# Gender at the Intersection of Racialization, Inequality, and Disability in Anbar Otin's Writing

*Accepted version of an article published in Central Asian Affairs: Donohon Abdugafurova. "Gender at the Intersection of Racialization, Inequality, and Disability in Anbar Otin's Writing", Central Asian Affairs 9, 2-4 (2022): 235-258.*

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## Abstract

Racializing locals has been one of the main characteristics of Russian and Soviet imperial modernity. Anbar Otin (1870–1915) was among the thinkers and writers in Turkistan's Muslim society engaging with such issues. In *Risolai Falsafai Siyohon* (The Treatise on the Philosophy of the Blacks) she treats *siyohon* (blacks) as a color employed as a social metaphor and social position used in reference to the ordinary people of Turkestan, their frustrated hopes, and their pain. In the work, Anbar indicates that the word *siyohon* (*qoralar* -blackness) has been used to racialize, discriminate against, and denigrate Turkestan's peoples. According to Anbar, it also carries a positive connotation as in "inner and physical beauty." In this paper, I analyze the writing of Anbar in relation to her understanding of racialization, inequality, religion, gender, and disability, situating Anbar's experience within broader discussions of such topics in the Central Asian context.

## Keywords

gender – racialization – religion – darkness – blackness – modernity – Turkestan

## Introduction

Nineteenth-century Central Asia presents an extensive female literary network sparked by the patronage of the Khoqand regent Nadira Begum (1822–1842) and including poets such as Jahon Otin-Uvaysi (1780–1845), Dilshad Barno (1800–1905?), and Anbar Otin (1870–1915). In addition to *ghazals*, traditional

love poems, this literary movement resulted in the female authorship of historical, ethical, and philosophical works. In this article, I analyze Anbar's Uzbek-language work *Risolai Falsafai Siyohon* (The Treatise on the Philosophy of the Blacks) and discuss how she engages with blackness as a color connected primarily to the ordinary people of Turkestan and their lives. Anbar Otin utilizes the word *qora* (black; plural *siyah* and/or *qoralar*) in different ways in her work. She uses the word "black" as an adjective and as a collective noun. According to her, the *qoralar*, blacks, are ordinary people who live in hardship. In the *Risola*, Anbar uses the color *qora* (black) as a defining quality of: (1) feelings, as in *qora baxt*, "black happiness"; (2) intentions, as in *qora niyat*, "black will," and *qora fikr*, "black thought"; and (3) people, as in *qora tusli xalqlar*, "black people." Anbar Otin's work on blackness demonstrates how, in Central Asia, gendered experiences are located at the intersection of religion, disability, racialization, and inequality. Racialization is a process that brings about discrimination against and denigration of peoples, cultures, and religions. In Anbar's writings, racialization – blackness – connotes ordinary people and also has positive associations of inner and physical beauty.

When I informed Uzbek scholars about my research interest in Anbar Otin's writings, some of them question whether Anbar Otin existed as an actual historical figure. These scholars suggested that Anbar could be a creation of Soviet ideologists wanting to emphasize women's autonomy and independence. One of these scholars questioned whether women writers could deal with philosophical and social issues, such as social stratification and race (in Central Asian terms), which were absent in the Jadids' discourses.[1] Another scholar in Uzbekistan noted that the *xunuk* (ugly) handwriting of the manuscript, which is kept at the Khoqand Literary Museum (# КП 4301), indicates that the author could be a woman. In my opinion, questioning the female writer's existence has to do more with conservative resistance to women's autonomy in contemporary Uzbek society than it does with a program of serious literary research. By sabotaging women's voices, this skepticism precludes readers from engaging with the work of female authors. Hence, the goal of this article is not to prove whether Anbar Otin existed or not. Rather, I focus on the writings that are attributed to her and analyze their content by examining how Anbar Otin engages with social issues contemporary to her. Regardless of who or what Anbar was, her works shed light on the social life of Central Asian women at

1 The Jadids were members of a Muslim intellectual reformist movement of early-twentieth-century Central Asia.

the time. Her narratives' symbolic and ideological significance, hence, becomes the center of my inquiry.[2]

## Methodology

In this article, my primary source is Anbar's *Risolai Falsafai Siyohon* (The Treatise on the Philosophy of the Blacks), a manuscript kept at the Khoqand Literary Museum, as well as her work published in 1970 by Fatima Husainova, which includes her poetry. Although the Treatise's title is in Persian following the literary convention at the time, the work is written in the Uzbek language with Old Uzbek script that is based on the Arabic and Persian alphabets. In this article, all the translations from Uzbek to English are mine. Through a close and critical reading, I utilized discourse analysis related to the theme of gender intersecting with racialization, inequality, religion, and disability. Occasionally, to clarify some indigenous terms and concepts, I consulted with my parents as experts on the Uzbek culture, history, and language.[3] I also drew on Helene Cixous' writings about gender, specifically her argument about women as the Dark Continent.[4] Because Anbar discusses blackness in tangible terms and darkness in abstract terms, Cixous' discussion of darkness resonates with Anbar's voice and conceptually ties together women's fates in cross-cultural settings. I also refer to Gyanendra Pandey's comparative work on prejudice and race. By utilizing non-Central-Asian scholarship to discuss gender's intersection in Central Asia, I assert that, geographical and cultural differences notwithstanding, our struggles are similar.

## Racialization in Soviet Terms

Race or racialization in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asian contexts is culturally and geographically specific.[5] A scholar of Soviet history, Eric Wietz, argues

2 Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," *Topics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University, 1978) 121–34.

3 In Uzbek society, elders are usually regarded as source of knowledge and consulted in the matters of livelihood, decision making and other occasions. The Uzbek proverb "*Qari bilganni pari bilmas*" [The things the elder people know, fairy does not know] attests to that convention.

4 Helene Cixous is a Jewish-Algerian-French writer.

5 For the topic of race and othering in imperial Russian and Soviet context, see David Rainbow, *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and Soviet Union in Global Context* (McGill Queen's

that although the Soviets "explicitly and loudly" denied the existence of race, racialized thinking seeped through to people's lives in the everyday practices and policies of the state. Wietz writes,

> Race is fate; there is no escape from the characteristics that are said to be carried by every single member of the group bar none. While racial distinctions have most often been based on phenotype, race is not essentially about skin color but about the assignment of indelible traits to particular groups. Hence, ethnic groups, nationalities, and even social classes can be "racialized" in historically contingent moments and places.[6]

Acknowledging the shortcoming of the focus on only state policies, Alaina Lemon highlights the importance of language in expressions of racial thinking and treats race as a "discursive practice."[7] Lemon explains, "The term discursive practice includes specific articulations of ideology as actions and avoids reducing discourse to schema while acknowledging the structural constraints of language. To ascribe identity is not only a 'mark' of practice, nor just a brake on practice, but is a practice among others."[8] I agree with Lemon's statement that "meta-terms such as *race* were only just entering broad circulation to describe these discursive practices did not mean that those practices themselves were brand new."[9] I expand on Lemon's reference to the Soviet era and support her claim in the context of the pre-Soviet, colonial, and precolonial times, just like David Rainbow and other scholars who explored the ideologies of race that are "ideas about human diversity articulated in racial terms."[10] Noting the prevalence of racialization practices, I argue that although the Jadids' did not

University Press, 2019); John W. Slocum, "Who, and when, were the *Inorodtsy*? The evolution of the category of 'aliens' in imperial Russia," *The Russian Review* 57, no. 2 (1998): 173–90; Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 6; Eric D. Weitz, "Racial politics without the concept of race: Reevaluating Soviet ethnic and national purges," *Slavic Review* (2002): 1–29; Kalanov Komil, *Markaziy Osiyo xududidagi ijtimoij-diniy tabaqalar (diniy-ekologik va sotsioantropologik taxlil)*, Rabochie dokumenti – Document de travail de 1'IFEAC [IFEAC Working Paper], 16 (May 2006), Tashkent, 2006, 5–8.

6 Wietz, "Racial politics without the concept of race," 7.

7 Alaina Lemon, "Without a 'Concept'? Race as Discursive Practice," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 54.

8 Lemon, "Without a 'Concept'?," 54.

9 Lemon, "Without a 'Concept'?," 57.

10 David Rainbow, *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and Soviet Union in Global Context* (McGill Queen's University Press, 2019), 4.

address discrimination or racialization, their silence does not mean racialization did not exist in practice, and Anbar's writing about racialization – her enunciation of it – does not take her out of the mainstream's narrative.

Another scholar, Nathaniel Knight, agrees with Lemon that practices always precedes formal recognition; Knight argues that "the appearance of formal dictionary definitions of race tended to lag behind racial practice."[11] The scholar ties race and racialization to power and inequality:

> Race, while commonly associated with the notion of innate biological traits, is just as much a reflection of the power to create and enforce categories of distinction. More than just a means of self-identification, race is often an ascribed identity imposed through mechanisms of power on multiple levels (symbolic and discursive as well as military and bureaucratic) that serves to order social reality and maintain hierarchical structures of inequality.

In the following section I discuss the manifestation of racialization in Central Asia.

## The Russian Imperial Era in Central Asia

In precolonial and early colonial Turkestan, racialization was not formally recognized (or theorized); yet racialization and discrimination were at play among local people. Vera Tolz argues that in imperial Russia, "biological factors were often seen as directly relevant to defining *narodnosti*, *natsional'nosti*, *narody*, and *natsii*, whereas definitions of race included references to cultural attributes."[12] That means in imperial Russia and its colonies, race and racism cannot be understood only through biology. In Central Asian contexts, social differentiation which we can now identify as "racialization" was not defined through physical appearance but was framed through familial connection to the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad and the four Khalifs, indicating a

11 Nathaniel Knight, "What Do We Mean When We Talk about Race? Methodological Reflections on the Theory and Practice of Race in Imperial Russia," *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* 2 (2019): 117–19.

12 Vera Tolz, "Constructing Race, Ethnicity, and Nationhood in Imperial Russia: Issues and Misconceptions," in *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, ed. David Rainbow (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 30.

relationship to power and prestige.[13] This social differentiation was often the basis of social inequality. Even though all members of the Khoja or Sayyid groups were not socially equal because they differed in their possession of wealth, being an *oq suyak* (white bone), a member of Sayyid or Khoja group that had hereditary rights that excluded other, non-Sayyid or -Khoja people. It already provided a sense of superiority over *qora suyak* (common people).[14] Notwithstanding similar physical appearance and skin color, people of Central Asia (namely Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Tajiks, Turkmens, Uyghurs, and Uzbeks) associated themselves with "holy groups" such as Khoja Sayyids and Ishon lineages.[15]

When describing daily life in the late nineteenth century's Ferghana Valley, Nalivkin and Nalivkina, Russian colonial ethnographers, define these differences as class stratification. They write,

> Talking about classes, we should point out that except for direct descendants of the khan's clan (who currently do not bear any social distinction) there are no noblemen or other privileged classes among the sedentary native population. There are *xo'ja* [part of holy group], who present themselves as the descendants either of the Prophet or the first four caliphs; during the khan's rule they had certain privileges in taxes, but now they have lost their privileges. There are no distinctions between them and others, except for the fact that they [xo'jas] avoid marrying their daughters to [non-xo'jas]. (But they themselves [xo'ja men] marry the daughters of *xo'ja* or *qoracha* [dark and ordinary] without differentiation).[16]

13 M.A. Usmonov, *Islom. Spravochnik: Islom va Ideologik Kurash, Terminlar, Tushunchalar, Iboralar, Mazhablar, Oqimlar, Sharqdagi Xurfikrlilik* [Islam. Guidebook: Islam and Ideological Struggle, Terminology, Concepts, Phrases, Madhhabs, Factions, and Free Thinking in the East] (Tashkent: Uzbek-Soviet Encyclopedia Press, 1987), 179.

14 Azim Malikov, "Sacred lineages in Central Asia: Translocality and Identity," in *Mobilities, Boundaries, and Travelling Ideas Rethinking Translocality Beyond Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Manja Stephan-Emrich and Philipp Schröder (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018), 129; for other works from the same author on this topic, see Azim Malikov, "Kinship Systems of Xoja Groups in South Kazakhstan," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 12, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 78–91; Azim Malikov and Khoji Yujnogo, "Kazakhstana: istoriya i identichnost," *Ethnograficheskoe obozrenie* 4 (2014): 35–45; Azim Malikov, "Khoja in Kazakhstan: Identity Transformations," ed. Peter Finke and Günther Schlee, *Framing the Research, Initial Projects*, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Department "Integration and Conflict" Field Notes and Research Projects VI (Halle/Saale, 2013a), 101–7.

15 Malikov, "Sacred lineages in Central Asia," 122.

16 Marianne Kamp, *Muslim Women of the Fergana Valley: A 19th-Century Ethnography from Central Asia*, ed. Mariana Markova, tr. Vladimir Nalivkin and Maria Nalivkina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 17 (Russian version, Kazan, 1886, pp. 25–26).

From this ethnographic account, we can distinguish two separate groups: *xo'jas*, who were also called *oq suyak* (white bone, noble), and *qoracha* or *qora suyak* (black bone, ordinary, plain). In the Central Asian context, the meaning of the word for "black" is multivocal (i.e., it means different things) and multilocal (i.e., it changes meaning vis-à-vis physical and historical location). For example, the color *qora* (black) refers to the highest degree of spiritual achievement in the Kubraviyya Sufi order,[17] and the term *qoracha* refers to uneducated, ordinary, and poor people who are not from the "holy lineage" or "holy groups" such as Sayyids, Kwajas, or Ishans.[18]

While studying the Kazakh context in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Bruce Privatsky argued that *oq suyak* and *qoracha* continue to be used to indicate a Kazak vs. non-Kazak differentiation. The scholar writes,

> Kazak tribal confederations are the 'pure' Kazaks of Turkic lineage, called the *qara süyek* or "black bone," as distinct from honor-groups called *aq süyek* or "white bone." The white bone are considered to be of different patrilineal "blood" (*qani bosqa*), do not belong to the three hordes … Today the white bone [plural] consist of two groups, the *töre* and *qojas* … The *töre* were the Kazak khans and their families claiming Chingisid inheritance, *i.e*. sacralized Mongolian descent from Genghis khan via the khans of Golden Ho'rde.[19]

The term *xo'ja*, with different variations such as *qoja* or *kwaja*, is also related to Sufi affiliations and has been the subject of several scholarly works.[20]

17 Kubraviyya is a Sufi order that was originated in thirteenth-century Central Asia by Shayx Najmiddin Kubro (1145–1221), whose full name is Ahmad ibn UlaribnMuhammad al-Hevaqiy al-Khorazmiy. For a detailed analysis, see Najmiddin Komilov, *Najmiddin Kubro: Risola* (Tashkent: Xalq merosi Nashriyoti, 1995).

18 Malikov, "Sacred lineages in Central Asia," 121.

19 Bruce G. Privratsky, *Muslim Turkistan: Kazak religion and collective memory* (Psychology Press, 2001), 34.

20 Devin DeWeese, "Foreword," in *Islamization and Sacred Lineages in Central Asia. The Legacy of Ishaq Bab in Narrative and Genealogical Traditions, vol. 2: Genealogical Charters and Sacred Families: Nasab-namas and Khoja Groups Linked to the Ishaq Bab Narrative, 19th–21st Centuries*, ed. Ashirbek Muminov, Anke von Kügelgen, Devin DeWeese, and Michael Kemper (Almaty: Daik Press, 2008), 6–33; Devin DeWeese, "The Descendants of Sayyid Ata and the Rank of Naqib in Central Asia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1995): 612–34; Devin DeWeese, "The Politics of Sacred Lineages in Nineteenth-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups Linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 4 (1999): 507–30.

Research like Privatsky's demonstrates that a linguistic distinction between "white bone" and "black bone" is meant to indicate the purity of blood and the depth of spirituality. For example, when discussing local healers who used Qur'anic verses as a treatment, Privatsky noted that for Kazakh people, the healer's genealogy played an important role in ascertaining their authenticity and also affected their curing strategies: "if the treatment performed by reciting [Quranic] verses cures, the healer will be honored as a big 'mullah' (*ulken molda*). If a mullah is not a Qoja, his claims maybe suspect because he is 'black' (*qara süyek*, black bone), not white or pure (*aq süyek*, white bone or nobility) like the Qojas."[21]

In *Risola*, Anbar Otin addresses the racial differentiation and divides within her contemporary Central Asian society. In Anbar's terms, the "blacks," ordinary people, were the ones who were bound to hardship and discrimination due to social circumstances. I turn to her work in the following paragraphs.

## Anbar Otin's Racial Theory

*Risolai Falsafai Siyohon* (The Treatise on the Philosophy of Blackness) is the only known prose work by Anbar Otin. This treatise is written in Uzbek with an old Uzbek script. The *Risola* is a literary piece that encompasses Anbar Otin's personal thoughts, beliefs, wishes, and hopes about social life and the future. Comprising four chapters, this 43-page work presents the author's philosophical thoughts on the appearance, differences, happiness, and dark(er) skin of people who were locally considered black: *siyohon or qoralar,* the ordinary people. Each chapter includes one or two *ghazal*s (a form of poetry) with the prose text. In a closing statement in the *Risola*, Anbar Otin informs the reader that she would continue her thoughts in her work *Mushoira* (Poetic Literary Dialogue), unknown in current scholarship.

The *Risola* begins with distraught opening remarks explaining Anbar's physical and psychological state. She writes, "It is me, a humble one (*kamina*) and poor bedridden behind the walls. My name is Anbar. Under these conditions I recount my despondent and disabled years. The full narration emanates the influence of weakness on me who is cursed and unfortunate."22 Anbar continues to share her thoughts about the disturbing injustices she has witnessed in the world. The subjects of her concern are *qoralar*, "blacks," the term she uses to refer to ordinary people. In her context, such racialization was used to

21 Privratsky, *Muslim Turkistan*, 201–2.
22 Anbar, *Risola*, 80 (original translation).

mark these people and inform the concomitant discrimination and denigration of ordinary people bound to hard labor. In Anbar's writings, not ethnicity per se but racialization becomes a conceptual resource within local inquiry. Stratifications based on skin color, social status, and physical ability inform her *Risola*. Hence, Anbar's understanding of race intersects with her understanding of gender, racialization, inequality, religion, and disability.

Unlike the racist conventions correlating black with negative connotations in literature and popular discourse, including several classical literary writings that associate the color black with slavery and ugliness, Anbar associates the color black with positive imagery.[23] For instance, in Mongol shamanism, which has greatly influenced Central Asian belief systems, there were ninety-nine *tngri* (deities); 44 of them are identified as black in color and terrifying, while the rest are described as white and benevolent.[24] In *Risola*, Anbar associates the color black with positive imagery. To link the color black with ordinary people, Anbar enmeshes it with altruism and beauty. She writes,

> There are black things, although they (look) black their inside is full of lights of knowledge. The example is that a black lantern is covered with oil and cinder, yet it brightens a hovel with its lights. In terms of beauty the most important factors also are blacks. The base of the beautiful face are black eyebrows, black hair and a black beauty mark.[25]

The first chapter of the *Risola* is about the faces of the blacks. Anbar uses the word "black" in racial and social terms to delink the color of one's skin from one's moral character. In racial terms, she talks about the Whites, meaning Europeans, and the Blacks, meaning Africans and people from the "South and East" and Asia. She writes, "Many people from the South and East, namely Arab, Iranian, Afghan, Ceylon, Indian and Kashmir people are dark-faced and good-hearted. Those people, just like aristocrat white people, possess body, legs-arms, tongue, eyes, intelligence, enthusiasm, strength and astuteness."[26] In social terms, she distinguishes between local aristocrats and ordinary people whose living conditions and hard work marks their appearances; the former are marked as white and the latter as dark-faced and good-hearted. While introducing the first instance of a relation between race, class, and morality,

23 Minoo Southgate, "The Negative Images of Blacks in Some Medieval Iranian Writings," *Iranian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1984): 3–36.

24 Klaus Hesse, "A Note on the Transformation of White, Black and Yellow Shamanism in the History of the Mongols," *Studies in History* 2, no. 1 (1986): 20.

25 Anbar, *Risola*, 80.

26 Anbar, *Risola*, 83.

Anbar disassembles these conventional stereotypes. She urges that regardless of appearance, people should not oppress one another and should appreciate the beauty of blackness. A thoughtful person, according to her, is able to see the internal magnificence in these black people.[27]

> A person with a sharp perception knows that in the *qora tun*, dark night black happiness, black will and black thought move in the ambiance of darkness. The movement of the black happiness in the dark night means that all *mazlumlar*, underprivileged are sleepless [and] with the fear of danger, and prone to hardship and labor. In this very night *zolimlar*, tyrants with their pretentious wealth are busy with planning attacks to the fine dignity of *mazlum ayollar va bechora masturalar*, oppressed and defenseless women.[28]

The phrase *qora baxt* (black happiness) appears in her *Risola* when Anbar refers to ordinary people's fates and talks about their dreams and hopes. She defines the rulers of her time as people with *qora niyat* (those who have black will): those who oppress *mazlums* (oppressed ones), women, and others who are in hardship. She writes,

> *Qora baxt*, black happiness, strolls at nights that would not go away from the frail people who are in pain in the dungeons of tyrants. In times, when the oppressed, who are caught up in black happiness forget about fun and pleasures of the world, another group of *muboshirat*, administrators consider oppressed peoples' lives as blessing that was created for their filthy covetousness. The thought of the hostile plunderer is called *qora niyat*, black will.[29]

Anbar also uses *qora* (black, Pers. *Siyah*, Uz. *Qora*) as a noun, which can be translated in English as "blackness." In *Risola*, this usage links gender, racialization, and inequality. This intersection is particularly obvious when Anbar uses the concept of blackness to refer to a woman's unfortunate fate and then expands her definition to include the lower classes of society. According to Anbar, the term "black" also can be used to refer to ordinary people, since the majority of them live in hardship. In that sense, hardship becomes a shared element in a woman's life and ordinary people's lives. Her definition also hints at the existing

27 Anbar, *Risola*, 81.
28 Anbar, *Risola*, 82.
29 Anbar, *Risola*, 82–83.

social stratification in terms of a contextual understanding of genealogy as *oq suyak* (pure) and *qoracha* (ordinary, plain). Also, the Mongol culture has influenced Central Asians' division and discrimination between nobility and commoners as "white bones" and "black bones," respectively. Noting this social structure in Mongol history, Hesse writes, "The principle of patrilinear descent is denoted in Mongolian as *yasun* (bone). The terminus *yasun* also refers to the social estates in society, which were organised by descent into *tsagan yasun* (white bone) or nobility, and *qara yasun* (black bone) or commoners."[30]

Nalivkin and Nalivkina, nineteenth-century Russian ethnographers in Central Asia's Ferghana Valley, wrote that in precolonial times the high social status of people was not based on ethnicity (e.g., Uzbeks and Slavs), but was instead related to the following factors: "by the position in [government] service that one occupies or by belonging to a line of scholars or the most widespread, by the extent of their wealth."[31] Hence, in Anbar Otin's society, local social discrimination and racialization were based not on ethnicity but on: (1) political and social status, the ruling elites vs. the ruled class; (2) the genealogical assignment of two ranks, pure vs. ordinary; and (3) economic status, wealthy vs. poor.

### Ruling Elites versus the Ruled People

According to Anbar, in the dichotomy between the ruling and the ruled, the officials and religious leaders were the ruling class that were described as oppressive. Although they were also associated with the color white, Russian colonial (Slav) rulers were not called "white bone" but *Oq qulaq* "white ear," while the Russian Tsar Nicolas was referred to as *Oq Posdsho*, meaning the White King (meanwhile Finns were called "white eyes" by Russians). The Uzbek symbolic novel *Otamdan Qolgan Dalalar* (Fields that were Left From my Father) by Toghay Murod (d. 2001) provides some vocabulary used for Russians in the eyes of his protagonist, native *Dehqonqul* (slave farmer).[32] Some examples are *g'ayridinlar* (believers of different faith), *oq podsholar* (white kings), *oq badan olabo'ji* (white skin monster), *kofir* (infidel), *yuvuqsiz* (unwashed/impure), and *padarlanat cho'chqalar* (God damn pigs). At the same time Russians used *tuzemtsy* (natives) or other pejorative terms such as *poda* (herd), *sart sobaka*

30 Hesse, "A Note on the Transformation of White," 20.

31 Nalivkin and Nalivkina, *Muslim Women*, 47.

32 Toghay Murod, *Otamdan Qolgan Dalalar* [Fields that were left from my Father] (Tashkent: Sharq, 1994).

(sart-dogs), and *churka* (uncivilized) for native people. The association of natives' darker skin to the color black and blackness by Russians is telling in this excerpt: "We will send you sart-dogs to Russia. There is black soil just like your black face. You fit to this black soil very well. Sart-dog-black soil – black soil-sart dog: *juda hamohang* (very harmonious)."[33] These examples highlight racialization based on the skin's pigmentation, belief system, and perceived lifestyle differences between colonizers and colonized in a Central Asian context. This racialization is markedly different from the one in the *Risola* both in terms of substance and implications.

### Racialized Distinctions: Pure and Ordinary

As I noted, Russian colonizers were not *oq suyak*. *Oq suyak* were the Kwajas or Sayyids, a part and parcel of local elites in nineteenth-century Central Asia, who claimed lineage from the Prophet Muhammad and four righteous Khalifs.[34] Therefore, in Anbar's work, racialization was not deployed between a colonizer and colonized but among local people: *qoralar* (blacks) were ordinary people, the men and women who were oppressed. This social analysis resembles the Soviet ideology that defined wealthy people as oppressors. Scholars arguing against Anbar Otin's existence can make a case that she was a fictive figure, a ghost writer who produced pieces in line with the Soviet ideology. However, the dichotomy of *qoralar* and *oq suyaklar* was prevalent in the region even before Russian colonization. The social recognition, negotiations, and arbitrations usually happened within social circles reflecting this distinction. Members of the *oq suyak* group often followed endogamous marriage rules and did not marry off their daughters to *qoracha* (black bone ordinary people), because such cases were said to sully their aristocratic blood, which was believed to have a primordial sacred substance.[35] Aside from the dubious nature of this claim, this marriage arrangement offered a strategic protection of wealth and authority.[36] According to Nalivkin and Nalivkina, a limited arrangement allowing *xo'jas* to marry *oq suyak* and *qoracha*, but marrying their

33 Murod, *Otamdan Qolgan Dalalar*, 12.

34 *Khoja*, *Khwaja*, *Xoja*, and *Qoja* are linguistic variations of the Persian word *kwaja*, which means master. Malikov, "Sacred lineages in Central Asia," 128.

35 Malikov, "Sacred lineages in Central Asia," 142.

36 For examples of marriage as aristocratic integration in the Mughal context, see Afzal Husain, "Marriages Among Mughal Nobles as an Index of Status and Aristocratic Integration," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 33 (1971): 304–12.

daughters to only *xo'ja* lineages led to a scarcity of suitors for the daughters of *xo'jas*.[37]

### Status as Motivation for Oppression

According to Anbar, one of the main reasons why men pursued women in the streets was financial hardship. Most men in the Khoqand Khanate could not marry in a timely manner – they could not afford it financially – and were driven to satisfy their desires in improper ways. Hence, economic hardship contributed to women's dehumanization within Turkestan's society; women, like men, were victims of an unfair economic order that undermined local standards of morality. As victims of social and economic hardships, local men engaged in oppressing others: local women. This form of oppression ensured that both women and men were caught in the same trap.

Unequal power relations not only between men and women but also among people of the same gender are a part of local gender dynamics whereby the status of certain women is superior to other women in terms of lineage, seniority, and financial influence. For Anbar, the exercise of power was not a gendered issue per se. Besides being oppressed by their male counterparts, women could also be oppressed by other women. This is one reason why Anbar made a point of identifying herself with the ordinary people, the lower classes of society; she experienced this oppression firsthand from women who were of a higher economic status. In fact, these "other women" were the direct cause of Anbar's own physical suffering.[38] This way, to Anbar Otin, oppression had no gender. The generalized notion that women were powerless and that all men were powerful did not describe local gender dynamics. Noting the power dynamic, Svetlana Peshkova argues that "socio-cultural expectations and degree of personal power and control differ not only between males and females but also among females and males. For example, in Central Asia, a mother-in-law is often in charge of her daughter-in-law(s); a mother controls a pre-menarche girl, while a father controls his son and is himself controlled by elderly male and female relatives."[39] Anbar Otin observed similar dynamics in her contemporary society. Although she characterized women in general as "different blacks," she also complicated this category by subdividing women into

37 Nalivkin and Nalivkina, *Muslim Women*, 160.
38 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 14.
39 Svetlana Peshkova, "Gender Structure," in *Central Asia: Contexts for Understanding*, ed. D. Montgomery (Pittsburgh University Press, 2022), 328.

the categories of "oppressed" and "oppressors." According to Anbar, it was not strictly accurate to consider all women as oppressed. She writes, "As there are both strong and helpless men, so there are many differences among women. For example, women from wealthy and aristocratic families are content with their lineages. They become domineering in the *ichkari* [inner courtyard, internal dynamics in the household] and oppress many helpless young women as much as possible."[40] Hence, in Anbar's view, wealthy and arrogant women both enabled and accentuated the oppression of women in general. Although affluent women in Khoqand may not have exercised power to the same degree as affluent men did, wealthy women, the wives and family members of the ruling class, used their elite status to oppress other women when it was in their interest to do so. As Patricia Hill Collins wrote, an oppressor can become the oppressed and the other way around depending on the context.[41]

Anbar's understanding of gender relations and racialization was complicated. She linked racialization, inequality, and gender in several ways. For instance, Anbar used the term *farqi qarolar* ("different blacks") to describe people who were unfortunate; she included women, especially mothers, in this category. I turn to a discussion of *farqi qarolar* in the next section.

## Women as *Farqi Qarolar*

The second chapter of Anbar Otin's *Risola* discusses gender difference: *farqi qarolar* (different blacks). She starts the chapter with a definition of the word *farq* (difference as boundary), since *farq* had physical properties. "The women's head (hair) is divided (symmetrically) from the forehead, in other words, (the part starts) from the nose (towards forehead). That line is called *farq* (difference as boundary)."[42] Some elderly women from the Ferghana Valley continue attributing religious meaning to this act of very precise separation of hair to two sides. According to them, to be truly purified during ablution, the part in women's hair should be straight so the water that started at the forehead should roll down to the back of the neck easily.[43]

According to Anbar, these *farqi qarolar* (different blacks) were among the oppressed and unfortunate. Anbar included women, especially mothers, in this

40 Anbar, *Risola*, 92–3.
41 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and The Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 285.
42 Anbar, *Risola*, 86.
43 Personal conversations, 2015.

category. While highlighting women's honorable duty as mothers, she was saddened by their deprecated status. Peshkova argues that there are variations of femininities and masculinities in every gender structure and there is always a hierarchy among those. She writes, "In Central Asia, there is a scaled hierarchy among such femininities as pre-menarche girls, menstruating young women, mothers of a girl/girls, mothers of a boy/boys, and post-menopausal women. The same goes for hierarchies and power relations among such masculinities as pre-circumcised boys, circumcised young men, husbands/fathers, and grandfathers/elderly."[44] From this perspective, it is possible that, at the time of the writing, Anbar, as a married woman and mother, was not at the lowest end of this gendered hierarchy. She was no longer a young girl or a young married girl who was under the control of others, such as her mother-in-law. Anbar Otin writes, "These beautiful, smart but pitiful women are under the authority of the mother-in-law. What is worse is the oppression of co-wives and sisters-in-law (wives of the husband's brother)."[45] Because of her marriage, family, and relatively advanced age (as defined at the time), Anbar had earned some authority vis-à-vis her younger female counterparts. In that context, mothers may have had more authority than their minor counterparts. Yet manifesting a "scaled hierarchy," they were still on the lower side of the hierarchy when it came to their husbands, fathers, uncles, and other male relatives.[46] According to Anbar, women were disrespected and deprecated, and not, as it was often claimed, honored in the male-dominated society. In Anbar's terms, women, being on the side of the unfortunate ones, fit into the category of blacks. Anbar described local women in Turkestan as being in a devalued social position because they were often deprived of the opportunity to better themselves in a society that did not equally or equitably value them.

In order to avoid harassment in the streets, women had to be strategic. Anbar writes,

> It is ordered that if women wanted to visit her parents or relatives she can go outside by wearing old clothes, holding a cane and covering with an old pranji (paranji, faranji). She had to bend down to resemble an old lady. Because sometimes the promiscuous shameless men may hurt women, therefore *qiz-juvonlar ko'chaga yasanib chiqmoqlari ma'n etilur* (it is forbidden to women go outside with nice clothing).[47]

44 Peshkova, "Gender Structure," 328.
45 Anbar, *Risola*, 93.
46 Peshkova, "Gender Structure," 328.
47 Anbar, *Risola*, 91.

The unofficial warning for the sake of safety that Anbar mentions – "It is forbidden to women go outside with nice clothing" – might have been a protective measure for the vulnerable ones and Anbar's note was addressed to the women of ordinary background. Because, about different experience in the early twentieth century, a young girl, Zarifa Saidnosirova, a member of an affluent family, narrated how visiting her grandparents or relatives was a ceremonial preparation given the sartorial choices, grooming rituals, and leaving in a carriage.[48]

Anbar vividly describes her concerns with women's place in society and the challenges that they face. In this chapter, she calls on men to

> Love with passion all the *farqi qarolarni* (different blacks, women)
> Because of their femaleness, do not debase *farqi qarolarni*.
>
> If you have a pure perception, they are your mother or sister,
> By deprecating their dignity do not beat *farqi qarolarni*.
>
> Every piece of her black hair wishes you a successful path,
> With black will, do not ever rape *farqi qarolarni.*
>
> Despicably by saying women were created for pleasure,
> Do not direct toward your desire those *farqi qarolarni.*
>
> You are human, she is human, oh villain, infidel what kind of person you are –
> Like a predator wolf, do not kill those *farqi qarolarni.*
>
> Every flowery garden got rid of its flowers,
> This is an Anbar plant, do not pull out *farqi qarolarni*[49]

There seems to be another reason why Anbar thought women were undervalued in local communities: local men thought that women were created for their personal pleasure. Seen as voiceless objects, they were always in a dependent position vis-à-vis their patrons, such as husbands, fathers, and more affluent men. Polygyny (having multiple wives) was widespread, which made it harder for women to assert their autonomy. Anbar writes, "It is not a secret how wealthy men treat their *cho'ri* (female servants) and *eshons* (religious figures)

48 Zarifa Saidnosirova, *Oybegim Mening* (Tashkent: Sharq, 1994), 9–10.
49 Anbar, *Risola*, 88.

regard the young girls that were given to them in marriages. It is known that the wealthy buy their female servants as property *nikohsiz* (without marrying) and would not refrain from doing unacceptable things [sexual intercourse]."[50] In *the Risola*, Anbar also argues against a particular depiction of women as deceptive in literary works. In many works of this genre, the beloved girl or woman was also a tyrant, an infidel, or a traitor to her lover. Anbar believed that these descriptions misrepresented women and were slanderous to their reputations. According to her, "a true beloved was kind-hearted, sympathetic, and considerate to her lover." Anbar argued that the beloved's absence from the lover's sight was a well-planned strategy. "The beloved could not stay longer with her lover, because she was cautious and thoughtful about the love relationship. She would not want to be a target for enemies' plots and desired to protect her lover from the evil eye."[51] Hence, according to Anbar, local women were not deceptive but thoughtful and strategic actors. By challenging conventional interpretations of the well-known literary traditions in a way that defined the nature of the female lover, she attempted to redefine the contemporary social construction of female selfhood.

The focus on beloved was very much a part of the classical Sufi literature. The *ghazal*, a classical poetry tradition, concentrates on symbolic love (love for God). Anbar seems to have interpreted such poetry in a different way: instead of the metaphorical love for God, she took these verses literally. At the same time, Anbar also criticized Sufis who themselves enjoyed the privileges of the affluent and promoted the idea that wealth was meant for the elite few. She condemned charlatan ascetics, who acted piously in front of the public but privately failed to practice what they preached. Anbar accused religious leaders of frightening the common people with "the Fire of Hell" by labeling them as "sinners in this world."[52] Anbar believed that her criticisms would not be welcomed and that religious leaders would accuse her of committing sins. She countered this *ad hominem* attack with a self-defense:

> You tell Anbar that writing poetry is a sin,
> Because the edges of my poetry cut through the deceptions of the ascetic.[53]

50 Anbar, *Risola*, 92.
51 Anbar, *Risola*, 89.
52 Anbar, *Risola*, 106.
53 Anbar, *Risola*, 106.

### Shades of Darkness: *Baxti Qaro*

The third chapter of Anbar Otin's *Risola* is about *baxti qaro* (people whose fate is black). According to her, oppressive religious or political authorities, whining poets, and unknowledgeable ascetics belong to this category. Anbar disagrees with the religious people's description of ordinary people as black-fated people bound to hellfire. Religious authorities think that ordinary people who do not pray (enough) and are busy with hard work and making a living are the *baxti qaro* (black-fated ones). On the contrary, according to Anbar, the *baxti qaro* are "are far from a hard labor"; they are the ones who oppress and cheat others. She writes, "If we tell the truth, the black fated people are the ones who are far from a hard labor. They want to spend their short life in comfort. With this goal, they are busy to find thousand *hiyla* (frauds). They accrue wealth because of others' labor. With their exploitation [of ordinary people] they are abhorred by ordinary people and their lives are fruitless."[54]

Anbar also places poets, who complain and do not know how to ease difficulties, and ascetics, who do not have any knowledge and became religious accidently, in the black-fated category. She distinguishes between passive and active people within this group. According to her, the passive are the ones who are *baxti qaro* (black-fated): they accept their fate. Those who are actively trying to find happiness – resisting social norms – overcome their *baxti qaro* (black-fated) state.

### Shades of Darkness: *Qaro Zulmat*

Anbar Otin's fourth chapter in the *Risola* is the description of *qaro zulmat* (black darkness). Anbar distinguishes that between a temporary and prolonged darkness and refers to night as a temporary darkness, because after the night there will always be daylight. In contrast, the prolonged darkness is a persistent gloominess in the society – a social darkness – and the exact time for the eradication of a dark state in society seems to be unknown to her. This kind of darkness is connected to power, particularly to those who hold sociopolitical power.

In this chapter, Anbar shares her thoughts about rulers. She believes that no ruler can be just. Local ordinary people were hoping that the Russian (White) King would be just, because they suffered under local oppressive and tyrannical rulers. However, such hopes proved to be unrealistic. This new king did not

54 Anbar, *Risola*, 97.

care about the ordinary people's lives; he did not alleviate their oppression at the hands of the local authorities but instead added to it. As a result, the ordinary people's condition did not improve, and their hopes were covered with *qaro zulmat*, prolonged darkness.

Some scholars argue that darkness is perceived as metaphorically equivalent to the obscurity because it conceals an image. For example, Hélène Cixous (1986) considers the world of women to be a "Dark Continent." According to her, this Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable: "It is still unexplored only because we have been made to believe that it was too dark to be explored."[55] The scholar criticizes the reduction of women to body and flesh, much as people of African descent are reduced to body and flesh in racist images. Accordingly, in both cases, men are the active agents in creating the social and cultural contexts in which women are forced to exist, since women are not seen as belonging to the vital political and social spheres that govern collective life. In this sense, women's humanity, like that of ethnic "blacks," is always under question. In such conditions, a woman is not only deprived of the ability to see herself clearly, but she is also deprived of her voice. Cixous writes, "[T]he 'dark continent' trick has been pulled on her: she has been kept at a distance from herself, she has been made to see (= not-see) woman on the basis of what man wants to see of her, which is to say almost nothing."[56]

Cixous attributes the association of darkness and women to the surrounding social environment, which determines the boundaries of social life independently of women. Nothing intrinsic to women makes them a Dark Continent; however, the perceptions and imaginations of others construct an image of women's dark state. In Cixous' description of the Dark Continent of women, only a woman's body and nothing essential to her selfhood was made visible. She writes, "Woman's voyage: as a *body*. As if she were destined – in the distribution established by men (separated from the world where cultural exchanges are made and kept in the wings of the social stage when it is a case of History) – to be the nonsocial, nonpolitical, nonhuman half of the living structure."[57]

Similarly, in Anbar Otin's writing, the society has sabotaged all women – yet, some more than others – and taken away their voices, especially those of the non-elite women, in all spheres of public life. In her socio-historical context, a criticism of the society was not an expected thing from local women, who were meant to attend to their domestic affairs only. Anbar writes,

55 Hélène Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 68.
56 Cixous, *Newly Born Woman*, 64.
57 Cixous, *Newly Born Woman*, 66.

> Oh, Anbar Otincha, do not talk like that, because you are a woman.
> Many women like you have vanished by sharing their pain.58

With the statement, "Oh, Anbar Otincha, do not talk like that, because you are a woman," Anbar emphasizes the unwritten rules and expectations for women in her society. The diminutive suffix *-cha* that Anbar adds to *otin* in the verse demonstrates that women were supposed to be small and unimportant in the society.[59] She also reminds the readers that women's efforts to express themselves have been futile in the past, and that those who tried to do so had to deal with harmful consequences.

Many traditional stories and fairy tales assert that women are (or must be) silent. As Cixous observes, these narratives reinforce the notion that "there is no place for your desire in our affairs of State."[60] This does not mean that women are completely out of sight, however. Rather, they live in men's shadows – shadows that "[man] throws on her; the shadow that she is."[61] In her shadow existence, a woman reminds a man of his superiority and helps to reproduce his authority and domination. In this counter-existence, she acts as "night to his day – that has forever been the fantasy. Black to his white. Shut out of his system's space, she is the repressed that ensures the system's functioning."[62] By saying that a "[woman] has been kept at a distance from herself," Cixous highlights the alienation of women from their consciousness, which ensures women's existence as complete human beings. This alienation is not a matter of happenstance but serves for the benefit of men. Much like Anbar Otin, Cixous states: "We (women) coming early to culture, repressed and choked by it, our beautiful mouths stopped up with gags, pollen, and short breaths; we the labyrinths, we the ladders, we the trampled spaces; stolen and flights – we are 'black and we are beautiful.'"[63] By all means at their disposal, men strive to ensure that women are no more than the launching pads or ladders for their success. As such, women are made into passive objects to be stepped on or

58 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 27.

59 In Uzbek, the suffix "-cha" is added to nouns to indicate the smallness of the object. For example, *stol-* means table whereas *stolcha* means small table. When used to refer to a human, it accentuates size as well as rank. For example, *yigit-* means young man while *yigitcha* connotes a less experienced, lower-ranking young man. When the suffix is added to a noun, it can also create an adverb, and shows the performance of that action in a certain way. For example, *yigitcha yurish* means walking like a young man.

60 Cixous, *Newly Born Woman*, 67.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 69.

trampled for the sake of a man's glory. In most cases, they are neither recognized nor acknowledged for the essential role that they play in society.

Much like Cixous, Anbar Otin compares the state of women in society to darkness or blackness. Her use of the term *zulmat* (darkness) shares much in common with Cixous' metaphor of the "Dark Continent." Anbar might have also agreed with Cixous that women are reminded of their darkness and alienation from childhood on: "One can teach her, as soon as she begins to speak, at the same time as she is taught her name, that hers is the dark region: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous."[64] It is hard to say whether Anbar saw the world in darkness because her "continent" as a non-elite woman was intrinsically dark. Anbar was ambivalent about the concept of blackness. Although she viewed darkness in a negative light, she also seemed to believe that the state of darkness would be temporary.

While analyzing Anbar Otin's writing and life at the crossroads of racialization, inequality, religion, gender, and disability, in the following paragraphs, I focus on the discourse about disability in Islamic terms and analyze how those elements shaped Anbar's life and relate to our local theorizing of gender.[65]

## Toward a Theory of Gender as an Intersection of Racialization, Religion, and Disability

In her biographical poem *Tajimai hol* (Autobiography), Anbar does not mention the incident that led to her disability, but she talks about it in the introduction to her *divan*, a collection of poems. According to her, at one gathering, she said something that was not welcomed. She fell down the stairs (probably pushed by others) and dislocated (broke) her legs. That incident eventually rendered her paralyzed and bedridden. Because of her condition, Anbar was anxious and experienced melancholy. She writes,

> Do not speak of sorrow, sorrow pressed me hard
> If you do not believe me, look oh mirror, my face became yellow.66

64 Ibid., 68.

65 I aim to point out how disability influences the perceptions of gender and race and not to provide a comprehensive analysis of disability in Islam.

66 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 47.

One other tragedy defined her life: she lost one of her children. Heartbroken from her daughter's death and limited in her abilities, Anbar continuously shared her feelings in writing.

The visitation of sick and disadvantaged people continues to be encouraged in Muslim communities. Al-Zyoud and Shahminan note that "[s]ince disadvantaged individuals may also be withdrawn, isolated, pessimistic, and are perhaps more likely to suffer from psychological illness, including disabled people in social occasions, such as visits and marriage, is highly encouraged in Islam."[67] Anbar Otin probably expected these visitations, too. In her writings, one can see several refences to her isolation because of her disability, as well as her yearning for socialization. Highlighting the fact that visiting the sick is an important part of Muslim identity (and Islamic ideology), Anbar writes that people visited her because of her illness. The isolating nature of being bedridden and expectations of communal care through visitations seep into her poetry:

> You are next to me showing friendship,
> You listen to my poetry.
> This illness seems not to go away,
> It seems the end is near.
> Oh, friends, my sickness is a good cause,
> You have another reason to come to see me.[68]

Later, Anbar wishes for guests to come to lighten up her spirit:

> When it would be the day that a guest comes to my garden?
> Just like a nightingale comes when flower blossoms?
> When is light up time for my dark abode?
> When candlelight comes to my dark cave?[69]

In the above-mentioned lines, Anbar yearns for and appreciates socialization. Her community-focused lifestyle differed from an individualistic way of dealing with a problem or with pain or suffering. Hoping for the betterment of her illness, she wrote the following:

67 Nawaf Al-Zyoud Hiam Al-Aoufi, and Norbayah Shahminan, "Islam and the Cultural Conceptualisation of Disability," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 17, no. 4 (2012): 209.

68 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 17.

69 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 41.

> Tell me oh doctor, when the medicine to my illness arrive?
> When the antidotes to push away this pain arrive?[70]

Distraught and bedridden, Anbar wrote poems and secretly hid them inside her books. She explained the reason for keeping her writings secret: at the time, it was not appropriate for women to express their feelings and write *ghazals* about love. She was aware of the established conventions and roles that were claimed as an owned territory – the territory not socially sanctioned for her. Writing about South Asian context, scholar Gyanendra Pandey argues that individuals who attempted to express themselves were always criticized by the dominant class as well as of their own people.[71] Because of such intimidation, some women, such as Anbar Otin, kept their writing secret even from their own family members.

It was not unusual for authors like Anbar Otin to hide their writings. As Pandey argues, this is "a familiar motif in subaltern reminiscence, and sometimes apocryphal, it speaks to the power of written words and of inherit traditions in which writing played no part, in which indeed writing-and book-learning could be seen as a hindrance to the performance of other, unavoidable tasks."[72] In her autobiography, Anbar Otin tells the reader that she entreated a bookbinder to give her some papers and collected her writings inside a book. She wanted people in the future to know about her works and shrewdness, so that her name would not be erased from history. Geographic, historical, and socio-cultural differences notwithstanding, one can read Anbar's practice of hiding the writing as challenging existing power relations and protecting one's self from accusations of transgressing contextual societal norms.

As a Turkestani woman, Anbar Otin was deeply conscious of the invisibility of her selfhood and her foreignness to the world of men. She used her writings to spell out and dispel her mysterious and "dark" condition in society. In the *Risola*, she acknowledges the darkness or oppression of women's lives and the "blackness" of a woman's fate. She also knew that by writing in this way she was stepping into a forbidden territory that at the time belonged primarily to men. To make matters worse, her severely disabled body pushed her from her peripheral state to a state of virtual oblivion. However, she sought to fight back against this fate through in-bodiment and embodiment.

70 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 31.

71 Gyanendra Pandey, *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste and Difference in India and The United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2013), 167.

72 Pandey, *A History of Prejudice*, 182.

Following Peshkova (2014), I argue that Anbar Otin's knowledge came through and resided in her physical body. Through her emotions articulated in a particular existential context, this in-bodied knowledge then informed her experiences and writing; this knowledge was embodied.[73] One of the Anbar's moral commitments was to improve women's position in society. She knew that women were suffering from powerlessness and urged them to be strong and powerful like men. Anbar already had in-bodied knowledge by discerning her society's peculiarities, rules, and regulations, but to fully embody it – to physically fight against those prejudices and oppressions – her possibilities were limited. At the intersection of racialization, inequality, religion, disability, and gender, Anbar's identity as a powerful, faithful, aspiring, and strong woman manifested in her writing. I argue that for her, putting knowledge into action *through writing* became an embodying strategy to represent those domains at an intersection:

> Do not be bedridden like me. Wake up!
> Hey, women of Ferghana! Be like men, strong and resilient.[74]

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank this issue's co-editors, Svetlana Peshkova and Hélène Thibault, my colleague Snejana Atanova, and an anonymous reviewer for their invaluable insights which made this article better. This article is a continuation of the discussions of Anbar's selfhood I started in my earlier article: "I was Born in the Wrong Time: The Concept of Selfhood in the Works of the Central Asian Poet Anbar Otin," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 4, no. 1 (2019): 66–86.

73 Svetlana Peshkova, *Women, Islam, and Identity: Public Life in Private Spaces in Uzbekistan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2014), 165.

74 Anbar, *She'rlar*, 17.