that manner."[95] Here, both the women's work, as a women's right, as well as their existential lives are under threat. Consequently, the presence of the U.S. military in Afghanistan is connected to protecting women's "bare life," on the one hand, and women's "qualified life," on the other hand. What I call "bare life," and "qualified life" here emanate from Didier Fassin's argument of two levels of life which engage in humanitarian actions: "bare life," or physical survival, and "qualified life," or social existence.[96] I employ these terms to show that the U.S. humanitarianism in Afghanistan acts in two levels: intervening to protect life

[95] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[96] Didier Fassin, "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life," *Public Culture* 19, no. 3 (2007): 518.

in its very existential and its social levels. On the one hand, women are protected from being killed, impaired, or mutilated - briefly, their biological existence and wholeness are protected – and on the other hand, the social aspects of their lives, such as their rights to work, education, or to actively participate in public sphere, are the target of protection. This claim can be supported by referring to Laura Bush's speech in support of the invasion of Afghanistan: "[o]nly the terrorists and the Taliban forbid education to women. Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women's fingernails for wearing nail polish."[97] Here, Laura Bush mentions forbidding women to educate, as well as pulling out women's finger nails to indicate that both qualified and bare life of Afghan women is in danger under the Taliban rule. As I will discuss soon, the idea of protecting these two kinds of life - as the aim of the U.S. military invasion/presence in Afghanistan - emerges in various parts of the *TIME* article, but for now I just raise a question and postpone to answer it until the end of the following discussion: is Aisha granted a "qualified life" anywhere in the article? To show how Baker develops the idea of protecting the qualified and the bare lives of Afghan women as the aim/achievement of the U.S. military presence, I analyze a part of the article, where she indicates the reason of the U.S.-led invasion in Afghanistan as follows,

> [w]hen the U.S. and its allies went to war in Afghanistan in 2001 with the aim of removing the safe haven that the Taliban had provided for al-Qaeda, it was widely hoped that the women of the country would be liberated from a regime that denied them education and jobs, forced them indoors and violently punished them for infractions of a strict interpretation of Islamic law.[98]

On the one hand, in this excerpt - and in the whole article - the author does not address directly the events of the 9/11 attacks, and the main reason of the U.S. military invasion in Afghanistan, the

[97] "Radio Address by Mrs. Bush," *The White House (President George W. Bush)*.
[98] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

invasion as a self-defense in response to the terrorist attacks against the United States in September 2001.[99] On the other hand, this excerpt – and the whole article – is inflated by humanitarian wishes (achievements/purposes) of the invasion. I demonstrate, the revival of the "women's rights" – as the qualified life of women in Afghanistan – as well as protecting their "biological wholeness"[100] – as their bare life - shape the main core of the U.S. humanitarian disguise. Before elaborating on this argument by analyzing the *TIME* cover story, first I give an example to show that this argument can be observed in the U.S. reports of other maimed Afghan women as well. For example, after covering the "mutilation story" of Reza Gul in the *New York Times*, and again without mentioning any political reasons of the U.S.-led invasion in Afghanistan, the authors state, "[d]espite more than a decade of efforts to enact an Afghan legal system that protects women, and more than $1 billion in legal aid from the United States alone, Afghan women remain particularly vulnerable to abuse."[101] Here again, the ruin of Reza's biological wholeness is connected to the U.S. humanitarian assistance for improving the local legal system which principally aim to protect and improve both biological and social life of Afghan women.

Let's return to the *TIME* cover story and analyze the above quotation: women's chance of having "education" and "job," and of not confining "indoors," i.e. of actively participating in the society on one hand, and preventing the violent punishment of women on the other hand, are mentioned as the U.S. humanitarian wishes of saving women's qualified life and bare life, respectively. The later becomes clearer if we make a comparison with the part when Baker indicates that Aisha is

[99] Ayub and Kouvo, "Righting the Course?"

[100] I employ this term in relation to Aisha's mutilation. If we consider her severed nose and ears as the emblem of destroying biological wholeness, one of the aspect of the U.S. humanitarian purpose would be protecting women's wholeness.

[101] David Jolly and Ahmad Shakib, "Afghan Woman's Nose IS Cut Off by Her Husband, Officials Say," The New York Times, January 19, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/20/world/asia/afghan-womans-nose-is-cut-off-by-her-husband-officials-say.html.

"*punished* for running away from her husband's house [emphasis added];"[102] women's punishment in this context brings them losing the biological wholeness; therefore, preventing women's punishments mean protecting their bare life. As an additional example, I refer to the part of the article where Baker directly quotes Robina Muqimyar Jalalai, an Afghan female Olympic athlete: "We have women boxers and women footballers, […] I go running in the stadium where the Taliban used to play football with women's heads. […] If the Taliban come back, I will lose everything that I have gained over the past nine years." Here, the present qualified life of Robina- running in the stadium as a female Olympic athlete - is threatened by the Talibs who played football with the destroyed bare life of Afghan women - their heads - in the past time. To note, "nine years" cover the whole period of time since the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan began in 2001 till the article was published in 2010; therefore, both freedom (as an attribute of the qualified life) and safety (as an attribute of the bare life) are assumed as the direct consequences of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan.

These examples show how the U.S. humanitarianism requires some Afghan women as the flag bearers of the qualified life, and some others who carry the flag of the bare life. The qualified and the bare life of women give permanent and temporal faces to the U.S. humanitarianism. On the one hand, women who carry qualified life show that the U.S. humanitarian actions could not only protect their existence, but also improve the quality of their life. Their qualified life demonstrates more stable and more last-longing achievements, and it brings more success to the U.S. humanitarianism. On the other hand, women who bear bare life prove how urgent taking the U.S. humanitarian actions is, because their existence is under threat.

Before going further in this discussion, let's answer to the question that I have raised earlier.

[102] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

Aisha's disfigurement - as the emblem of the ruined wholeness - plays an essential role in the context of the U.S. humanitarian purpose of saving women in Afghanistan, because as I said, it brings urgency. Aisha is never granted a qualified life. As we can see in the article, her whole life is summarized only in a time span of her mutilation. She is just a biological body that is maimed. She is trapped in her maimed-bodiedness, and deprived of having a qualified life. Her disfigurement is the face of the ruined bare life and should be represented in a way to only highlight this ruin. Her ruined wholeness in particular, and the threatened bare life in general, add the emergency of taking (humanitarian) actions. I mean when life, in its very essential biological existence is in danger, no thinking, rather acting, and no delay, rather immediacy are expected. When Baker narrates Aisha's mutilation story she adds, "[t]his [becoming mutilated] didn't happen 10 years ago, when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. It happened last year."[103] Here the time of mutilation - when Aisha's wholeness was ruined – is emphasized. Aisha's disfigurement and the recent time of becoming disfigured – create the emergent sphere around the U.S. humanitarianism. As discussed in subsection 1.1.1, what makes humanitarian discourses problematic is not only that they conceal political purposes and power relations, but also because they depend on the proliferation of the figure of the "victim."[104] In one aspect, this victimized figure is embedded in the Aisha's disfigured face. Let's elaborate how her victimhood is created in the cover story. It is mainly built in the first paragraph, where Baker employs a couple of assumptions to narrate the Aisha's "mutilation story." For instance, "[h]er in-laws treated her like a slave, Aisha pleaded,"[105] or "Aisha passed out from the pain but awoke soon after, choking on her own blood,"[106] or "she

[103] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[104] Fassin, "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life," 501.
[105] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[106] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

would have died, if she hadn't run away."[107] In this paragraph, Baker never directly quotes Aisha. Although it is her story, she never appears as the subject of the story, she is only the one that should be narrated. Therefore, if we consider that one of the purposes of writing the article is the necessity of keeping "women's rights" alive, the article betrays its own aim, by making Aisha voiceless. Having said that, Aisha passes the silent world and treads into the world of sounds only when, as Baker describes, she touches "the jagged bridge of scarred flesh and bone that frames the gaping hole in an otherwise beautiful face,"[108] and says: "[t]hey [Taliban] are the people that did this to me, […] [h]ow can we reconcile with them? […] the Taliban are not good people, […] [i]f they come back, the situation will be worse for everyone."[109] So, the voice is granted to her only when she confirms the main author's argument of negotiating with the Taliban has a disastrous consequence. To note, in this scenario, Aisha is not alone, because most of the time the whole lives of other Afghan maimed women are summarized only in their "mutilation stories" as well. In January 18, 2016, *NBC News* published a report about how Reza Gul's nose had been sliced off by her husband.[110] In this report, besides narrating Reza's "mutilation story" in a couple of sentences, the names of two other maimed women, Aisha, and Setara, a mother whose nose and ears cut off by her husband in December 2013,[111] are mentioned. Here, these women are just names whose bodies are mutilated.

Let's make a connection between the recently mentioned quotation - "the jagged bridge of scarred flesh and bone that frames the gaping hole in an otherwise beautiful face,"[112] and what Jodi Bieber, the photographer who took picture of Aisha for the *TIME* magazine says in a video published by

[107] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[108] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[109] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[110] Fazul Rahim, "Photo of Reza Gul, Mutilated Woman, Provokes Revulsion in Afghanistan," *NBC News*, January 18, 2016, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/photo-mutilated-woman-provokes-revulsion-afghanistan-n498966.
[111] Rahim, "Photo of Reza Gul, Mutilated Woman, Provokes Revulsion in Afghanistan."
[112] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

the *TIME PHOTO DEPARTMENT*, "her [Aisha's] head scarf fell slightly back and her hair was exposed and she had the most beautiful hair. And I said, "you know, you are really such a beautiful woman, and I could never understand or know how you're feeling, you know, by having your nose and ears cut off. But what I can do is show you as beautiful in this photograph.""[113] Here is the moment when Aisha's womanhood in the local patriarchy and in the U.S. humanitarianism encounter. In the context of the local patriarchy, Aisha has to be mutilated in a harsh way that no trace of beauty remains. In the U.S. context, she has to be represented in a way that her beauty reveals as much as possible. In both contexts, Aisha is reduced to the "just body" that carries only beauty, the beauty that should be destroyed, the beauty that should be debuted – two sides of the same coin of objectifying - no space for agency, no space for subjectivity. Figure 2 depicts another picture of Aisha taken by Bieber.

Figure 2: A Picture of Bibi Aisha, taken by Jodi Bieber [114]

Let's compare this picture with two other pictures (Figure 3 and Figure 4). Figure 3 is a French colonial postcard in Morocco and Figure 4 depicts Aisha before her last surgery in December

[113] Jodi Bieber, "Photographing Aisha for the Cover of TIME," *TIME PHOTO DEPARTMENT*, June 28, 2010, https://time.com/3774895/photographing-aisha/.

[114] TIME Photo Department, *Revisiting Aisha*, photograph, updated June 28, 2010, https://time.com/3774895/photographing-aisha/.

2012.[115] I see more commonalities between Figure 2 and 3 than Figure 2 and 4. Figure 2 depicts Aisha in medium shot, while she wears a traditional red dress which exposes her neck and a part of her chest. The scarf was put on in a way which gives an oriental vibe, while her "beautiful" hair is exposed. Her wrist is adorned by bangles. Briefly, her feminine beauty is highlighted. By comparing this with Figure 4, where her disfigurement and scars are captured in close-up or extreme close-up shots (I will discuss in detail in the next chapter that using this technique which is complemented with other elements objectifies Aisha), it becomes clearer that although her disfigurement is depicted (only her nose, the ears are hidden behind her hair) in Figure 2, it is not at the center of attention, rather her oriental beauty is emphasized. And because of this, probably Figure 2 reminds me of the French colonial postcard in Morocco (Figure 3).

Figure 3: A French colonial postcard in Morocco [116]

[115] "The Evolution of Aesha," The CNN, updated December 18, 2012, https://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/15/us/gallery/aesha-surgery/index.html.

[116] Youssef El Kaidi, *Readings of French Colonial Postcards in Morocco*, photograph, Inside Arabia: Voice of the Arab People, March 3, 2019, https://insidearabia.com/french-colonial-postcards-morocco/.

These women are depicted in a way to expose the feminine beauty of the South. Aisha's disfigurement is required in the context of the U.S. humanitarianism - as discussed before, as the emblem of the ruined bare life and the emergency of taking actions - but it should be represented not in an "annoying" rather in a "beautiful" way to not "repel" rather "absorb" the gaze.

To go one step further in exploring the Afghan women's positionality in the eyes of the U.S. humanitarianism, let's talk more about those women who are granted the qualified life. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. humanitarianism needs representations of the qualified life of Afghan women, as its more permanent and stable achievements – in parallel to representations of the threatened bare life of some other Afghan women. Therefore, some Afghan women, who are represented as the women resist the local patriarchy, should occupy the subjective position. This argument raises a question: who can be the owner of this subjective position? To answer this question I refer again to the *TIME* article. Besides Aisha, there are some other women who appear in this cover story. Their names and their social statuses – which are always attached to their names in the first round of citations - are listed in Table 1. To note, without exception, all the women have high social statuses and are directly quoted by the author. This politics of citation demonstrates how the text is established based on an "elitist" ideology which demarcates who can have her own voice, when she is referred to, and who – just like Aisha - cannot have a voice, so should be represented.

Name	**Social Status**
Fawzia Koofi	"the former Deputy Speaker of Afghanistan's parliament"
Robina Muqimyar Jalalai	"one of Afghanistan's first two female Olympic athletes"

Sabrina Saqib	a "parliamentarian"
Mozhdah Jamalzadah	"Afghan refugee who grew up in Canada […] [and] recently returned home to launch an Oprah-style talk show, which has become wildly popular"

Table 1: A list of the cited Afghan women (except Aisha) in the cover story, published by the *TIME* magazine

Their high social statuses, and having the voice to represent themselves emphasize their qualified life. They are "non-disfigured" Afghan women who occupy the subjective positions, while Aisha - as the woman who has visible disfigurement – is the only woman who occupies the objectified position. Aisha's maimed corporeality makes a foundation of this reduction. Her disfigured face reminds that she is "neither "full person" nor "nonperson","[117] just like other disabled people in the paradigm of ableism. In this paradigm, Aisha's impairments are interpreted as the blemish of the qualified, more specifically, "functioning" life; therefore, she - who struggles with the very basic daily aspects of her life, such as breathing, smelling, eating, or generally, living "independently" - could not be the representative of the bearers of the qualified life in the ableist discourse. Consequently, Aisha's objective and other women's subjective positions have roots on the ground of ableism as well.

To clarify, when I discuss two subjective and objective positions for Afghan women I do not mean that women in the subjective position are not perceived as victims in the context of the U.S. humanitarianism, rather I mean there is a hierarchy of the female victimhood. The bottom level belongs to "disfigured" victims of the local patriarchy with their already ruined bare lives, and the

[117] Ida Nicolaisen, "Persons and Nonpersons: Disability and Personhood Among the Punan Bah of Central Borneo," in *Disability and Culture*, eds. Benedicte Ingstad and Susan Reynolds Whyte (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995): 38.

upper level is allocated to "non-disfigured" victims, whose qualified life is threatened by the local misogynistic structures. In this arrangement, besides Afghan women, the local patriarchy and its agents, Afghan men, play a crucial role for the U.S. humanitarianism. Afghan men should be represented in a way, as if they were there to threaten both levels of bare and qualified life of Afghan women. And because of that I say all Afghan women in the U.S. humanitarianism are victims. For example, in a part of the article, where Baker narrates an experience of Fawzia Koofi, the former Deputy Speaker of Afghanistan's parliament and one of the women in the subjective position, she says, "Koofi remembers being beaten on the street for forgetting to remove the polish from her nails after her wedding. "We were not even allowed to laugh out loud," she says."[118] This example shows how even the women in the subjective position, have represented as those who have already been oppressed by the local patriarchy.

In August 2017, *The New York Times* published an article about Mumtaz, a twenty-three year old female acid attack victim who maimed at the age of eighteen, because she married her beloved man, not a "pro-government militia," to whom Mumtaz had been promised.[119] At the very beginning of the article, the authors state, "Mumtaz is a 23-year-old woman […] whose tormentors were jailed. It was a rare legal victory in the struggle for women's rights in Afghanistan, hailed at the time as proof that justice for female victims was possible. But as far as Mumtaz is concerned, justice has brought her nothing but tragedy,"[120] because, as they narrate, her husband was killed a month ago by relatives of her attackers, and now she remains alone in extreme poverty, with a newborn baby.[121] Although Mumtaz resisted the arranged marriage, got marry to the man she

[118] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[119] Rod Nordland and Jawad Sukhanyar, "Years After Acid Attack, an Afghan Story of Survival Takes a Dark Turn," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/world/asia/afghanistan-womens-rights-acid-attack.html?auth=link-dismiss-google1tap.
[120] Nordland and Sukhanyar, "Years After Acid Attack, an Afghan Story of Survival Takes a Dark Turn."
[121] Nordland and Sukhanyar, "Years After Acid Attack, an Afghan Story of Survival Takes a Dark Turn."

loved, and Afghan women became closer to their emancipatory aims when her attackers were jailed, by publishing this article this massage is conveyed that even "rare legal victory in the struggle for women's rights in Afghanistan" inevitably would fail. It seems that in the U.S. mainstream media most of the time Afghan women are losers and their rights would never be attainable. In section 1.2, I discussed how postcolonial feminists criticize the western created categories of non-western "oppressed women," and "male oppressors." Here we can also see how these categories are deployed for the U.S. humanitarian interests. Consequently, on the one hand, the ruined bare life and the threatened qualified life of Afghan women, and on the other hand, the local patriarchy and its agents – Afghan men - complete the puzzle of the U.S. humanitarianism in Afghanistan. In the next section I discus the role of the last segment of this puzzle - the local patriarchy and Afghan men - in the U.S. humanitarian context.

2.2 Brown men take the stage

First, I examine how Afghan men are represented and how the relationship between Afghan men and Afghan women are described in the *TIME* article (some few supplementary examples from other U.S. mainstream media are also added here). Based on the representations of Afghan men in the *TIME* cover story, they can be categorized into three different groups. First, those men who are the part of the Taliban apparatus. They are monolithically represented as "Evil," those who "play football with women's heads,"[122] "set fire to […] daughter[s],"[123] burn girl's school, throw acid in the student's face, and command to cut the women's organs.[124] These examples demonstrate how this group of men - Taliban chiefs and members - are represented as the ones who threaten and ruin the bare life of Afghan women.

[122] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[123] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[124] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

The second group is the Afghan men who are the part of the government. These men are represented as "corrupted," "opportunists," and "conservative." This kind of representation can be observed in these examples: "Allegations of fraud and corruption in the Afghan government have exasperated Congress, as has evidence that the billions of dollars spent training and equipping the Afghan security forces have so far achieved little,"[125] or "[i]n June, President Hamid Karzai established a peace council tasked with exploring negotiations with Afghanistan's "upset brothers," as he calls the Taliban,"[126] or "Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, the Minister of Economy and leader of the ideologically conservative Hizb-i-Islami faction […] holds that women and men shouldn't go to university together. Like the Taliban, he believes that women should not be allowed to leave the home unaccompanied by a male relative. "That is in accordance with Islam. And what we want for Afghanistan is Islamic rights, not Western rights," Arghandiwal says.""[127] Particularly, the last example demonstrates how the second group of men - men of the Afghan government - are represented in a way to convey this idea that they threaten the qualified life of Afghan women. In a part of the article, Baker refers to President Hamid Karzai, when he responses to the question of Tom Malinowski, the director of a U.S. NGO about women's rights in Afghanistan: "What is more important, protecting the right of a girl to go to school or saving her life?"[128] In July 11, 2011, *The New York Times* published a report and announced that "[t]he only suspect arrested" in Aisha's case, her father-in-law, had been released.[129] First, the author referred to Aisha's father to indicate how corrupt the government is: "He [Aisha's father-in-law] was there at the time when they chopped off her nose and did the cruelty to her. He was one of the culprits

[125] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[126] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[127] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[128] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[129] Alissa J. Rubin, "Suspect in Mutilation of an Afghan Women Is freed," *The New York Times*, July 11, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/12/world/asia/12afghanistan.html.

and should have been punished, but the government released him."[130] Then, she quoted the director of a shelter for women in Kabul to affirm the corruptness of the government: Aisha's father-in-law's release "sends out a message that it doesn't matter how violent or how cruel the crime is; if you have connections or money you can get out on the street. It just shows that the justice system is very weak and corrupt."[131] At the end, the author indirectly quoted "human rights advocates" to emphasize her main argument in the article: the release of Aisha's father-in-law "demonstrated the depth of the problems in the country's justice system."[132] In another article published by *Fox News*, which was allocated to Reza Gul's "mutilation story," the author stated that violence in Afghanistan had been sharply increased due to forty year war in Afghanistan, poverty, ignorance, and high rate of unemployment, which make Afghan people dependent on government in some part of the country, but corruption in government is rife, "and many residents complaining that officials pilfer the aid."[133] These examples show, men of the government are mostly represented in a way for conveying this massage that the Afghan government intend to spoil women's rights because of their interests or in the name of rescuing their bare lives, while practically they put women's existence in danger.

The third group encompasses Afghan male civilians, where the majority of them are represented as "oppressors," and the potential actors of the Taliban. For instance, Aisha's husband and her brother-in-law who maimed her and "left her on the mountains to die,"[134] or a "society so-called10-dollar Talibs [,] the low-level insurgents who fight for cash or over local grievance."[135] These men appear even when the text addresses a joke which is told by a male guest in Jamalzadah's TV

[130] Rubin, "Suspect in Mutilation of an Afghan Women Is freed."
[131] Rubin, "Suspect in Mutilation of an Afghan Women Is freed."
[132] Rubin, "Suspect in Mutilation of an Afghan Women Is freed."
[133] "Man in Taliban-controlled Afghan village cuts off wife's nose," *Fox News*, January 19, 2016, https://www.foxnews.com/world/man-in-taliban-controlled-afghan-village-cuts-off-wifes-nose.
[134] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[135] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

show. The joke is about "a *foreign human rights team* in Afghanistan. In the cities, the team noticed that women walked six paces behind their husbands. But in rural Helmand, where the Taliban is strongest, they saw a woman six steps ahead. The foreigners rushed to congratulate the husband on his enlightenment — only to be told that he stuck his wife in front because they were walking through a minefield [emphasis added];"[136] therefore, in this joke Afghan men can only be "traditional" oppressors or "selfish" killers. Only after this joke, in the last sentences of the text, the author directly quotes Jamalzadah to mention that "supportive" Afghan men do also exist: "When we talk about women's rights […] we are talking about things that are important to men as well — men who want to see Afghanistan move forward. If you sacrifice women to make peace, you are also sacrificing the men who support them."[137] In an article which was published by *Huffpost* in 2016 and allocated to Reza Gul's "mutilation story," two men appeared, Reza's father who exchanged Reza to her husband at the age of fourteen for seven thousand dollars, and her husband who, as the author narrated, beat her, burnt her "with a hot iron," physically abused their daughter, and at the end cut Reza's nose.[138] These examples show that the representations of this group – Afghan male civilians – oscillate between the representations of the first and the second groups, i.e. they are mostly represented as men who destroy both the bare and the qualified lives of Afghan women. To summarize, by addressing these examples I try to demonstrate that in the U.S. mainstream media, most Afghan men – Talibs, members of government, and civilians - are represented as "pure" oppressors, who are threats for women's bare and qualified lives.

[136] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[137] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[138] Sophia Jones, "Meet The Afghan Woman Who Refuses To Stay Silent After Her Husband Cut Off Her Nose," *Hoffpost*, updated January 28, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/meet-the-afghan-woman-who-refuses-to-stay-silent-after-her-husband-cut-off-her-nose_n_56aa0100e4b05e4e3703588e.

Let's refer again to Aisha's case in *TIME* cover story and discuss what/who exactly plays role in her disfigurement in the author's point of view. First, the familial system, specially her grandfather, because Baker mentions that her "family did nothing to protect her from the Taliban."[139] In addition, she is represented as the sufferer of the marriage system, because her husband maimed her; as well as the victim of religious ideologies because she maimed under the command of a Taliban chief who in the author's word, has "a strict interpretation of Islamic law."[140] Consequently, although Aisha's disfigurement separates her from other "un-disfigured" women in the eyes of the U.S humanitarianism, she is connected to them, because all are perceived as the victims of the same oppressed patriarchal system. So, when she appears on the cover of the *TIME* magazine, her disfigured face is not hers alone anymore, rather belongs to all Afghan women, because it is the disfigured face of the female Afghan victimhood. Her mutilated face represents seen and unseen maimed faces of all Afghan women and symbolizes their oppression.

The whole text of this article, which can be extended to the U.S. humanitarian context as well, is established based on this idea that Afghanistan is a traditional country, where "a family that finds itself shamed by a daughter sometimes sells her into slavery, or worse, subjects her to a so-called honor killing — murder under the guise of saving the family's name,"[141] so this country is represented as a place where the women's existence, their bare life, is always under threat. The introduction of the article, "[a]s the U.S. searches for a way out of Afghanistan, some policymakers suggest negotiating with the Taliban. But that would spell disaster for half the country's population: Afghan women," indicates how all Afghan women would be oppressed – in a way that Aisha is oppressed - "if we [the U.S.] leaves Afghanistan." In section 1.2, I referred to Spivak's

[139] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[140] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[141] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."

phrase, "white men are saving brown women from brown men;"[142] and this article is saturated by these western ideological definitions of "brown women," which is mainly represented by Aisha, who is "receiving care from ["white men"] U.S. forces,"[143] with the aim of saving her life from "brown men," represented by Aisha's husband and her brother-in-law. In addition, although this article is allocated to Aisha's "mutilation story," it is structured in a way to extant her bodily condition to the corporeal condition – at least the potential/most possible condition - of all Afghan women. Interestingly, later western media has acknowledged that Aisha's disfigured face published on the *TIME* magazine with the aim of making her face the face of all Afghan women.[144] I find it seriously problematic, since it represents all women of a country as disfigured bodies – who, as previously mentioned, are deprived of having the qualified life in the U.S. humanitarian context - although I see it totally understandable in the logics of humanitarianism. As I discussed earlier, time and the ruined/threatened bare life make a humanitarian action the urgent one. Now quantity, the high number of the bare lives which are in danger, makes the humanitarian action even more urgent.

To conclude, let's address again the silence on the main reason of the U.S. military invasion in Afghanistan in this text, which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. To divide a nation of a country in the Middle East into the dichotomy of the female chopped body and the male body of a butcher, there should be a pure "lifesaver" from the far North who in the absence of the national sovereign power imposes power to revive life, in two different levels, the bare and the qualified life, the lives which are threatened by the local patriarchy. In this chapter I sought to demonstrate

[142] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *in Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994): 93.
[143] Baker, "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban."
[144] Jessica Ravitz, "Saving Aesha," *The CNN*, December 2012, https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2012/05/world/saving.aesha/.

how the U.S. humanitarianism depends on, on the one hand, the proliferation of the female Afghan disfigured body, as the sign of the ruined bare life to demonstrate how urgent its humanitarian action is, and the representations of the qualified life of other women in Afghanistan to emphasize the success of its humanitarian achievements, and on the other hand, the local patriarchy that threaten the bare and the qualified lives of Afghan women. In this context, the granted qualified life to some Afghan women does not liberate them from being victims, because under the colonial western gaze, all Afghan women are perceived as victims. By this arrangement, the U.S. military invasion converts into the U.S. humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan.

Chapter 3: Aesha and the evolution of a feral child in Wonderland

In May 2012, the *CNN* published a news story, "Saving Aesha," written by Jessica Ravitz, based on documenting Aesha's life in the United States in almost a year, from the time she lived in Women for Afghan Women organization in New York till moved in with her new family in Maryland. In contrast with the article published by the *TIME* magazine, where Aesha and her "mutilation story" were narrated to depict and highlight the disastrous living condition of all Afghan women under the Taliban rule (as discussed in detail in chapter 2), according to what authors of this article and of its follow-ups claimed, they were supposed to dedicate to Aesha alone, as personal as possible.[145] In a part of the article, Ravitz mentioned that since there was a media moratorium and nobody was being allowed to interview, and film Aesha, she "decided to tell Aesha's story through the people working with her."[146] Therefore, the story was written primarily by interviewing the volunteers, "who were working with her - her English and math tutors; the imam who taught her about Islam; lawyers familiar with the asylum process; her primary guardian at Women for Afghan Women, Esther Hyneman; and others in the group's Queens office,"[147] and then by participating in the events where Aesha was there, including her English classes and a gala dinner, and observing her on several occasions, such as when they went to her apartment to share the news about Osama bin Laden's death. Having said that, the last part of the story was written during the time when media moratorium was lifted, and Ravitz was allowed to talk with her immediately in the house of the family that had adopted Aesha.

One of the follow-ups was a photo news article, "The Evolution of Aesha," published on December 18, 2012. This article which encompasses four images (Figure 4), "taken before [Aesha's] latest

[145] Ravitz, "For Aesha, healing comes in many forms."
[146] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[147] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

surgery in December 2012,"[148] and the brief descriptions underneath of each, which based on the *CNN*'s narration, reported her "mutilation story" as well as her physical and emotional transformation.[149]

Figure 4: Aesha before her last surgery in 2012. From the *CNN* article "The Evolution of Aesha"

In this chapter, I analyze discourses in both articles, "Saving Aesha," and "The Evolution of Aesha," (and bring some examples from other U.S. mainstream media) to argue that the entanglement of the concept of "compulsory feralization," ableist discourses, and humanitarian discourses shape the main core of my interpretations of the representations. Here, I employ the concept of "compulsory feralization," critiques of ableist discourses, and of humanitarian discourses – which all three emerge from criticizing colonial discourses - to reveal how and why Aesha is treated like and represented as a feral child. These critiques by explaining why people with some races and disabled people are perceived as "insufficient," how their supposed "insufficiency" has to be constantly improved, corrected, and normalized by various kinds of intrusions, and how these intrusions are justified under the banner of the humanitarian assistance help me to understand the reasons of objectifying and reducing Aesha into the status of a feral child.

[148] "The Evolution of Aesha," The CNN, updated December 18, 2012, https://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/15/us/gallery/aesha-surgery/index.html.
[149] "The Evolution of Aesha."

3.1 Aesha in a human zoo

In the last few sentences of the introduction of "Saving Aesha," Ravitz says, "[s]ince then [coming to America], [Aesha has] been passed around by well-meaning strangers, showcased like a star and shielded like a fragile child."[150] At first glance, it might seem that the author criticizes the way that Aesha is treated and objectified in the process of being represented sometimes like a superstar and at other times like a fragile child. I will return to this argument soon to explain why I think that it is not an authentic claim, mainly due to the way that the author produces the report, but before that, I first discuss why Aesha is objectified in these sentences. The first thing which absorbs my attention is how the juxtaposition of these sentences evokes the environment of an exhibition, such as a gallery, a museum, or a zoo. To clarify it, let's look up the meanings of one of the passive verbs, "showcased," which is employed in this text. "Showcase" as a noun means "a glazed case, box, or cabinet for displaying and protecting wares in a store or articles in a museum," and as a verb means "to exhibit especially in an attractive or favorable aspect."[151] What is shared between these definitions, is the occasion of "being exhibited." Exhibitions are the events where subjects encounter with objects/"objected subjects." I employ the term "objected subjects" to refer to animate beings – or more explicitly, to human beings – as the eye-catching objects of exhibitions. "Human zoos," or "ethnological expositions," where indigenous people usually from the so-called "natural," "savage," "uncivilized," and "primitive" geographical zones were brought to be publically displayed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American entertainment events,[152] are the examples of exhibitions where human beings are converted into "objected subjects."

[150] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[151] Both definitions from Merriam Webster: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/showcase.
[152] Ian McLean, "Reinventing the Savage," *Third Text* 26, no. 5 (2012), 601.

The general approach towards writing this article and its follow-ups pushes me to claim that Aesha in these articles is converted into an "objected subject." First and foremost, due to producing reports about the life of a person, and catching her on camera when there is a media moratorium, and she cannot represent herself. In these articles, spaces are created for everyone (except Aesha) to show their feelings and points of views about Aesha's life. As I mentioned earlier, people who work with her cooperate in producing the reports, and even one of the follow-ups is allocated to reader's responses and comments to Aesha's life progress.[153] In this process, Aesha is objectified and reduced to an "objected subject." Her life, even her very routine and daily activities, are the object of gaze. For example, she is photographed when she responses to her teacher at an English class, or watches Bollywood films on her laptop, or plays on a swing.[154]

At the very beginning of the article, Ravitz describes her first encounter with Aesha as follows,

> [w]earing skinny jeans, UGG knockoff boots and a pea coat, she carries the swagger of any self-absorbed American teen. Her long dark hair flows thick, smooth and enviable. Her makeup is impeccable – barring one small flaw. It doesn't perfectly match the shade of her prosthetic nose. Only because of her nose do I realize who this is: the Afghan woman whose disfigured face graced the August 9, 2010, cover of Time magazine. Her Taliban husband and in-laws punished her for running away by hacking off her nose and ears and leaving her for dead.[155]

Here Ravitz attaches her physical appearance, including visual disfigurement and costumes, to the supposed "opposing" racial contexts - on the one hand, to Afghanistan where the woman is brutally

[153] Jessica Ravitz, "Readers respond as Aesha's surgery and life progress," *The CNN*, December 20, 2012, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/20/us/reactions-aesha-surgery/index.html.
[154] All images can be found in Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[155] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

and wildly disfigured, and on the other hand, to America where she, like other "American teenagers," can display her self-confidence through her appearance. Addressing physical appearance to distinguish between racial contexts can also be observed in *NBC News* coverage of Reza Gul's "mutilation story." In a part of the report, the author refers to the Facebook message of an Afghan activist in response to Reza's story as follows, "[w]e are the most proud and brave nation on earth?! If you doubt it, here is another example of our bravery! Don't worry, soon America or Europe will make her another nose and Afghanistan will win another trophy for this pride!"[156] Here, the woman's physical appearance, i.e. the severed nose and the reconstruction of the nose distinguish Afghanistan from the western countries. This kind of representations, knowing the racial background by highlighting a specific attribute of the physical appearance, encourages me to think about another attribute of exhibition which is related to my discussion of "objected subjects," and its contribution to "human zoos."

Exhibitions are the place where subjects stare and objects/"objected subjects," are stared, and where subjects gaze at the eye-catching objects/"objected subjects," that have "something" to be exhibited. This something can be varied from being "valuable," "ancient," or "artistic" to being "peculiar," "extraordinary," or "grotesque." In other words, what makes objects/"objected subjects" "exhibited objects," is their ability to convert a "look" into a "stare," the act which "asks what's going on and demands the story."[157] What made (and is still making) human beings the exhibited objects of "human zoos" was (is) their so-called "illegible," "unruly," or "strange" attributes. What made Sarah Baartman, a woman from a southwestern part of Africa, the "objected subject" of freak shows in nineteenth-century Europe, was her "non-normative" buttocks; Aesha

[156] Fazul Rahim, "Photo of Reza Gul, Mutilated Woman, Provokes Revulsion in Afghanistan," *NBC News*, January 18, 2016, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/photo-mutilated-woman-provokes-revulsion-afghanistan-n498966.
[156] Rahim, "Photo of Reza Gul, Mutilated Woman, Provokes Revulsion in Afghanistan."
[157] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

is exhibited in twenty-first-century America because of her "non-normative" severed nose. Sarah's buttocks revealed her geographical root, Aesha's severed nose does the same (as her severed nose reminds the Author of where she comes from in the above quotation), Sarah's buttocks disclosed her so-called "primitive" background, Aesha's severed nose highlights her so-called "barbaric" context (as I sought to demonstrate in above quotation by comparing having self-confidence in American and becoming disfigured in Afghanistan). In addition, the public passion of knowing more about their physical "peculiarness" necessitates to hold freak shows and write articles; the passion of knowing, which permits to exhibit Sarah even after her death,[158] and Aesha even in the period of a media moratorium (their situations seem even more similar to each other in the state of being compulsory mute, one by death, one by a media moratorium).

Having said that, the attributes of "subjected objects," which make them "exhibited subjects," are not always revealed rather sometimes concealed to disclose and highlight other issues. In Aesha's case, the issue is satisfying the logic of the U.S. humanitarianism. To clarify, I analyze the following excerpt from the article,

> [s]he [Aesha] was trotted out at a pricey gala dinner in Beverly Hills, where she debuted her prosthetic nose, a preview of what the surgery would do for her. She walked the proverbial red carpet, met Laura Bush and was honored by California's then-first lady, Maria Shriver.[159]

Here, we can see again how the vibe of an exhibition is created. Aesha, as an "objected subject," is "trotted out," noble U.S. women - Laura Bush and Maria Shriver – and other participants of the

[158] Justin Parkinson, "The significance of Sarah Baartman," BBC, January 7, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35240987.

[159] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

gala dinner show up to stare at her, and dozens of cameras are there to represent her for spectators. Figure 5 is taken at that night, as it is clear, something is changed in comparison with the previous representations. Aesha's severed nose is disappeared, and her "non-normative" nose is disguised by a "normative" prosthetic nose.

Let's speculate on the possible reasons behind this disguise. In section 1.1, I discussed that in our contemporary time military invasions and wars should be justified on the humanitarian ground, and I think one of reasons of disguising her severed nose is highlighting the U.S. humanitarian actions. As Ravitz claims, from the beginning, Aesha came to America because of a promised help which included "reconstructive surgery offered *free* by the Grossman Burn Foundation, a *humanitarian medical group* in the Los Angeles area [emphasis added];"[160] therefore, organizing a gala dinner and previewing what would be done by a U.S. humanitarian group promotes the U.S. humanitarian actions, which are done for Afghan people.

Figure 5: Aesha with her prosthetic nose at a gala dinner on October 2010 in California, from the *CNN* article "Saving Aesha"

[160] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

I find this humanitarian disguise, this "perfect," "flawless," "beautiful" prosthetic nose is seriously problematic, since as Judith Butler argues (and I discussed in detail in subsection 1.1.1), it hides the sign and the vocalization of grief and agony[161] - which has been experienced in the process of becoming disfigured - on the one hand, and bears the ideology that a female body has to be "beautiful," even by wearing a fake prosthesis, on the other hand. In subsection 1.3.1, I discussed, that Audre Lorde criticizes wearing prosthetic breasts, because in contrast to other prosthetic limbs, fake breasts are not worn to improve the physical functions of impaired bodies, rather to make women's bodies closer to the idealized figure of female normative beauty. This prosthetic nose, which is worn for the sake of making a "disfigured" woman "beautiful," and "normative" can be criticized in the same way which prosthetic breasts are criticized. In the previous chapter, I discussed why depicting the beauty of Aesha on the cover of the *TIME* magazine which was the aim of her photographer, objectified her. The same thing happens here. Her face has to seem "beautiful," as well as "normative." The obligation of seeming "beautiful," and "normative" is so strong that the author cannot even imagine how uncomfortable seeming "flawless," and "beautiful" is. Ravitz describes her second encounter with Aesha as follows, "she doesn't seem as flawlessly put together. Her hair is disheveled, her makeup less perfect. She's not wearing her prosthetic nose."[162] Before asking other women about the reason of Aesha's refusal to wear the prosthetic nose, she speculates on the reasons – "[i]s it an indication of new found confidence? Maybe it's a call for attention? Or could it be a sign of turmoil, a psychological slip downward?"[163] Then she is told, Aesha is "simply growing tired of the nose and doesn't like the way it feels."[164]

[161] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 142.
[162] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[163] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[164] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

Here, the concept of "compulsory feralization" helps me to understand why disabled people are forced to compulsorily wear prosthetic limbs. As it was discussed in subsection 1.3.1, "compulsory feralization" demands the constant process of correcting and of improving of what seems "illegible," "unruly," or "strange," the process which is accompanied by regulating and disciplining the so-called "undocile" and "non-normative" bodies. I see wearing obligatorily prostheses as a practice of "compulsory feralization," because the aim is correcting– even only the appearance – of the so-called "non-normative" impairments to be compatible with "normative" standards. Encouraging Aesha to wear the prosthetic nose means correcting her disfigurement and improving her body to be closer to the image of a "beautiful," "non-disabled" female. To note, correcting and improving Aesha is not only limited to her appearance, rather as will be demonstrated in the next section, related to various levels and dimensions of her personal and social lives as well. Therefore, by bearing the concept of "compulsory feralization" in mind, in the next section, I will examine how the *CNN*'s representations convert Aesha into a feral child.

3.2 Aesha, a feral child who should be civilized

In the paradigm of "compulsory feralization," intrusions are justified first and foremost, by claiming that objects of intrusions are not "mature" enough or are too "naïve," or "primitive;" so, they need someone to intrude for their own good, safety or benefit. I return to the *CNN* article and show that intrusions in Aesha's life are justified by the same claim. As I mentioned earlier, when Ravitz asks women about Aesha's refusal to wear prosthetic nose, they talk about her uncomfortable feelings and add, "[Aesha's] advocates want her to be comfortable with who she is."[165] Ravitz immediately mentions, "yet some worry she's too fragile to withstand the inevitable

[165] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

stares."[166] These sentences convey a massage: Aesha is not "stable/mature/wise/intelligent" enough to give reasons for wearing/not wearing the prosthetic nose and needs some people as Ravitz call them, "advocators" or "well-meaning strangers," to tell her what's what. The necessity of the presence of "wise" guardians in Aesha's life does not emerge only in these sentences, rather it appears time to time in various parts of the article, when the author talks about some occasions, such as, "Hyneman [Aesha's guardian in the organization], and the others want her to have her own home, one that doesn't change. But they don't want her to be alone, especially at night. So they've hired someone to live with her."[167] They do not care how uncomfortable Aesha is with her roommates, and when she expresses her discomfort by kicking them out, they interpret it as a behavior of a child who should be taught, in Ravitz's words, to "respect others and get along. She has to acknowledge her own mistakes – as well as her reality."[168] As an additional example, one of her English and math teacher, Jessica Whitney talks "to Aesha about practicality, about buying the sorts of shoes that will last,"[169] to show her the ropes of buying shoes! These examples demonstrate that Aesha is treated like a person who needs and depends on "wise" people to guide her and to intrude for her benefits.

This dependency on others is taken for granted to such an extent that when the author and others learn, Aesha – without saying a word - left New York to live with the new family in Maryland – the decision which is made independently by her – nobody believes. Some of them think that "she would return after the long Thanksgiving weekend,"[170] some others, while confused by what happened, wonder "if they'd known Aesha – and her needs – at all,"[171] Aesha's translator Yalda

[166] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[167] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[168] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[169] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[170] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[171] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

Afif is outraged and feels her "sudden move was a slap in the organization's face,"[172] and only some of them, like her teachers, acknowledge that everybody in New York has been foisted on Aesha, and none has been relationships of Aesha's choosing.[173]

The reason that Aesha is treated like a feral child is first, related to how disability and disabled people are perceived in ableist discourses. Here, disabled bodies are seen as "dependent, incomplete, vulnerable, and incompetent"[174] people, who should accept various intrusions in their private and public lives to compensate their supposed insufficiencies. One of the most common intrusion is done in the name of medicalization and hospitalization to return them in more "stabilized," and "normal" conditions. In a part of the article, Shiphra Bakhchi, Aesha's psychologist says, "I really hope at some point she'll be a *functioning* young lady"[175] (emphasis added). This comes after describing one of Aesha's panic attack, when, as Ravitz says, Aesha "threw herself down, banged her head on the floor, pulled her hair out in fistfuls and bit her fingers. No one could stop her. Hyneman called 911. Aesha was hospitalized for 10 days. Her medications were evaluated and changed, and she turned a corner."[176] Making a connection between describing a panic attack, emphasizing the necessity of hospitalization to boost her mental health, and quoting a wish of making someone "functioning" indicates how physical/mental condition of Aesha should be "stabilized" and "improved" with medical intrusions to make her individually/socially "functioning."

The second reason that Aesha is treated like a feral child is related to her racial roots. In section 1.1, I discussed how the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan is justified in the name of rescuing and

[172] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[173] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[174] Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," 8.
[175] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[176] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

protecting Afghan women's lives and their rights, because they are perceived as more docible and civilizable entities. In this article, there is also a presupposition that Aesha is not civilized and the team who works with her should intervene to civilize her. At the very beginning of the article, when Ravitz introduces Aesha, she says, Aesha is forced "to sleep with animals."[177] Adding to this, it is a part, where Esther Hyneman says, everybody in New York hope, Aesha spreads her wings, but it demands time and effort, and is not easily and quickly attainable, since Aesha is "from a village in Taliban-controlled southern Afghanistan where [she has] never been to school and can't read or write in [her] language, and [she has] never heard of France or Italy or Canada, and [she does not] speak the language in the country [she is] living in."[178] These examples address the mentioned presupposition on the one hand, and by quoting Hyneman permits the intrusion of those around Aesha to civilize her through the process of education and integration into the civilized western society, on the other hand. The first step of civilizing is teaching her the language.

Ravitz describes how Aesha is taught to speak English and the difficulty of this task by giving very detailed information. For example, ""Puh… ahh… tuh," Aesha sounds out slowly. She looks up at her teacher who encourages her to go on. "Puh… ahh… tuh. Puh. Ahh. Tuh." I notice I'm holding my breath. "Puhahhtuh. Puhaht? Pot? Pot!" Aesha cries."[179] Needless to say, Ravitz immediately reminds her readers that Aesha "was illiterate even in her native language, Pashto. [And] [f]or that reason and others, her teachers must customize her lessons. A typical alphabet book, for example, would feature an X for xylophone, *something Aesha has never seen*,"[180] (emphasis added). Or when Aesha gets mad at Hyneman, because she asked Aesha to change the way she treats others, particularly her roommates, and says to Hyneman: ""Puck you!" Hyneman

[177] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[178] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[179] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[180] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

got in Aesha's face. "No, it's fuck you! Fuck you!" she yelled back. "Repeat after me" Fuck, fuck, fuck! If you're going to say it, you need to say it right!"[181] The educating process is not only limited to teaching her the language, rather extended to various modes of civilizing her supposed "primitiveness," and "wildness;" including teaching her that "there are days of the week […] [she should not] litter, how to board a subway and use a Laundromat."[182] These examples represent Aesha in a very "primitive," "uncivilized," and "feral" status. As discussed in subsection 1.3.1, the feral is deployed for migrants, disabled bodies, as well as people of color; and Aesha belongs to all these three groups. Consequently, treating her like a feral child can also be understandable in the paradigm of "compulsory feralization."

This kind of representations, which emanates from the colonial discourses, points out the U.S. humanitarian missions as well. By returning to the discussion that I had in the previous chapter, where I explained that the U.S. humanitarianism acts in two levels of saving lives in its very existential dimension, and of saving/improving the qualified lives, this practice of educating and civilizing can be interpreted as a practice of the second level. In this context, Aesha's existence was saved when she was brought from Afghanistan to the United States, now it is the time to promote how much her qualified life is improved. In a part of the article Ravitz narrates Aesha's fear of being found by her father-in-law in New York. Yalda Afif, Aesha's translator responses to her fear as follows, "C'mon, it's the U.S., […] [w]e can arrest him and send him to the biggest jail in the world!"[183] Then Ravitz adds, "Afif wants Aesha to share her faith in America. They can walk around freely without being questioned. They're so lucky to be Afghan women living

[181] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[182] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[183] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."

here."[184] In this excerpt, the author affirms that the Aesha's existence is not the issue of saving anymore, rather now improving her qualified life - her sense of freedom – does matter. Adding to this, now not only Aesha's daily life, rather Aesha's body in its biological and physical level should be qualified as well, which is accomplished by going under multistage and complicated reconstructive surgeries. This level adds another layer to the feral figure which is attached to Aesha through representations. And it is the subject of the last topic of this chapter, where I engage with analyzing the *CNN* photo article, "The Evolution of Aeshe."

3.3 Scar reading

To get on the subject, I analyze the title of the article and the general arrangement of images in Figure 4. The first meaning of "evolution," offered in *Merriam-Webster dictionary* is,

> descent with modification from preexisting species : cumulative inherited change in a population of organisms through time leading to the appearance of new forms : the process by which new species or populations of living things develop from preexisting forms through successive generations.[185]

This definition of "evolution," the term which is employed in the title of the article, in combination with the series of images (Figure 4) with a specific arrangement reminds me of the image of human evolution, where the chain of primitive ancestors to archaic Homo erectus and later the modern humans, is portrayed. Besides the term of "evolution," what makes Figure 4 similar to the image of human evolution is that in both the changes in visual appearance is scrutinized to find out what has happened through the life of humans. In other words, in this context, the changes of physical appearance are read to understand not the body per se, rather to know the background, the racial

[184] Ravitz, "Saving Aesha."
[185] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evolution.

roots, and social structures. For instance, in Aesha's case her bodily changes are read to highlight the Afghan patriarchy or the U.S. humanitarian actions.

Let's look at Figure 4 again. The first image from the left, shows a close-up of Aesha's face and as one of the *CNN*'s follow-ups describes, it depicts how her "forehead has ballooned to the size of a baseball, and narrow darkened, peeling and drooping flesh protrudes from where her nose once was."[186] The image description explains what is going on now in Aehsa's life, "[s]ix month into multistage reconstructive surgery, she's on her way to having the nose she's wanted,"[187] besides what happened to her, "she was disfigured and left for dead in Afghanistan."[188] The balloon on her forehead discloses her present time in the United States and the effort of the humanitarian team who helps her to become "full" again; and the extra flesh instead of the nose demonstrates her past time and the brutality of "brown men" who made her maimed. The second image from the left, with an extreme close-up of her maimed ears, and the description, "[h]er ears, which were also cut off by her Taliban husband and in-laws,"[189] remind spectators her biography in the past time and gives again some information about the local patriarchy. Although in the picture, there is no sign of present/future time, the description promises the so-called bright future when her ears "will be reconstructed after her nose is completed,"[190] again promoting the U.S. humanitarian action. The third image from the left, depicts a big close-up image of her hand with scars, and the image description narrates her present time; "[s]cars on her left arm show where doctors took tissue that was then transplanted onto her face."[191] It adds, "[h]er emotional scars [which cannot be

[186] Ravitz, "For Aesha, healing comes in many forms."
[187] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[188] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[189] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[190] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[191] "The Evolution of Aesha."

depicted] are also healing."[192] And Aesha is in the process of "learning to trust in new ways."[193] The last image, with a close-up of the all scars on her face, connects the biography of her past life to the present one, her disfigured nose and ears depict her so-called "dark past" and the balloon on her forehead, in addition to the image description, "she will undergo the next dramatic surgery in a process she's not ashamed to show off,"[194] demonstrate her so-called "bright present and future," when she gains enough self-confidence to not be ashamed of showing her disfigurements.

Here, whole life span of Aesha is summarized in her scars, and her whole biography, from past to future is read from them. This kind of reduction can also be observed in the representations of other maimed women. In *Huffpost*'s coverage of Reza's story, two images of her body were published, a close-up image of her face with her bandaged nose, and a close-up image of her hand with a scab which indicated that her husband burned her hand.[195] As feminist scholar Lauren B. Wilcox points out, "humanitarian discourses and "responsibility to protect" make some humans "objects for rescue, intervention, and manipulation […] [whose lives are] the passive beneficiaries of aid."[196] She argues that they are not "subjects of agency, but are bodies that breathe, suffer, and die, who are "just bodies."[197] I want to add to this list the bodies that are scarred. Scars are interpreted as an allowance to intervene, manipulate, and correct bodies that are supposed "primitive," "non-normative," and "uncivilized." I see this process, reducing humans to their scars, as a form of objectifying humans in the time of humanitarian intrusions. Scarred bodies are the iconic figure in the logic of contemporary humanitarianism, because they can be deployed to

[192] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[193] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[194] "The Evolution of Aesha."
[195] Jones, "Meet The Afghan Woman Who Refuses To Stay Silent After Her Husband Cut Off Her Nose."
[196] Lauren B. Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2015): 174.
[197] B. Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence*, 176.

demonstrate that the life in its existential level is under threat in the local places, as well as promote that biological and qualified life of the rescued persons are improved by humanitarian intrusions.

In this chapter, by analyzing two *CNN* articles about Aesha's life in the United States, first I discussed that Aesha is reduced to an "objectified subject" of the exhibition. Then, I sought to demonstrate that Aesha is represented as a feral child in need of being civilized. I employed critical disability studies arguing that disability and disabled bodies are perceived as "insufficiency" and have to be improved by various intrusions in ableist discourses, to demonstrate why Aesha is treated like a feral child. Moreover, the concept of "compulsory feralization" assisted me to understand why Aesha is encouraged to wear prosthetic nose, which as I discussed is a show-off for the U.S. humanitarianism; in addition, this concept, by arguing that the feral is deployed for disabled people, as well as immigrants and people of color, which is complemented by feminist postcolonial discussion - that "brown women" are perceived as more docible and civilizable humans in the U.S. civilizing mission - helped me to explain Aesha's status as a feral child in the colonial context. Then, I discussed that in the process of making Aesha a feral child, she and her whole life is reduced and summarized to her scars. At the end, I demonstrated that all of these, objectifying Aesha, making her a feral child, and reducing her to just a scarred body, are done to satisfy the logic of the U.S. humanitarianism, the discourse which demands to show that the biological and social life of indigenous women are improved as the result of the U.S. humanitarian actions.

Conclusion

In my interpretation, representing maimed bodiedness of Afghan women in the U.S. mainstream media during the time of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan is mainly shaped at the intersection of three discourses: the contemporary humanitarianism, colonial discourses, and ableist discourses. First, the contemporary humanitarianism - with the logic of protecting a population and saving lives - has a huge impact on shaping representations. According to this, representations promote that the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan save, protect, and improve lives of Afghan women in two levels: "bare life," or life in its very existential level, and "qualified life," or life in its social level. Representations of disfigured Afghan women mainly satisfy the requirements of the first level. They demonstrate that the U.S. invasion leads to saving women's existence on the one hand, and how urgent taking humanitarian actions are, on the other hand. The later refers to the mechanism within which the contemporary humanitarianism conveys this idea that no time to think and waste remains, since the life in its biological wholeness and existential aspect is under threat, so humanitarian acts have to be taken immediately.

Representing the qualified life of "non-maimed" Afghan women indicates that the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan improves Afghan women's social existence and revives women's rights. The representations of "non-maimed" Afghan women complement the representations of "maimed" Afghan women; while the later brings urgency for the U.S. humanitarianism, the former promotes the idea of the long-lasting U.S. humanitarian achievements. In other words, representations of "non-maimed" Afghan women demonstrate the success and stability of the U.S. humanitarian achievements. Critics of the contemporary humanitarianism argue that this discourse immensely depends on the figure of the victim, and actively produces and proliferates it. In the

case of Afghanistan, producing this figure is intertwined with the second highly influential discourse, the colonial discourse.

In this discourse, indigenous women and men in the Global South are divided into two homogenous groups of "oppressed women," and "male oppressors." In this arrangement, indigenous women are the victims of the local patriarchy; therefore, have to be rescued and protected from the brutality, which is embedded in the local patriarchal structure, with western intrusions. Feminist postcolonial thinkers criticize this categorizing not only because they universalize and misuse indigenous women to satisfy international power relations, but also since it works based on a western ideology that indigenous women are rescued because they are perceived more docile and civilizable. In my interpretation, presuming this state of un-civilizibility saturates the U.S. media representations of the case study of this research, Aesha a maimed Afghan woman, who was rescued by the U.S. military force and then brought to the United States with the assistance of the U.S. humanitarian groups. They report that various groups of people engage to civilize, educate, and integrate her in the U.S. society. The presupposition of this state of un-civilizibility emerges at the intersection of the colonial discourse and the third discourse which shapes representations, the ableist discourse.

In this discourse, disability/disabled person is perceived as "insufficiency/insufficient," "incompleteness/incomplete," and "incompetence/incompetent;" that has to be corrected, normalized, and improved with various intrusions. The representations of Aesha concentrate mainly on the necessity of medical intrusions and hospitalizations to improve her mental health. Adding to this, critical disability scholars introduce the concept of "compulsory feralization," to argue that disability is perceived as "primitiveness," and normalizing and improving bodily/mental condition of a disabled person is similar to correcting and civilizing a feral child. Moreover, they

argue that the feral is deployed for disabled persons, as well as immigrants, and people of color. Therefore, the figure of a feral child which is attached to Aesha by the U.S. media representations emerge at the intersection of her state of being disabled, immigrant, and people of color. At the end, the entanglement of these three discourses reveal two crucial issues: first, wars and political conflicts in our contemporary time are disguised by humanitarian masks. And second, both humanitarian and ableist discourses emanate from colonial discourses, because both reproduce the colonial practice of "Othering," as well as intervening in a hierarchical structure to normalize the supposed "non-normativity."

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