



GENDER-SENSITIVE VERSES IN THE QUR'ĀN: AN  
ANALYTICAL STUDY OF AMINA WADUD'S AND  
ASMA BARLAS' HERMENEUTICS

BY

IBRAHIM ILYASU ADAM

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines gender-sensitive verses in the Qur'ān as reinterpreted by Muslim feminists, placing particular emphasis on Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas. The aim of the dissertation is to analyse to what extent Wadud's and Barlas' perception of gender equality shaped their Qur'ānic hermeneutics. Over the last two decades, *tafsīr* has gained a new momentum with the emergence of Muslim feminist hermeneutics, an exegetical method used by feminists to reread the Qur'ān to advance gender equality within an Islamic paradigm. This is particularly true for Wadud and Barlas who concisely argue that classical exegetes manipulated *tafsīr* to oppress women and preserve 'male-centric' authority. Hence, contextualization of the Qur'ān by adopting a new gender-sensitive approach is necessary to ensure women's active participation in *tafsīr*. Using this approach, Wadud and Barlas propose a new hermeneutics to reread the Qur'ān and deconstruct specific verses to discredit what they call patriarchal fallacy. While mainstream *tafsīr* relies heavily on using *ḥadīth* for the most authentic interpretation, Wadud and Barlas have all but disregard its authority, arguing that *ḥadīth*-based Qur'ānic hermeneutics should end. This dissertation analyses their hermeneutics within an Islamic framework and evaluates the extent to which they break with mainstream *tafsīr*. In the course of engagement with both feminists, the study adopts a comparative exegetical approach, (*al-Tafsīr al-Muqāran*) making special reference to some classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, as well as some modern intellectuals who have made substantial contributions to Qur'ānic scholarship. Similarly, it comparatively examines the point of similarities and differences between Wadud's and Barlas' hermeneutics. The study has found that Wadud's and Barlas' hermeneutical methodology is flawed for disregarding authentic sources of *tafsīr* and deviation from its principles and forcing their own reading in to the Qur'ān to provide theological legitimacy to a gender-orientated discourse, Islamic feminism. It argues that revitalization in *tafsīr* is essential in light of modern challenges but it has to be based on sound principles of interpretation. Therefore, the study suggests alternatives ways of addressing the problems of women within an Islamic framework rather than adopting a new hermeneutics for reading the Qur'ān.

## خلاصة البحث

تناولت هذه الرسالة آيات الجنس في القرآن الكريم من وجهة نظر آمنة ودود و أسماء بارلاس، ومنهجهما في إعادة تفسير هذه الآيات في ضوء المنهج النسوي الإسلامي. وقد ركزت الدراسة - بشكل خاص - على تحليل تفسير آمنة وبارلاس لهذه الآيات ومناقشة آرائهما، واستكشاف مدى تأثير تصورهما لمفهوم مساواة الجنسين في منهجيهما في صياغة تفسير جديد للقرآن. ومما لا شك فيه، أن تفسير القرآن الكريم شهد ثورة احتراقية ملحوظة خلال العقدين المنصرمين، خاصة بعد ظهور المنهج النسوي الإسلامي الذي يؤمن بمساواة الجنسين، وإعادة صياغة تفسير آيات القرآن الكريم بمقتضى ذلك. وتأتي آمنة ودود وأسماء بارلاس في مقدمة النساء المفسرات للقرآن الكريم اللاتي يدعن إلى خرق الحواجز، وإثبات تسوية الجنسين في كافة المجالات للدفاع عن الهوية. كما احتج كل من ودود وبارلاس بأن المفسرين القدامى شوهوا وحرفوا تفسير الآيات القرآنية المتعلقة بالجنس لاضطهاد المرأة، وإثبات سلطة مطلقة للرجال. فمن هذا المنطلق، رأوا ضرورة إعادة صياغة تفسير آيات القرآن، خاصة ذات الحساسية للجنس بأسلوب عصري جنسي يتلاءم مع التحديات التي تواجه المرأة المعاصرة، وتعرقل مشاركتها الفعالة في عملية التفسير. وبناء على ذلك، أوجد كل من ودود وبارلاس منهجاً جديداً للتفسير مع التركيز على الجانب التاريخي لمواجهة ما سموه بسلطة الرجال في التفسير، ومكافحة عملية اضطهاد المرأة الناجمة عن ذلك. ولتحقيق ذلك، سعنا إلى إلغاء شرعية الحديث النبوي ودوره في التفسير زاعمتين أن دوره قد انتهى. وقد سلك الباحث منهج التفسير المقارن في تحليل آرائهما ومناقشتها مع مقارنتها بأبرز آراء المفسرين القدامى، كالإمام الطبري والعلماء الذين قاموا بمساهمة ملحوظة في التفسير الحديث. وتوصل الباحث أخيراً إلى أن منهج ودود وبارلاس لإعادة تفسير الآيات من نهج خاطئ لبعده عن الضوابط الصحيحة للتفسير وما يتصف به من التحيز للبيِّنَات أعناق النصوص القرآنية لصالح دعاة تحرير المرأة المعاصرة وإخضاعها للانسجام مع برنامج (النسوية الإسلامية) لتحقيق هدف غير صائب. كما قدم اقتراحات جديدة لمساعدة المرأة للتغلب على مشاكلها في العصر الراهن في ظل الشريعة، بدلا من إعادة صياغة تفسير جديد للقرآن الكريم.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

The thesis of Ibrahim Ilyasu Adam has been approved by the following:

---

Muhammad bin Shah Jani  
Supervisor

---

Israr Ahmad Khan  
Internal Examiner

---

Muhammad Mustaqim bin Mohd. Zarif  
External Examiner

---

Asyraf Hj. Abdur Rahman  
External Examiner

---

Mahmoud Muhammad Rawash  
Chairman

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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*I dedicated this dissertation to  
my mother Hajiya Binta  
wife Salma  
and sister  
Yalwa*

*I do not know what the future  
holds for me,  
but I know  
there is a vision  
in my life  
that is greater than  
my imagination  
can hold*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Over the last two decades, *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis) has experienced a revolutionary breakthrough with the emergence of Muslim feminist hermeneutics, an exegetical method used by Muslim feminist scholars to reread Qur'ānic text to advance gender equality and discredit what they call oppressive patriarchal structures of interpretation (Abu-Lughod, 2001; Badran, 2002; Wadud, 2006). Although some of these women scholars have willingly allowed themselves to be categorized as 'feminists', others have remained ambivalent against the term (Barlas, 2002; Abu-Odeh, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

Using this interpretive methodology, Muslim feminists have proposed a new hermeneutical approach to personally engage with the Qur'ān and analyse its language, deconstruct specific verses and key words to discredit what they understand to be patriarchal fallacy and woman oppression by misogynists (Ahmed, 1992; Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002). While traditional method of Qur'ānic interpretation relies heavily on using *ḥadīth* for the most authentic interpretation, Muslim feminist scholars have all but disregard its authority and relentlessly argue that hadith-based Qur'ānic hermeneutics should end. A modern reader of the Qur'ān, they argue, has no obligation whatsoever to rely on literary sources outside the Qur'ān to understand Islam (Hassan, 1995; Hewitt, 1995; Abu-Lughod, 1998; Barlas, 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> Wadud, for example, has no problem with the term “feminist”. For her, identity really does not matter as long as she succeeds in her discourse of text rereading. Barlas, on the hand, is so sensitive to the term as she does not like to be identified as feminist. She has chosen to be feminist by practice without shouting slogans. Perhaps, this explains why she prefers to be called “believing woman” (Barlas, 2002).

Predictably, Muslim feminists' hermeneutics is an extension of feminist discourse on Islamic feminism which expounds gender equality within an Islamic paradigm (Ahmed, 1992: Badran, 2002: Abu-Odeh, 2004). This is particularly true because feminists have been engaged in a significant process of identity struggle, self-renaming in light of modernity and global challenge since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (precisely after the colonial era). To respond to the political reverberations and anti-feminist theories of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim feminists changed their discourse towards a definition of identity to defend their legitimacy and validate their demand for change. Consequently, they sought to reread the Qur'ān and early Islamic literature in order to challenge what they consider 'patriarchal interpretation' and give theological legitimacy to their discourse. Similarly, they claim the right to engage in *ijtihad* (independent interpretive reasoning of Islamic law) including the right to lead congregational prayers as an extension of larger reform process within Islam and ultimately adopt a crucial strategy of alternative interpretation of the Qur'ān to pursue their identity struggle. This new discourse opened up a debate over the definition of identity in feminist circles which has continued up to the present time.

It is against this background that modern Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century adopted a new hermeneutical approach *vis-a-vis* gender-sensitive verses in the Qur'ān to complementarily critique what they call 'anti-patriarchal rereading' of the Qur'ān. For them, Muslims read Islam as a patriarchy partly because of how they read the Qur'ān, who reads it, and the contexts in which they read it. They further claim to have developed this new strategy to simply exonerate the Qur'ānic texts from charges of being anti-women contending that the texts itself has been continually decontextualized and re contextualized in light of Muslim sexual politics which is overwhelmingly male-centric (Barlas, 2002).

Wadud was greatly inspired by the progressive/liberalist approach of exegesis advanced by Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) who argued that the Qur'ān must be contextualized to demonstrate the viability of Islam to the modern period (Taji-Farouqi, 2006). Rahman combined contextual and thematic approaches to *tafsīr*, claiming that de contextualised reading of the Qur'ān had failed to “yield insight into the cohesive outlook on the universe and life” (Rahman, 1980: xi). For him, the correct method of interpreting the Qur'ān is essential, since “the basic questions of method and hermeneutics were not squarely addressed by Muslims” (Rahman, 1980: 1). Moreover, since a systematic framework for interpreting ethico-legal contents of the Qur'ān had ceased to exist in the past, “Muslims in the modern period are in urgent need of one” (Saeed, 2006: 44).

Having been greatly influenced by Rahman's hermeneutical approach, Wadud makes the Qur'ān's conceptualisation of gender relationships her most consistent theme of exploration, while challenging what she considers patriarchal nature of text interpretation. Consequently, she opens up a space for intellectual inquiry in criticizing traditional exegetes and for what she claims to be “atomistic” methodology of interpretation, arguing that de contextualisation of the Qur'ān not only affects its internal coherence but also ignores broad principles that underpin its teachings (Wadud, 1999: 99). While emphasizing reading the Qur'ān as an organic entity, she also favours historicising its rulings, examining various gender-related verses and providing new readings to demonstrate that the responsibility for misreading the Qur'ān in oppressive and anti-women modes lies with its readers, not with the text itself (Wadud, 2000). For this reason, she dedicated her major work *Qur'ān and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (1999) to exploring

Qur'ānic gender-sensitive verses and applying her hermeneutical approach to reread them in light of Islamic feminist discourse.

In the same vein, Barlas closely followed in the footsteps of Wadud, proposing a Qur'ānic hermeneutics that allows Muslim feminists to argue in favour of gender equality within an Islamic paradigm.<sup>2</sup> In her book, *“Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’ān* (2002), she examines what she calls “the patriarchal nature of medieval interpretations” concerning gender-related verses. Grounding her argument on historical analysis of religious authority, Barlas contends that cultural influence, patriarchal and social settings have potentially influenced the mode of Qur'ānic interpretation, adding that any interpretation of a sacred text necessarily reflects the viewpoint of the interpreters.

Barlas' central argument is not only that the Qur'ān is not patriarchal, but also its teachings are “radically egalitarian” and even anti patriarchal (Barlas, 2002: 19). She then goes on to analyse the Qur'ān's position on a wide variety of gender issues in order to argue that patriarchy has no support of any kind in the teachings of the Qur'ān. This study will analyse Wadud's and Barlas' hermeneutical approach and examine the extent to which they break with the traditions of classical exegetes in Qur'ānic interpretation.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

For over two decades, Muslim feminists have continued to ground the theoretical core of their feminist discourse in Qur'ānic interpretation, *tafsīr*. This is particularly true because they believe that gender discrimination has a social and cultural rather than

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that Wadud published her book *Qur'ān and Woman* in 1999 while Barlas proposed her hermeneutics in her *Believing Woman* in 2002. Considering that Barlas' work was composed 3 years after Wadud's, the influence of latter on former is highly probable.

divine basis. Wadud and Barlas are probably the most outspoken Muslim feminists in critiquing the methodology of traditional exegetes for what they call manipulative tendencies of male interpreters.

Their central argument is that the principles of equality of all human beings are enshrined in the Qur'ān, but that practising this equality has been obstructed by what they claim to be patriarchal readings of biased and manipulative interpreters. This exegesis, however, “is faulted for its atomistic methodology and lack of recognition of the Qur'ān's structure of thematic unity” and the reason for this fault is that “all traditional Qur'ān interpretations were written (exclusively) by men” (Wadud, 1999: 2). And of course, “*Tafsīr* is (hu)man-made and, therefore, subject to human nuances, peculiarities, and limitations” (Wadud: 2000: 28). In other words, “it is not the text or its principles that change, but the capacity and particularity of the understanding and reflection of the principles of the text within a community of people” (Barlas, 2002: 5).

This new feminist hermeneutics, however, has created lots of problems that must be addressed. First, it may be a great disservice to Islam and denial of its heritage. Second, there is a strong possibility of having many theoretical and theological contradictions in struggling to reform Qur'ānic interpretation within secular structures.

Ostensibly, Muslim feminists claim to offer readings that recover the egalitarian Message of the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, they end up making bizarre interpretations which lead to revolt against the Qur'ān and sound Islamic tradition. Conceptually, feminists' enterprise of rereading is a replica of Christian feminist theology which reinterpreted the Gospel under the premise that it had been manipulated. This is evident in the way feminists' readings focus more on the text

itself rather than on the context of the revelation or on extra-Qur'ānic considerations as well as interpretation beyond the text. In this perspective, feminists' readings of the Qur'ān differ from the approaches of other intellectuals who are often qualified as liberals, modernists or progressives. Hence, feminists' rereadings constitute a mere subjective projection of a previous Christian feminists' ideology/hermeneutics upon Qur'ānic text.

Indeed, Muslim feminists' enterprise of text rereading has a profound effect on Muslims which originates from their attempt to reinterpret not only the Qur'ān but entire Islamic tradition with acute subjectivity and bias. They reinterpret Qur'ānic text with preconceived notion of gender equality in a way that conforms with their cultural and alien orientation without sound reevaluation of religious sources and total negligence of Islamic tradition, heritage, language and civilization. Despite the fact that several attempts have been made to critique feminists' hermeneutical approach, there still exists a serious problem in the field as most of the works largely ignore the effect of modern feminists' hermeneutics on Qur'ānic scholarship.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The central question around which this research is focused is to what extent Wadud's and Barlas' feminism shaped their hermeneutics in their engagement with gender-sensitive verses in the Qur'ān. More specifically, the study will provide answer to the following questions:

1. What theological or exegetical challenge inspired Wadud and Barlas to propose a new gender-sensitive hermeneutical approach to criticize traditional exegesis in the face of modern challenges?

1. What are the problematic aspects and implications of Wadud's and Barlas' hermeneutics in reinterpreting gender-sensitive verses in the Qur'ān?
2. In what ways can the problems of Muslim women be addressed in the modern era rather than proposing a new hermeneutical approach?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The central aim of this dissertation is to appraise the hermeneutics of Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas in re-reading gender-sensitive verses of the Qur'ān to advance gender equality within an Islamic paradigm. In addition, the study is intended:

1. To examine what basically motivated Wadud and Barlas to adopt a new hermeneutical approach to reinterpret the Qur'ānic text, giving special reference to gender-related verses.
2. To critically evaluate the limitations of the hermeneutics of Wadud and Barlas *vis-a-vis* gender-sensitive verses and identify the problems it generates.
3. To identify how to address the problems of Muslim women in modern era within an Islamic framework rather than adopting a new hermeneutical approach.

In a broader perspective, the study is intended to be a humble contribution to modern Qur'ānic exegesis within the academia by filling the existing literature gap in the field.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The significance of this study lies in its connection with the area of Qur'ānic interpretation, *tafsīr*, a central component of Islamic scholarship. Although a

considerable amount of literature has been published on modern trend in *tafsīr* and the critique of western scholarship *vis-a-vis* Qur'ānic studies, never before had any research been published on analysing the hermeneutical approach of Muslim feminist scholars, especially in rereading gender related verses. Most of the researches in the field of modern Qur'ānic scholarship have tended to focus on Muslim feminist scholars' debate on issues related to gender justice in the Qur'ān and the effect of patriarchal reading on Muslim women in Muslim societies. Moreover, the only available works written to challenge the feminist hermeneutics are written in the languages within the Muslim world (in most cases Arabic language). Thus, never before had any research been published in English to examine Muslim feminists' hermeneutical approach in relation to rereading gender-sensitive verses and consequently, addresses the problem of text rereading.

This study therefore intends to fill the existing gap by focusing on Wadud and Barlas and critically analyzing their views on gender-sensitive verses. The focus on these two feminist scholars is particularly relevant due to their influence and popularity not only in the West but in the Muslim world as well. Moreover, their relentless effort to challenge the authority of male exegetes by proposing a new gender-sensitive *tafsīr* poses a fundamental threat to Qur'ānic scholarship.

Certainly, Muslim feminist enterprise has now left the shadow of academia and begun to penetrate modern Muslims' psyche in different parts of the world. In addition, these two figures, Wadud and Barlas are still active today and receiving a wide media attention. Hence, it is critically urgent to combat this potentially dangerous discourse. This research is distinguished from some other writings for making a detailed analysis on Muslim feminist hermeneutics and their critique of male

exegetes and by its focus on the roots of the problems concerning the question of authority of interpretation.

The pertinent question in this connection is who is this research addressing? Basically, the research is not so much a refutation as it is a humble attempt to draw the attention of Islamic scholars worldwide to the potential danger of Muslim's feminist hermeneutics. Rather than silencing Wadud and Barlas and other feminists *per se*, the researcher hopes to call for constructive engagement with their ideas and exploiting the opportunity to build a hermeneutic theory that corresponds with Islamic thought and tradition. The research also targets average Muslims and mainstream Muslim organization who have fallen into the trap of promoting Muslim feminists' ideas in their quest for a new 'Islamic theology' as well as women's right advocacy. In the same vein, the study critiques the controversial ideas underpinning the feminist interpretive enterprise and evaluates to what extent it break with mainstream *tafsīr*.

Moreover, Islam has long been the subject of misinformation, misrepresentation and distortion in issues related to the position of Muslim women in Muslim society. This is evidently clear by examining oriental and western-orientated feminist scholarly literature like *Women in Sociology: A Bio-bibliographical Source book* authored by Deegan (1991) and *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* edited by feminist sociologist, Linda Lindsey (1997). This study will clarify these concocted misrepresentations by providing a reading that reflects a true picture of Muslim women from the Islamic perspective. Furthermore, as Islamic feminism is significantly gaining wider currency across the globe and feminist scholars are actively engaged in *ijtihād* to reinterpret the Qur'ān to seek legitimacy, the expediency of an objective appraisal of Muslim feminist hermeneutics is not only relevant but essential.

## 1.6 RESEARCH SCOPE AND LIMITATION

As a matter of fact, Muslim feminists draw their hermeneutics from various disciplines such as Islamic thought, Philosophy, Theology and Anthropology. Nevertheless, the limited nature of this research has compelled the researcher to focus exclusively on gender-sensitive verses. Hence, the research will appraise the hermeneutical approach of Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas in rereading gender-sensitive verses in the Qur'ān. In the engagement with the two feminist scholars, the study will critically analyse their hermeneutics in Qur'ānic text rereading giving special reference to their major works, *Qur'ān and Woman* and *Believing Women* respectively. Before assessing the exegetical methodology of each author, the researcher will start with a review of their books to explore and analyse their arguments. Afterwards, I will explore gender-related issues the authors have raised in their works and their approach in rereading relevant verses to support their arguments.

The researcher has chosen to use the term 'gender-sensitive verses' to define those verses which have gender sensitivity/connotations and frantically used by Muslim feminist scholars to advance gender equality in the Qur'ān. It would be safe to indicate that in the course of my engagement with Wadud and Barlas, my analysis will focus on some 5 verses in *Sūrah al-Nisa'*, namely, 4: 1, 4: 3, 4: 32, 4: 33 and 4: 34. However, a special reference will be made to the following 13 verses to substantiate my arguments when deemed necessary; from *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2: 222, 2: 223, 2: 228, 2: 229, 2: 230); from *Sūrah al-Nūr* (24: 30, 24: 31, 24: 60), and from *Sūrah al-Aḥzāb* (33: 32, 33: 33, 33: 35, 33: 53, 33: 59). Thus, collectively, the dissertation will examine only these gender-sensitive verses.

“Feminist” is a broad term that includes several groups; secular feminists are those who do not accept the Bible as authoritative; religious feminists are individuals

who have chosen not to identify with Christianity, but whose beliefs nevertheless include a religious worldview; Christian feminists work from the stand point of a commitment to the Christian faith but accept the authority of scripture in a limited scope (Lundy, 1992; Letham, 1992; Fricke, 1994). Throughout this thesis, the term “Muslim feminist scholars” refers to those female scholars who seek to relentlessly advocate gender equality within an Islamic framework by critiquing traditional exegetical and hermeneutical methods and at times rejecting any external sources in reading the Qur’ān (Badran, 2002; Barlas, 2002; Wadud, 2006).

While there are various Muslim feminist scholars in the Muslim world and the West in contemporary times, the researcher intends to focus on Wadud and Barlas for three reasons. Firstly, unlike other feminists who use theological discourse, literary or sociological criticism to promote gender justice, Wadud and Barlas have proposed hermeneutical approach to advance the notion of gender equality in the Qur’ān. Secondly, so far they are the only feminist scholars who have proposed hermeneutical approach to reinterpret the Qur’ān and dedicated major works to represent the other feminist scholars from within an Islamic paradigm. Thirdly, while Wadud is the pioneer in the field of modern feminist hermeneutics, Barlas arguably, remains the second most influential figure in the Western feminist circle who dedicated a comprehensive study that explores the concept of gender justice within an Islamic paradigm. Her book is, to say the least, influential and is gaining an enormous popularity not only in the West but within the wider community of Muslim feminist circles and liberalists around the globe.

Another term central to the present study is 'hermeneutics'. Indeed, Western hermeneutics is the basis from which feminist enterprise of reinterpreting Islamic text was born (Gardiner, 1999; Grondin, 2010). Hermeneutics, technically speaking, refers

to the rules of interpretation and understanding of religious text (Gadamer, 1996). It is an old term derived from Christian theology which was understandably punctuated and exploited in response to developments in religious and philosophical thought and biblical studies in the Western context (Nagel, 1986). Ferraris (1996: 1) defines hermeneutics as "the art of interpretation as transformation" and contrasts it with a view of theory as "contemplation of eternal essences unalterable by their observer"(Gadamer, 1996). The task of hermeneutics, therefore, is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but rather to clarify the interpretive conditions in which understanding takes place. This understanding is reached within a fusion of horizons.

It would be fair to say that hermeneutics has over time been applied to the human sciences more generally and is now seen by many to cover all interpretive acts in the human sciences (Dilthey, 1910; Rorty, 1991). For this reason, the term is sometimes criticized for its conceptually elusive nature, but it is important to note, as Gadamer (1992: 70) does, that "hermeneutics is a protection against abuse of method, not against methodicalness in general". In conventional theological usage, the term 'hermeneutics' is broadly used to denote the enterprise which identifies the principles and methods prerequisite to text interpretation as well as the aims and criteria of that practice (McAuliffe, 1988). For the purpose of this thesis, however, the researcher will use hermeneutics to refer to a variety of ways through which an individual may arrive at the knowledge of a text and its interpretation. In other words, it is a method of interpretation of a text and the process as well as the conditions that generally govern that understanding and manage its possibility.

Qur'ānic hermeneutics<sup>3</sup> is broadly defined as the study of theories and principles of the interpretation and understanding of the Qur'ān. Through the ages, Qur'ānic scholars have developed a wide range of systems of hermeneutics to mine the wealth of Qur'ānic meanings.

To have a better constructive basis for our analysis of the feminist hermeneutical approach, the study will briefly explore the concept of Islamic feminism and its historical origin as well as its relation to textual reinterpretation project and the extent to which it influences feminist hermeneutical approach. While it will be interesting to address key methodological issues in the study of feminist hermeneutics, the limited nature of this study has compelled us to refrain from delving into theological debates generated by feminists' interpretation which are beyond the scope of this research. Also, throughout this thesis, I intend to use Yusuf Ali's *The Qur'ān Translation* as well as commentaries of Muḥammad Asad and Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall whenever providing direct quotes from the Qur'ān becomes necessary.

Furthermore, I maintain that this research is particularly a comparative analysis on feminist hermeneutic as drawn out from Wadud's *Qur'ān and Woman* and Barlas' *Believing Women*. Therefore, the hermeneutics under review are the ones focused on by these two authors; nevertheless, I do recognise the need to bring up examples of the views and arguments of other feminists outside of the writings of the selected two authors in order to situate their theories and hypotheses on common grounds. Although the study is focused on analysing hermeneutics of interpretation used by Wadud and Barlas in the Qur'ānic text rereading, it does not presume to

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<sup>3</sup>From technical perspective, the terms "hermeneutics" and "exegesis" are often used interchangeably. Notwithstanding, hermeneutics is applied to a wider discipline which encompasses written, verbal, and nonverbal communication. Exegesis, on the other hand, focuses exclusively upon texts.