



## Honor Crimes in Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*: A Comparative Study

Hussein A. Alhawamdeh<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>English Language and Literature, Jerash University, Jarash, Jordan.  
 \*Corresponding author.

Received 8 September 2015; accepted 4 November 2015  
 Published online 26 December 2015

### Abstract

This paper examines the concept of “honor crimes” as reflected in two literary works—Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* (1997/2005) and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924/2009). The female characters—Zaynab and Nahleh in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and Mary in O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*—are maintained by the masculine discourse of honor as symbols rather than individuals to be protected and avenged by the males. Ironically, the discourse of honor is a gender-based mechanism which observes only the females' morality and justifies the males' violations to the cultural ethics. Even though the male characters—Mazin and Said in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and Boyle and Johnny in O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*—show moral and ethical irresponsibility towards the financial and social assistance of their families, they view themselves as the guardians of the honor of their families. To establish a space of gender equality in which both males and females share the ethical and social liability, Khalifeh and O'Casey empower the feminine voice to question and dismantle the patriarchal hypocrisy of the discourse of honor. Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* show that honor crimes, which are legitimized by cultural rather than religious definitions, are not peculiar to one culture or one region. In other words, the female characters in Khalifeh's novel and O'Casey's play negotiate their cultures rather than religions to achieve social equality.

**Key words:** Honor crimes; Feminism; Sahar Khalifeh; *The Inheritance*; Sean O'Casey; *Juno and the Paycock*

Alhawamdeh, H. A. (2015). Honor Crimes in Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*: A Comparative Study. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 11(6), 105-113. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/7915>  
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7915>

### INTRODUCTION

Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* (1997/2005) and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924/2009) critique the gendered-based concept of honor crimes. Even though each work revolves about a different society—the Palestinian Arab society in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and the Irish society in O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*—female protagonists are subject to males' supervision of their sexual behavior in accordance with traditions rather than religions. In the two works, males play the role of the guardians of honor and victimize their women in cases of violation or breach to the discourse of honor. Ironically, the concept of honor is associated only with the practices of women whereas the males are not responsible to observe their morality and behavior since the male's immorality does not affect the honor of the family. Such gender imbalance brings victimization to women, who are transformed into a symbol of the family's honor to be protected and avenged by their male relatives. Even though some male characters show carelessness, laziness, immorality, and social irresponsibility, they still view themselves as protectors of their family's honor and are not to be blamed for punishing or murdering their sisters, daughters, or wives to cleanse the shame. In Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, Zaynab, born to an American mother and a Palestinian father, gets pregnant at fifteen years old and threatened to be killed by her father. Hoda, another Palestinian girl living in America, gets pregnant at fifteen years old and runs away to avoid her father's attempts to stab her. Nahleh, a fifty-year-old Palestinian woman,

is chased by her brothers for making a relationship with an old man. In O' Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, Mary Boyle, a twenty-two-year-old Irish girl, is expelled by her father and brother from the house after her pregnancy for the shame she brings to the family.

## 1. THE CONCEPT OF "HONOR CRIMES"

In its report "Femicide: Understanding and Addressing Violence against Women," World Health Organization (2012) defines honor crimes as a "girl or woman being killed by a male or female family member for an actual or assumed sexual or behavioural transgression, including adultery, sexual intercourse or pregnancy outside marriage—or even for being raped" (p.2). Honor crime is not attributed to certain societies rather it is worldwide. Accordingly, the World Health Organization declares that "there are an estimated 5,000 murders in the name of 'honour' each year worldwide.... These killings occur mainly in parts of the Middle East and South Asia, but also among some migrant communities" (p.2). In his report "Preliminary Examinations of So-Called 'Honour Killings' in Canada," Muhammad (2013) shows that honor crimes were practiced "since the ancient Roman times, when the *pater familias*, or senior male within a household, retained the right to kill an unmarried but sexually active daughter or an adulterous wife" (p.16). Many historical events such as the "Trojan War" and King Henry VIII's beheading of his fifth wife "on allegations of adultery" (p.17) proved that honor crimes were practiced in many cultures. Even in Latin American societies, honor crimes were registered when the early laws allowed the act: "In the early times of Peru, the laws of the Incas permitted husbands to starve their wives to death as punishment for committing an adulterous act. Aztec laws resulted in death by stoning or strangulation for female adultery" (p.18). In this context, the conceptualization of honor crimes is a cultural man-made discourse, which takes its legitimacy from tradition rather than religion and does not pertain to certain societies: "The notions of honour and shame and their use as justification for violence and killing is not unique to any one culture or religion" (p.17).

Honor crimes are rooted in societal traditions rather than religions. No religion justifies the murdering of women in the name of honor. In her article "Understanding Honour Killing and Honour-Related Violence in the Immigration Context: Implications for the Legal Profession and Beyond," Korteweg (2012) shows that religions do not incite killings in the name of honor:

Religion plays a specific role as a source of meaning in discussions of honour-related violence. There is no direct link between religion and honour-related violence, and people of different faiths to enact it. At the same time, individuals or families involved in committing crimes will be at times cite their

interpretations of religion as reinforcing their understandings of honour, regardless of their faith. (p.144)

In other words, the murderers of honor depend on interpretations rather than on clearly religious textual evidences that justify their killings.

Many accusations are addressed to Islam as a religion, which falsely encourages the honor crimes. Even though the reports show that many honor crimes are practiced in the Islamic world, Islam as a religion does not incite the act. However, such crimes are motivated by cultural codes of morality. Korteweg points out that "honour killing is often linked to Islam but there are no references in the Quran that justify these kinds of murders or other forms of violence in these types of circumstances" (p.144). In her article "Considerations of Honor Crimes, FGM, Kidnapping/Rape, and Early Marriage in Selected Arab Nations," Zuhur (2009) clarifies that Islam is not responsible for the honor killings committed in the name of Islam: "numerous Muslim authorities have stated that honor crimes are 'not Islamic' or cannot be blamed on Islam" (p.6). Zuhur refers to the fact that Islam does not allow Muslims to perform the punishment of adultery individually rather to be conducted by Islamic authority: "*shari'ah* [Islamic law] itself does not authorize individuals to engage in vigilante activities, it should be up to a qualified Islamic authority to determine whether or not *zina* [adultery] was committed" (p.6). In this context, the murderers of honor exploit Islam as a cover of justification for the violent gender crime:

There is no mention of honour killing in the Quran or Hadiths. Honour killing, in Islamic definitions, refers specifically to extra-legal punishment by the family against a woman, and is forbidden by the *Sharia* (Islamic law). Religious authorities disagree with extra punishments such as honour killing and prohibit it, so the practice of it is a cultural and not a religious issue. However, since Islam has influence over vast numbers of Muslims in many countries and from many cultures, some use Islam to justify honour killing even though there is no support for honour killing in Islam. (Muhammad, 2013, pp. 20-21)

Patriarchal and traditional societies exempt men from any moral responsibility and emphasize ironically the role of men as protectors of the family honor. In her article "Crimes of Honor and Shame: Violence against Women in Non-Western and Western Societies," Araji (2000) refers to the inequality of the patriarchal perception of the males' and females' amoral acts and behavior: "turning to how males can dishonor their families, we find that a double standard usually exists with respect to how males' and females' behaviors are viewed and what the consequences are" (p.4). Araji gives an example in "India" where a "son, by getting a reputation for stealing or gambling may bring dishonor, yet no serious consequences from the family result" (p.4). Unlike females, males' adulterous act brings neither shame nor dishonor to the family. In her article "Crimes of Honor and the Constructions of Gender in Arab Societies," Abu-Odeh (1996) explains

that the moral behavior of the Arab women is controlled and supervised by the males: “to be a man is to engage in daily practices, as important part of which is to assure the virginity of the women in your family. In Arab culture, a man is that person whose sister’s virginity is a social question for him” (p.13). Abu-Odeh shows that it is shameful in Arab culture for a man not to avenge the loss of his honor: “If a man doesn’t intervene by killing his sister/wife once she has shamed him, he suffers a loss of his gender: he is no longer a man” (p.13).

## 2. HONOR CRIME IN SAHAR KHALIFEH’S THE INHERITANCE

Although much ink has been spilt on Sahar Khalifeh’s novels from a postcolonial vantage, little attention has been given to Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* because I think it does not concentrate on the narrative of resistance to the Israeli occupation to the West Bank the way we find in Khalifeh’s *Wild Thorns* (1976). However, some recent scholarship has pointed out that Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* focuses more on the Post-Oslo Palestinian domestic reality. In her master’s thesis *Reclaiming the Motherland: (Eco) feminism in Sahar Khalifeh’s The Inheritance and The End of Spring*, Angierski (2014) makes a connection, from an ecofeminist vantage, between the domination of nature and women in the West Bank: “My ecocritically-informed feminist readings of Khalifeh strengthen the ecofeminist contention that the domination of land and the domination of women under a patriarchal system are connected” (p.7). Notwithstanding Angierski’s theoretical approach is ecofeminism, she refers briefly to the notion of “honor” in Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* without explaining the cultural and legal background of the term in the Arab Palestinian society and worldwide: “Khalifeh brings attention to a patriarchal culture of ‘honor’ that reads ‘daughters’ ‘aberrant,’ unmarried sexual practice as a direct affront to male authority” (pp.17-18). However, Angierski’s ecofeminist approach is still problematic in understanding Khalifeh’s novel, which rejects any symbolic associations such as mother or procreator to the Palestinian women. In her article “Between Complicity and Subversion: Body Politics in Palestinian National Narrative,” Amireh (2003) shows how the Palestinian national discourse delineates women as “fictional constructs and ideological signs” (p.748). For Amireh, Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* resorts to the use of body politics to reveal the Palestinian reality of defeat and frustration during the Israeli occupation: “Khalifeh’s men in the novel are either sexually impotent, physically repulsive,... The Women’s bodies are sexually frustrated, exploited” (p.765). Nevertheless, Amireh considers Khalifeh’s reliance on the body narrative as a “limitation of the current Palestinian feminist discourse that continues to recycle a nationalist patriarchal ideology regarding women’s bodies and sexuality” (p.765). Thus,

Amireh asks for a new Palestinian feminist discourse, which transcends the “tropes, metaphors, and ideologies that continue to circumscribe women’s lives and to prevent them from being full citizens of the nation” (p.766). Adding to Amireh’s aspiration, I think the issue of honor crimes, which is not tackled in Amireh’s study, in the Palestinian society is one restricting trope, which Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* attacks and urges simultaneously to the discontinuity of the patriarchal traditions that victimize the Palestinian women.

Recent scholarship has discussed Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* within the context of the Arabs’ maneuver since the nineteenth century to establish the *nahdah* “modernity” project away from tradition. In her book *Locating Gender in Modernism: The Outsider Female*, Ramanathan (2012) explains that Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* presents a new facet of realism, which is called the “imperfect” mode of realism:

Khalifeh perforce participates in the *nahdah* reformists’ embrace of modernity, but in staging modernity with women as the central actors, she avails of Euro-modernist techniques to proffer a feminist perspective on the anti-modernity critique. Euro-modernism, she finds, caves in to the pressures of the mixing: women, nation, modernity, community, cosmopolitanism. The text shows that an ‘imperfect’ mode of realism is more equipped both to accommodate women’s entrance into modernity, and to critique the options of modernity for women. (p.136)

Even though Ramanathan does not tackle the issue of honor crimes in Khalifeh’s novel, I think her notion of the “imperfect” realism is significant because honor crimes can be considered as an “imperfect” reality of the Palestinian patriarchal society, which Khalifeh’s novel critiques as an obstacle for Palestinian women’s modernity and development. In her article “Reinscribing Identity: Nation and Community in Arab Women’s Writing,” Fayad (1995) analyzes the challenges facing Arab women writers in resisting the association between “traditionalism” and Arab women identities:

One of the most difficult tasks confronting Arab women writers in inscribing themselves as subjects lies in resisting and renegotiating their role within a master national narrative that not only homogenizes the concept of national identity itself, but also assigns woman a fixed role as an historical metaphor buried deep within the foundations of the narrative. Through this historical metaphor, woman is appropriated as signifier of traditionalism. (p.147)

Fayad takes Sahar Khalifeh as one example of Arab women writers who reject the “nationalist discourse,” which deprives women of achieving self-independent identity and associates them to the metaphorical realm. Notwithstanding Fayad does not discuss Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance*, her argument remains important to the core of the study since the case of honor crimes is part of the “traditionalism” discourse, rejected by Khalifeh.

In her article “Feminism in Revolution: The Case of Sahar Khalifa,” Bamia (2000) reveals the Palestinian



women's experience of emancipation, self-independence, and struggle to challenge the patriarchal traditions and be equal partners to the Palestinian males in shaping the Palestinian identity. According to Bamia, the Palestinian women challenge the status of the "double victim of colonialism and traditions" (p.174). Bamia shows that the personal life of Sahar Khalifeh reflects a good model of the Palestinian women's strife for eminence and self-independence:

Sahar Khalifa, the woman-writer who experienced in her personal life many of her characters' hardships. Khalifa came to literature at the end of a fight for her own rights as a woman. Her literary production was the result of her emancipation and not a means to achieving it. She brought to literature the fruit of the rebirth of a woman who found her way to the already open path of the national struggle. Her familiarity with many of the roles played by her characters contributed to their realism. (p.181)

Bamia's article, which does not analyze Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, remains important because Khalifeh's novel shows how the discourse of honor crimes imposes one side of the "double" victimization of the Palestinian women.

In Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, there are three female characters—namely, Hoda, Zaynab, and Nahleh—who suffer the gendered-violence of honor crimes. Hoda, who gets pregnant at the age of fifteen, is an American-Palestinian girl living in America and threatened to be killed by her father for the shame of adultery. The female protagonist of the novel, Zaynab, recalls the story of Hoda:

Hoda was the daughter of our neighbors living in the same complex. Like me, she was half-American. She became pregnant at fifteen and we all saw her father run after her in the street like a raging bull, carrying his longest knife. My father tried to stop him, but couldn't. Finally, with the help of two neighbors they were able to prevent him from killing her. (p.6)

However, Zaynab's father, Muhammad Hamdan, blames himself later for rescuing the girl from her father's vengeance because Hoda's father has lost his manhood and honor: "He should have killed her, she sullied his name, stained his honor, and humiliated him among his people. Had I been in his place I would have gone after her to hell" (Khalifeh, 1997/2005, p.6). Even though Hoda is lucky to escape death, she runs away from her father and neighborhood to live as an outcast in her "American grandmother's house" (Ibid.). Hoda's destiny is ambiguous and unknown since no one contacts her anymore: "We did not see her in Brooklyn again, but we heard rumors. Some said she had kept the baby, others said that she had given him up for adoption. Still, others said that she had an abortion" (Khalifeh, 1997/2005, p.6). Hoda exists in vacuum and becomes a source of shame for her father, who is unable to murder her to reclaim his honor: "Everyone agreed that Hoda's father was no longer a man since he had not washed his honor in her blood" (Ibid.).

The story of Hoda frightens every Arab American father that her story may reoccur with any other Arab American girl. Zaynab's father, who is the most affected and worried by the Hoda's scandal, warns the Arab community in America to go back home in order to protect the honor of their daughters and to prevent the reoccurrence of Hoda's model:

What are we waiting for, friends? Haven't we had enough of America and its trash? We all have boys and girls, do you want your daughters to be loose like American girls? Do you want to protect your girls, keep them pure, and bring them up strictly and marry them well? (Ibid., p.7)

Zaynab's father always reminds the crowd of Hoda and the shame she brings to her father. Of course, at Muhammad Hamdan's unconsciousness, he is worried that his daughter will dishonor him by repeating the same example of Hoda. He is now obsessed with the ghost of Hoda and the possibility of losing the honor of his daughter. Muhammad Hamdan is anxious that he may become like Hoda's father, who is "no longer a man" in the eyes of his community. Therefore, the idea of "going home" brings him relief and safety of honor: "I want my daughters to be brought up as Arabs, clear and transparent as a candle. I want them to marry Arabs and Muslims, .... To hell with America—I'm going back home" (Ibid., p.8). Muhammad Hamdan, who is the protector of his daughter's honor, is worried about the future of his daughter's moral behavior over the non-Arab land—America.

Zaynab, like Hoda, gets pregnant at the age of fifteen and becomes subject to her father's disdain and revenge. Just as Hoda, Zaynab finds herself threatened by her father's "longest knife" (Ibid.). Zaynab becomes a target for her father's attempts of murdering. She decides to run away to her American grandmother, Deborah: "I was afraid my father would find out about my pregnancy and would kill me as he had once threatened to do. He did try to kill me when he heard of my pregnancy" (Ibid., pp.11-12). Muhammad Hamdan decides to cleanse his name by murdering his daughter because he does not want to be like Hoda's father. Like a "hunting dog" (Ibid., p.13), he chases her at her grandma's house. For Zaynab, her father becomes unfamiliar to her: "He wasn't the father I knew but a total stranger" (Ibid., p.14). He beats her severely despite her grandmother's efforts to save her. He shouts at Deborah not to interfere because he believes that he is the protector of his daughter's honor: "It's over; consider her dead. She must pay for her mistake. I must wash away my shame and hers" (Ibid., p.13). Zaynab's father transforms into a violent monster, who looks at his daughter as a metaphorical representation of amorality and shame: "He dragged me into the kitchen, my body covered with pieces of glass, jam, and blood. He pulled my hair and shouted at the top of his voice, 'Daughter of a dog, by God I will suck your blood!'" (Ibid., p.14).

Zaynab's grandmother, Deborah, rescues Zaynab from an inevitable death. Zaynab, who is frightened by the violent scene of her father holding a knife to kill her at her grandma's house, feels helpless towards her father's fury: "I closed my eyes tightly and felt his kicks to my chest, while waiting for his knife to fall" (Ibid., p.14). Deborah successfully prevents the father from stabbing Zaynab by threatening to shoot him by the "hunting rifle" (Ibid.). Deborah, the American grandmother of Zaynab, is fully aware of the cultural background of the father in terms of honor and shame: "You can go to your people and tell them that you acted like a man and killed her" (Ibid., p.15). Deborah recognizes that the father wants to prove his manhood and bravery by killing his daughter. Therefore, she offers him a deal to leave the girl under the custody of her grandmother and to pretend that he has cleansed his honor by killing his daughter: "Forget Zaynab like you forgot her mother" (Ibid.). Muhammad Hamdan, unable to counter the warnings of Deborah, decides to depart away from his daughter: "He mentioned once more with his hand and disappeared down the road, forever" (Ibid.).

In Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, Muhammad Hamdan is a victim of tradition. Zaynab always celebrates the kind, simple and passionate character of her father. Even when her father attempts to kill her, she sympathizes with him: "Forgive me Daddy! Please forgive me!" (Ibid.). Zaynab knows that her father's consciousness is controlled by the tradition of honor revenge. Zaynab, before her pregnancy, describes the natural relationship between her and her father: "I enjoyed living with my father, who was as dear to me as my soul and the light of my eyes. He was a good-hearted man, full of memories, anecdotes, and funny stories" (Ibid., p.10). Zaynab tries to find justifications for her father's monster-like transformation. She thinks that her father is behaving according to the cultural codes of morality and acting violently as a protector of the family honor. Therefore, she does not despise her father; rather, she goes to Brooklyn to search for him when one of the neighbor tells her, "some say he went to the old country, others say he went to Canada, and some say he lost his mind and died" (Ibid., p.25). However, Muhammad Hamdan, leaving his daughter and shame in America, goes back to Wadi al-Rihan in the West Bank.

Zaynab, after her pregnancy and confrontation with her father, spends the majority of her time searching for her identity. Even though Zaynab achieves academic and financial success in America, she feels culturally lost. She becomes "chair of the anthropology department" and inherits her American mother's property by having "two departments—one in Washington, one in San Diego," "two cars," "yacht," and "diplomatic receptions" (Ibid., p.19). However, she lacks intrinsic self-value: "despite this life of luxury, I felt deprived" (Ibid.). Zaynab, who is brought up in America, is curious to know the other cultural side of the Palestinian society to which she and her father belong.

She cannot bring reconciliation to the two different cultural aspects of her character since she, as a "hybrid" character, combines simultaneously the American and Palestinian cultures: "I was caught between two languages and two cultures—my father's Brooklyn and the West Bank on one side and my maternal grandmother's American culture on the other. I was later left without any culture and lived in a vacuum" (Ibid., p. 9). She suffers from a loss of identity: "I didn't say I was Arab because I wasn't. Who am I then? Despite my mother's citizenship, my birth certificate, my school certificate, my books, my accent, my clothes, and everything about my life, I was not truly American" (Ibid., p.17).

Receiving a letter from her uncle to claim her inheritance of her father in the West Bank, Zaynab is delighted to be attached to her Palestinian roots. The "inheritance" signifies not only materialistic benefits but also cultural value. Zaynab is enthusiastic to know the Palestinian Arab culture to which she and her father belong:

I received a letter from my uncle saying what amounted to, "Come quickly before the thread breaks and you lose your claim to the inheritance." I lost no time thinking things over, but decided without hesitation. I felt at that moment as if I were standing before a window whose curtains were hiding the symbols of the country I had long dreamed of seeing. There was the affection of the family I had lost in my childhood and the warmth of my connection to the roots for which I had long searched in vain. (Ibid., p.29)

Zaynab's journey to Wadi al-Rihan is to discover the culture and world of her father. For her surprise, she finds her father very sick and paralyzed: "I saw nothing but the skeleton of a human being with two large eyes, skin and hair, or rather some remnant of hair... I saw nothing in my father's face that revealed that he recognized me" (Ibid., p.37). Zaynab is not lucky to talk with her father, who is deadly alive, but she is united with his surroundings, brothers, relatives and environment. However, she remains as an outsider, who just observes and never interferes in the family matters of her relatives. As an observer, Zaynab wants to find an answer to the meaning of honor in the Palestinian Arab culture to analyze the sudden transformation of her father from a kind man into a murderer: "I never knew my father well enough to provide an answer. I was young and here I am a grown-up, coming back to gather the details of his life like someone collecting grains of sand" (Ibid., p.44). Zaynab, however, decides to go back to America leaving her inheritance and family behind when she sees the agonies of her cousin, Nahleh, who is threatened by her brothers to be killed for her honor crime.

Zaynab's cousin, Nahleh, is another victim of honor crimes in Wadi al-Rihan in the West Bank. Nahleh, who is a fifty-year-old Palestinian woman, is expelled from work as a teacher in Kuwait after the Gulf War to live as "single and unemployed" in Wadi al-Rihan. Nahleh, who dedicates her life and money for bringing up her

brothers, is ironically deserted and neglected by them: "I worked in Kuwait, being milked like a cow, teaching and bringing them up, but they paid no attention to me and did what they wanted" (Ibid., pp.50-51). Nahleh feels that she is exploited by her brothers as a source of financial assistance and no one helps her find social stability by making her private family. She believes that she sacrifices her life for the sake of others. She comes into a conclusion that she will focus on her life and never allows others to manipulate her: "No one says that I've wasted my youth and life in Kuwait's heat, living alone in a foreign land. Now I don't care,..., even if the whole Hamdan family disappears, I couldn't care less!" (Ibid., p.71). Her brother, Said, is surprised by the transformation of his sister when she declines his appeals for money. Nahleh informs Said that all of her brothers have established themselves by having wives, children, and education, so she wants to secure her social life by having a family and money:

I 'm not a stupid girl anymore, leave me alone, you've bankrupted me. Get off my back. You've milked me like a cow. I'm not the Nahleh of Kuwait, like you all I live on the West Bank now. I'm not even like you, you have families, wives and children, you don't need anything. It is I who has needs (Ibid., p.92).

Nahleh, who is a hard-worker woman, blames her fortune in the West Bank where she finds no job nor lovely family: "Now I find myself doing nothing but housework, sweeping and cleaning, washing and making pickles! I'm about to explode, this kind of life is killing me. Am I going to stay home after having spent a lifetime working?" (Ibid., p. 92).

Nahleh, despite all of her efforts to establish her independency, is still controlled by the patriarchal rules of monitoring her sexual behavior. Nahleh finds that she, as an old woman, has no options to wait for a young man to marry her. Abu Salem, a seventy-year-old man, is the only man who seems to care about Nahleh as an expected wife. Even though Nahleh knows that Abu Salem is a married man with "ten children," she accepts his proposal as a "second wife" (Ibid., p.73) to establish her private family. Nahleh, who "had no children and no husband and no home of her own" (Ibid., p.128), decides to compensate the years she has wasted on bringing her brothers to start a new life even as a second wife: "Nahleh has also said that being in a polygamous marriage was better than being a widow or an old maid" (Ibid., p.117). Nahleh feels alienated from her brothers and society since she is obsessed now with the idea of having her own family. However, Nahleh does not dare to reveal her relationship with Abu Salem to her father and brothers. Even though Nahleh seems a strong woman, she is still controlled by the patriarchal rules which give the males the right to choose or decline marriage proposals for their daughters. In a society, where honor is something sacred to be protected by the males, Nahleh is cautious enough

not to show the details of her relationship with the old man. Zaynab, the narrator of the novel, comments on the importance of honor in Nahleh's society: "the protection of a woman, her marriage, and her reputation were the most important things for a family, a means to safeguard its honor" (Ibid., p.149).

Nahleh's life is changed into a misery after the discovery of her relationship with Abu Salem. Nahleh's brother, Mazen, discovers the scandal of his sister sitting with Abu Salem and sharing his sexual drives: "He [Mazen] grabbed the realtor [Abu Salem] and pulled him away from his sister. In a professional move he grabbed him, hit him, then threw him like a ball in the middle of the terrace" (Ibid., p.120). Zaynab, the narrator, shows how the rumors of Nahleh's scandal with Abu Salem spread everywhere:

It might be transmitted through other guests who would share the story with their relatives. Their relatives would tell other relatives and the story would reach the neighbors, the collective taxi drivers and the bus drivers traveling between Jerusalem and Ramallah, and those traveling between Ramallah, Nablus, and Wadi al-Rihan. It would then be journey through the bridge to Amman, Lebanon, and all the way to Frankfurt. (Ibid., p.121)

Nahleh, worried about the societal atmosphere of distrust, revenge and contempt of her, decides to elope with her lover, Abu Salem, to get a legal marriage and to escape the revenge of her brothers. Even though her brother, Mazen, cheats many women by pretending his love to them and making sexual relationships with them, he is not rebuked by the patriarchal society since he is a male. Violet, who is victimized by the false love of Mazen, is surprised by the violent reaction of Mazen to murder his sister for her relationship with Abu Salem: "Why do you accept conduct from me that you condemn from your sister?" (Ibid., p.122). Violet shows the hypocrisy of the patriarchal societies in which the concept of shame is only associated with women's behavior while men are free of any blame or punishment. Zaynab refers to the strange reaction of Nahleh's father towards Nahleh's disappearance: "He was shaken up and more afraid of scandal than for Nahleh's safety" (Ibid., p.126). In other words, Nahleh's father is not worried about the safety of his daughter as much as he is worried about the honor of his family.

Ironically, her brother, Said, the one who receives many financial assistance from his sister, threatens to kill her: "Said's reaction was overblown, as he swore three times to kill Nahleh and divorce his wife if he failed" (Ibid., p.127). Said, in a state of fury and blind hatred, holds the "biggest knife" (Ibid., p.130) to stab his sister since he plays the role of the protector of the family honor. However, Nahleh prevents the brutal attack of Said by shooting him with a "huge gun" (Ibid., p.131) and wounding him. For Said, Nahleh violates the masculine traditions when she decides to love and marry without consulting her father and brothers: "She fell in love and ran away with him and married him without consulting



anyone. Aren't we men? Nahleh made a mistake but I didn't" (Ibid., p.133). In other words, Said reminds the crowd of the role of men in accepting or declining the marriage proposals of their daughters and sisters. Said, attempting to murder his sister, thinks that he does not commit any "mistake" because he is doing his duty as a male guardian of his family honor. For Said, Zaynab holds responsible for the amoral behavior of Nahleh since the latter wants to imitate her as a Western woman: "It's all your fault. She wanted to act like Westerners, like Violet, and Helga, and people on television" (Ibid., p.132). Zaynab shows the burden of Nahleh's elopement on her father and brothers:

The Hamdan family was truly in a terrible situation. They were worried about Nahleh and their reputation in society. They had become the center of attention and their story was being told everywhere. If they were to abandon Nahleh, they would cause a scandal and would be considered as weak as women. (Ibid., p.149)

In this context, the brothers of Nahleh need to prove that they are capable of doing their duty as protectors of their family honor, and they are ready to cleanse their shame by chasing their sister and murdering her. They do not want to appear "as weak as women" in the eyes of their masculine society, which emphasizes the role of males as defenders of their family honor.

Although Khalifeh enables her female characters to survive death, she shows the agonies of women as subject of accusation, revenge, death, and shame in patriarchal societies. In the novel, Khalifeh does not bring Islam, as a religion, into the discussion of honor crimes in her Arab Palestinian society; rather, she relates the roots of honor crimes to traditions since it seems to me that Khalifeh is aware of the idea that Islam does not incite honor crimes, as noted earlier. Khalifeh shows the gendered hypocrisy of honor crimes when males' behavior does not bring shame to the family even if it is amoral, while females' actions are responsible for judging the honor of the family. In the novel, Mazen and Said, who are jobless, careless and amoral, are practicing surveillance on the behavior of their sister, Nahlehn, and punish her in the name of protecting their honor.

### 3. HONOR CRIME IN SEAN O' CASEY'S *JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK*

In O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), the Irish women hold responsibility for managing their families and earning their living; however, they are still restricted by the imbalanced gender phenomenon of honor. In the play, the male characters—"Captain" Jack Boyle and Johnny Boyle—show recklessness and moral ignorance towards the development and welfare of their family. Boyle, about sixty years old, is nicknamed by his wife, Juno, as the "paycock" (peacock) because he behaves arrogantly and

carelessly towards his family. He always finds excuses for not finding a job by complaining of the pain in his legs: "The job couldn't come at a better time; I'm feeling" in great fettle, Joxer. I'd hardly believe I ever had a pain in me legs, an' last week I was nearly crippled with them" (O'Casey, 1924/2009, p.203). He spends the majority of his time drinking wine with his friend, Joxer, and fails, as a father, to do his social duties to protect his family. Juno always reprimands his carelessness and selfishness: "It's miraculous that whenever he scents a job in front of him, his legs begin to fail him!" (Ibid., p.205).

Johnny Boyle, the son of Boyle, fails also to be a virtuous and loyal member of his family. He is hit in the hip during the Eastern Week rebellion and his arm is destroyed by a bomb. He is obsessed with his treachery to his friend, Mrs. Tancred's son, who is murdered because of the information Johnny gives about Mrs. Tancred's son. Johnny, like his father, does not work nor contributes to the development of his family. He appears as a "thin, delicate fellow... His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremendous look of indefinite fear in his eyes" (Ibid., p.200). Johnny Boyle, like Mazen in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, lives the illusion that they are national patriots and freedom fighters, while ironically they are parasites on their families. They never look into the positive sides of their sisters but prefer to persecute their personal development in the name of protecting their honors. Moreover, both of Mazen in *The Inheritance* and Johnny in *Juno and Paycock* have been wounded and left with limp. However, Mazen discovers too late the false illusion of his heroic superiority and blames his failure:

Now that I'm wounded and exhausted and have come out of the feast empty-handed, I'm beginning to regret having squandered my life. I wish I'd done something meaningful in my life, something valuable. . . . I wanted to be larger than myself, bigger than the world and the limits of the wind, but I ended up like a paper kite tossed in the wind! (Khalifeh, 1997/2005, p. 2018).

It is ironic to have someone like Mazen or Johnny, having an inferiority complex, play the role of the male protectors of the honor of their successful and hardworking sisters.

Mary Boyle, Juno's and Boyle's twenty-two-year-old daughter, is victimized by the discourse of honor exercised by her father and brother. Mary, who is seduced by the false love of the schoolteacher, Charles Bentham, becomes a subject of humiliation and exclusion. Boyle, ignoring all the fatherly duties, practices the role of the male protector of the honor of his family. Boyle threatens his daughter to leave the house after she is impregnated by Bentham: "Leave this place! Ay, she'll leave this place, an' quick too!" (O'Casey, 1924/2009, p. 238). For Boyle, Mary violates the discourse of honor and should be punished for shaking the masculinity of her father and brother. Boyle is terrified by the society's contempt in case he is unable to cleanse the shame of his daughter: "Oh, isn't this a nice

thing to come on top o' me, an' the state I'm in! A pretty shows I'll be to Joxer an' to that oul' wan, Madigan! Amn't I afther goin' through enough without havin' to go through this!" (Ibid.). In other words, Boyle expects that his daughter's scandal will function as a "show" of amusement and disdain of Joxer and the rest of the Irish society. Boyle, like Nahleh's father in *The Inheritance*, is distressed about his reputation more than the safety of his daughter. Throughout the confrontation between Juno and Boyle, Boyle never admits his failure as a model father for the family: "You'll say nothin' to her, Jack; ever since she left school she's earned her livin', an' your fatherly care never troubled the poor girl" (Ibid.).

Johnny, upbraiding the scandal of his sister, supports his father's condemnation to Mary. For Johnny, Mary's illegitimate pregnancy brings shame and "disgrace" to the family: "She should be dhruven out o' th' house she's brought disgrace on!" (Ibid.). Johnny, who is jobless and traitor to his friend, claims his moral and masculine mission to guide and protect the honor of his sister. He claims superiority and dominance over his sister and insists on her dismissal from the house: "It's a wondher you're not ashamed to show your face here, afther what has happened" (Ibid., p.241). Johnny is obsessed with his sister's scandal and encourages an arranged marriage for her with Jerry as a social cover to hide her illegitimate pregnancy and shame. Therefore, he rebukes his sister for telling Jerry about her relationship with Bentham and her pregnancy: "Couldn't you have waited for a few days?... he'd have stopped th' takin' of the things, if you'd kep' your mouth shut. Are you burnin' to tell every one of the shame you've brought on us?" Ibid., (p.242). Like Nahleh in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, Mary is transformed into a symbol associated with honor, accusation, "shame" and a burden on male protectors.

## CONCLUSION

The female characters in Sahar Khalifeh's *The Inheritance* and Sean O' Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* ironically do not receive protection nor guidance from the males except threatening, humiliation and ignominy. In O' Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, Mary, who is thrown away by her male protectors, is assisted only by her mother, Juno: "We'll go. Come, Mary, an' we'll never come back here agen. Let your father furrage for himself now;... , an' then we'll work together for the sake of the baby" (Ibid., p.244). Juno, who looks realistically at her daughter as a human being rather than a symbol of honor, declares herself as a second mother to the baby: "It'll have what's far betther—it'll have two mothers" (Ibid.). Similarly, in Khalifeh's *The Inheritance*, Zaynab's grandmother, Deborah, stands firm to rescue her granddaughter from the threatening of Zaynab's father. Again, Deborah plays

the role of another mother to Zaynab. It is only after the death of Deborah and travelling to the West Bank, Zaynab discovers the hypocrisy of the gendered-based theory of the male protectors of the family honor. Zaynab finds out the illusion of the tradition of honor, which degrades women into the symbolic realm and exempts men from any amoral behavior accusation: "Would the family become my grave?... I wrote in my diary that the members of my family were merely detached pieces in a rusty chain.... Their relationship was part of the traditions and was only symbolic" (Khalifeh, 1997/2005, p.127). In this context, the concept of honor becomes a "grave" for women because it suits only the feminine body to be buried in. However, both of Sahar Khalifeh and Sean O'Casey relate the interpretation of honor to traditions rather than religions.

## REFERENCES

- Abu-Odeh, L. (1996). Crimes of honor and the constructions of gender in Arab societies. *Comparative Law Review*, 2, 1-47.
- Amireh, A. (2003). Between complicity and subversion: Body politics in Palestinian national narrative. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102 (4), 747-772.
- Angierski, K. N. (2014). *Reclaiming the motherland: (Eco) feminism in Sahar Khalifeh's the inheritance and the end of spring* (Master's thesis). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No.1553021).
- Araji, S. K. (2000). Crimes of honor and shame: Violence against women in non-western and western societies. *The Red Feather Journal of Postmodern Criminology: An International Journal*, 8, 1-20.
- Bamia, A. A. (2000). Feminism in revolution: The case of Sahar Khalifa. In K. A. Malek & W. Hallaq (Eds.), *Tradition, modernity, and postmodernity in Arabic literature: Essays in honor of professor Issa J. Boullata* (pp.173-185). Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Fayad, M. (1995). Reinscribing identity: Nation and community in Arab women's writing. *College Literature*, 22(1), 147-160.
- Khalifeh, S. (2005). *The inheritance*. In A. Bamia (Trans.). Cairo, Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press. (Original work published 1997)
- Korteweg, A. C. (2012). Understanding honour killing and honour-related violence in the immigration context: Implications for the legal profession and beyond. *Canadian Criminal Law Review*, 16, 135-160.
- Muhammad, A. A. (2013). Preliminary examinations of so-called "honour killings" in Canada. *Serving Canadians*. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada. Retrieved from [http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/hk-ch/hk\\_eng.pdf](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/hk-ch/hk_eng.pdf)
- O' Casey, S. (2009). *Juno and the Paycock*. In J. P. Harrington (Ed.), *Modern and contemporary Irish drama* (pp.197-246). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1924)



- Ramanathan, G. (2012). *Locating gender in modernism: The outsider female*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- World Health Organization and Pan American Health Organization. (2012). Femicide: Understanding and addressing violence against women (WHO/RHR/12.38), 1-8. Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/iris/handle/10665/77421>
- Zuhur, S. (2009). *Considerations of honor crimes, FGM, kidnapping/rape, and early marriage in selected Arab nations*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw\\_legislation\\_2009/Expert%20Paper%20E\\_GMGPLHP%20\\_Sherifa%20Zuhur%20-%20II\\_.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2009/Expert%20Paper%20E_GMGPLHP%20_Sherifa%20Zuhur%20-%20II_.pdf)