

**Liberated Women, Enlightened Men: Discourses on the
19th century Arab Renaissance in Egypt and Syria**

By

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Abstract

Arab scholarship of the history of the Arab world's relationship with the West has typically been characterised by a narrative of struggle against Western hegemony and colonial domination. This narrative has failed to give sufficient recognition to the fact that in the nineteenth century, numerous Arab intellectuals, important members of the elite and significant segments of the general public were positively receptive and admiring of Western ideas. Significant segments of the general public embraced these ideas with open arms and seemed, initially, to be quite accepting of the apparatus of colonialism. European influence on nineteenth century Arab culture was more substantial than originally understood by Arab writers. A more nuanced perspective of Arab engagement with the West, adopted in this research, shows how Arab intellectuals who were fascinated by the West's achievements tailored Western Enlightenment ideas to suit their own society.

The impact of the Western Enlightenment and early modernity on nineteenth century Egyptian and Syrian society and on women's education was profound. The focus of this study is on educational reforms which empowered women and allowed Arab women to enter the intellectual life of the nineteenth century. The emergence of female Arab writers and journalists affected not only women's domestic lives and the development of their consciousness regarding their rights, but also enabled women to participate in other spheres of public life. The establishment of women's literary societies and salons led to the development of a social consciousness that later allowed women to secure key legal, educational and marital reforms at the national level. This study illustrates the lasting influence of Western ideas on Arab society in the nineteenth century, particularly with regard to the education and advancement of women.

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge, the work presented in this thesis to fulfil the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is original. I declare that I have not previously submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Kinda AlSamara

Date: 26/08/2019

Dedication

A very special thank you to my dear son Ameer Kakaje for all your support and encouragement during my years of study. I cannot imagine reaching this place without you!

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Many people in Melbourne and Melbourne University have helped me on this journey and deserve my thanks. I am very grateful to Dr Mary Atchison for her invaluable advice, direction and continuous encouragement and support to complete this work. I want also to express my gratitude to Amani Zayegh who supported me from the very beginning, step by step, without complaining.

Several peer-reviewed articles that discuss aspects of this research have been published during my candidacy. The most recent articles include “Muḥammad ‘Abduh: Islam and New Urbanity, in the Nineteenth Century Arab World,” in *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 3 (2018). “Intellectual and Educational Transformations, and New Urbanity in Damascus, A View of the Nineteenth Century,” in *the Journal of Arts, Literature, Humanities and Social Science*, issue. 21 (2018). “A New Educational Model and the Crisis of Modern Terminologies: A View of Egypt in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Journal Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 53 (2017). “Journalism and New Urbanity in the Arab World: A View of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Journal Tabyyun*, vol. 5 (2016). “Women’s Freedom in 19th-Century Arab Renaissance Discourse,” in *Journal al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, issue. 136 (2015).

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Notes to Reader

- 1- Names of Arabic authors appear as they are in their original English publications. Otherwise, other Arabic names are with diacritics to ensure consistency throughout.
- 2- All dates provided throughout this thesis are in accordance with the Gregorian calendar and where a date is provided according to the Islamic (*hijrī*) calendar, the Gregorian equivalent follows.
- 3- All translations from original Arabic sources are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- 4- Throughout this thesis, the term “Syria” denotes the greater geographical region of what was referred to as “Ottoman Syria” or “Greater Syria,” which included Lebanon at the time.
- 5- Throughout this thesis the reference to the terms ‘Arabs’ and ‘Arab world’, denote the citizens of the Ottoman Empire and the Empire itself.
- 6- “Arab Renaissance,” “al-Nahda al-‘Arabiyya,” or “The Arab Awakening,” are terms usually used to indicate a remarkable period of change and transformation. Throughout this thesis, the term “Arab Renaissance” has been chosen over the term “Arab Awakening” because it is closer to the Arabic root n-h-d, meaning “rising” or “standing up.”
- 7- Egypt and Syria were identifiable countries within the Ottoman Empire and were subject to the laws of the Ottoman regime. These laws were in turn interpreted and applied by the respective governors of Egypt and Syria.

Table of the Transliteration System

- 1- The Arabic translation system used throughout this thesis follows that from the Library of Congress.
- 2- The definite article “al” is connected to the word by a hyphen. “Rules for the capitalisation of English are followed, except that the definite article “al” is in lower case in all positions.”¹

The Transliteration System			
Arabic	Transliteration	Arabic	Transliteration
ا	a	غ	gh
ب	b	ف	f
ت	t	ق	q
ث	th	ك	k
ج	j	ل	l
ح	ḥ	م	m
خ	kh	ن	n
د	d	ه/ة	h (ah/at)
ذ	dh	و	w
ر	r	ي	y
ز	z	ء	'
س	s	س	double consonant
ش	sh	ـَ fathah (short vowel)	a
ص	ṣ	ـُ dammah (short vowel)	u
ض	ḍ	ـِ kasrah (short vowel)	i
ط	ṭ	ا (long vowel), ى	ā, á
ظ	ẓ	و (long vowel)	ū
ع	‘	ي (long vowel)	ī

¹ R. K Barry, *ALA-LC Romanization Tables: Transliteration Schemes for non-Roman Scripts* (Washington: Cataloguing Distribution Services, Library of Congress, 1997).

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life is usually nourished and often sustained by the circulation of ideas, whether this takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity.²

The nineteenth century is considered to be a vital period in the development of Arab intellectual life and Arab women's freedom as contact with the West increased and, with it, exposure to the ideas of western Age of Enlightenment. Education and journalism were important instruments in improving the status of women and driving changes towards the new modern lifestyle of Arabs in the nineteenth century.³

During the early part of the nineteenth century the study and application of science, education, technology and industry in Western countries were advancing more rapidly than ever before. At the same time, most of the Arab lands remained subordinate to the Ottoman Empire.⁴ Though creative and enlightened several centuries before, they had regressed in a slow downward spiral despite some periodic reform efforts.

² Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226.

³ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63–69.

⁴ Albert Hourani, "The Ottoman Background of the Modern Middle East," in *Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 1–18.

The struggle of the Arab world with Western colonial interests and hegemony since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798), has been widely analysed and discussed. Edward Said's *Orientalism* offers insights and clarity surrounding the tools used to assess this mode of thought.⁵ Other modern day Arab scholars often portray the resistance and struggles of the nineteenth century Arab societies against the dominance and supremacy of the west.⁶ However, in the nineteenth century, under increasing European influence, Arabs largely accepted European-style development in some aspects of life. The most important of these was the adoption European style education.

Arab education pre-nineteenth century was highly influenced by religion and was informal in nature. People wishing to be educated often learnt from scholars within a mosque.⁷ These schools were usually attached to large mosques and study was free of charge to students. Many schools also provided lodgings, especially for students who travelled long distances to attend. There was no specific time period for students to complete their studies; a course of study might take 12 or 14 years to complete.⁸ A traditional teaching institution, al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, opened its doors in 972 during the Fatimid period (909–1171).⁹ al-Azhar Mosque was the first architectural project commissioned by the Fatimids and became the official mosque of the State and the centre of its religious vision.

⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

⁶ Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," in *American Historical Review*, vol. 107, no. 3 (2002), 1–32. Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present* (London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press, 1970). Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians – Face to Face* (Oxford: One world, Oxford, 2000). Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979). Nadia Walid Bou Ali, *Performing the Nahḍah* (Beirut: American University, 2008). Mundhir Ma'ālīqī, *Ma'ālim al-Fikr al-'Arabī fī 'Aṣr al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-Ḥadīthah lil-Kitāb, 2003). Sayyār Jamīl, *Takwīn al-'Arab al-Ḥadīth* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 1997). Muḥammad Badī' Sharīf, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah fī al-Nahḍa al-'Arabīyah al-Ḥadīthah* (Cairo: Jāmi'at al-Duwal al-'Arabīyah, 1958).

⁷ George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 6–10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3: 217.

⁹ At the height of its power the Fatimid Empire included, in addition to Egypt, vast areas of the Maghrib, Sicily, Sudan, the Levant, and the Hijāz. Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn Surūr, *Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Fāṭimīyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1994).

Caliph al-ʿAzīz (r.975–996) appointed a group of religious scholars to offer classes at al-Azhar Mosque after Friday prayers although at the time al-Azhar Mosque was not considered to be an educational institution or a university.¹⁰ Later, in the Ayyubid period (r. ca. 1169-1260), al-Azhar Mosque lost the religious position that it had enjoyed during the Fatimid period; it did, however, remain an important educational institution. When the Mamlūks (r.1250–1517) replaced the Ayyubids as rulers of Egypt, al-Azhar Mosque was restored as a main Islamic learning centre of the Muslim world where, alongside the Arabic language, both natural and religious sciences were taught. Typically for the time, al-Azhar was a boys-only school with girls only very rarely attending.¹¹

During their reign, the Mamlūks also opened a number of other schools in their realm.¹² However, the golden age of al-Azhar ended when the Ottomans became the rulers of Egypt in 1517. The Ottomans imposed Turkish as the official language in all schools and institutions, despite the fact that most students knew only Arabic. Consequently, the number of schools decreased.¹³ However despite this hurdle, the ideas of the Enlightenment found their way to the Arab world towards the end of the eighteenth century. Historians traditionally mention the French campaign led by Napoleon in Egypt (1798-1801) as signalling the dawn of the modern period in the Arab world.¹⁴ The French were more than just an occupying military force, despite the brevity of this campaign. The campaign brought Egypt, and later Syria,

¹⁰ Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-Iʿtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibāʿah al-Miṣrīyah, 1853), 2: 69.

¹¹ Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 7.

¹² Suʿād Māhir Muḥammad, *Masājid Miṣr wa-Awliyāʾuhā al-Ṣāliḥūn* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā lil-Shuʿūn al-Islāmīyah, 1971), 1: 167–168.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1: 167-168.

¹⁴ Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* Eugene Rogan ([London], UK: Penguin, 2010), 61.

advanced science, liberal ideas, the printing press and sophisticated cultural attitudes as well as introducing Arab intelligentsia to the achievements and works of French scholars.¹⁵

In 1801, after the failure of the French campaign in Egypt, the Ottoman government dispatched troops from Rumelia (the Balkan regions within the Ottoman Empire) to represent their authority in Egypt.¹⁶ The troops were under the military command of Muḥammad ‘Alī (r. 1805–1848), an officer born in Macedonia of Albanian parents who spoke some Turkish but no Arabic. One of his tasks was to protect Egypt from Napoleon returning. After the French had been ousted there was a power vacuum in Egypt.¹⁷ During this period, Muḥammad ‘Alī used his Albanian supporters to gain prestige and power and, in 1805, the Ottoman government recognised him as *wālī* (governor) of Egypt, with the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire remaining Egypt’s titular sovereign until 1914.¹⁸

After becoming governor, Muḥammad ‘Alī made efforts to modernise Egypt along Western lines. He embarked on a number of important educational projects, sending selected groups of Arab students on educational missions to France and Italy.¹⁹ He founded a modern educational system based on the Western model which operated in parallel to the traditional Islamic educational system lead by the al-Azhar Mosque.²⁰ Most of the intellectuals involved in setting up the new system were former students of the Mosque who had studied in Europe.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 71–73.

¹⁶ Nezar AlSayyad, *Cairo: Histories of a City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 172.

¹⁷ Nash’at al-Dīhī, *Muḥammad ‘Alī Bāshā* (Cairo: Dār al-Jumhūrīyah lil-Ṣiḥāfah, 2009), 26.

¹⁸ AlSayyad, *Cairo*, 174.

¹⁹ Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011). ‘Umar Ṭūsūn, *al-Ba‘thāt al-‘Ilmīyah fī ‘Ahd Muḥammad Alī thumma fī ‘Ahd al-‘Abbās al-Awwal wa-Sa‘īd* (Alexandria: Maṭba‘at Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1934).

²⁰ Ra’ūf ‘Abbās Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Jāmi‘āt al-Qāhira* (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2007), 14–15.

They led the reforms in the judiciary, the military, in education, and also to the improvement of women's situation.

As a result of this more frequent contact with Europe, Arab intellectuals saw that European women had access to schools and universities and regretted that this was not the case in the Arab world. In the 1820s they recognised the necessity of making education available to Arab women. This new awareness of the advancement of female education and their need for equality with men in teaching and learning was seen as indispensable for enhancing women's position in Egyptian society. The establishment of schools for girls was seen as vitally important and eventuated in the opening of the first school of midwifery in the Arab world in Cairo in 1832.²¹

In 1822, Muḥammad 'Alī established the Būlāq Printing Press publishing translations of Western works as well as Arabic works.²² His vision was to promote learning through encouraging book publishing and the printed media. The year 1826 saw the first issue of the official gazette of Muḥammad 'Alī's government, *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣrīyah (Egyptian Affairs)*. This periodical consisted of executive summaries of current issues submitted by department heads from within the government and public sector. This was a bilingual publication with pages divided into two columns, Arabic on one side and Turkish on the other. It was

²¹ Aḥmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta'līm fī 'Aṣr Muḥammad 'Alī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1938), 297. Mervat Hatem, "Modernization, the State, and the Family in Middle East Women's Studies," in Margaret Lee Meriwether; Judith Tucker (eds.), *A Social History of Women and Gender in The Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo.; Oxford: Westview, 1999), 70. Guity Nashat; Judith E Tucker, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 85.

²² Abū al-Futūḥ Raḍwān, *Tārīkh Maṭba'a Būlāq* (Cairo: al-Matba'ah al-Amiriyah, 1953), 10–12. Ḥanna Fākhūrī, *al-Jāmi' fī Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1986), 24–25.

compulsory for all public servants to subscribe to this gazette, even if they could not read Arabic or Turkish.²³

Educational reforms also found their way into Syria. New schools were established in the 1820s by American and later by British missionaries, leading to an increase in literacy.²⁴ The graduates of the missionary schools, both girls and boys, received a thorough education in English and French literature and language, alongside other subjects. Students moved from traditional, ultra-conservative religious teachings, toward the modern sciences, literature, philosophy and other subjects. The professional and educational skills that they gained allowed the best of these students to become pharmacists, doctors and teachers.

At the time, Syria like Egypt was still under Ottoman rule and, as an Islamic society, its legal and political institutions centred on Islamic law. However, as “Ottoman subjects, Christians, Jews and members of various Islamic sects” were able to practise their faith and discharge certain public duties determined by the ruler.²⁵ Further changes and freedoms followed when in 1831 Muḥammad ‘Alī helped his son, Ibrāhīm Bāshā (1789–1848) to invade Syria.²⁶ As ruler of Syria between 1831 and 1840, Ibrāhīm Bāshā introduced new social policies which allowed religious freedom even for non-Muslim Arabs and for Western merchants, diplomats and missionaries.²⁷ This is an important period for both the West and the Arab world; Syria

²³ Charles Augustus Murray, *a Short Memoir of Mohammed Ali, Founder of the Vice-royalty of Egypt* (London: Quaritch, 1898), 56. Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13.

²⁴ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

²⁵ Waḥīd Qaddūrah, *Tārīkh al-Ṭībā‘ah al-‘Arabīyah fī Istānbūl wa-Bilād al-Shām* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭanīyah, 2010), 104.

²⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāfi‘ī, *‘Aşr Muḥammad ‘Alī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1982), 224–303. al-Dīhī, *Muḥammad ‘Alī Bāshā*, 26–28.

²⁷ The signing of the Balta-Liman Agreement between London and Istanbul in August 1838 enabled the West to continued economic penetration into the region beyond Ibrāhīm Bāshā’s reign of Syria until 1839. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 84–85.

was regarded as the “cradle of Christianity” because Jerusalem and other venerated Christian religious sites were within its borders.²⁸ The West also believed Syria to be the “bridge between Asia and Africa, a melting pot of cultures and civilisations particularly suited to missionary activities.”²⁹

Religious freedom encouraged Presbyterian missionaries from the US to venture into Syria.³⁰ The missionaries had a sound understanding of the region’s ancient history which they gained from Western literature.³¹ They took it upon themselves to improve literacy in Syria by publishing books and establishing a modern education system.

The schooling systems installed by the Presbyterians in Beirut were quite different from the highly traditional Islamic and Christian Arab schools. One of the most important differences was the introduction of state education for girls. The Western missionaries were mostly interested in delivering Christian religious texts to Syria, whilst Arab intellectuals were mostly interested in publishing books dealing with topics that related to culture and classics in Arabic literature.³² Most books published by the missionaries were printed by the Egyptian Būlāq Press in Cairo³³ from where Western missionaries and Arab intellectuals (especially during Ibrāhīm Bāshā’s reign) began to order books in Arabic in fields such as medicine, science, literature, history, and many others.³⁴ The US missionaries however realised the

²⁸ Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria: From Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 54.

²⁹ Frederick Bliss, *The Religions of Modern Syria and Palestine* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1920), 314. Rao Humpherys Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools in the Levant: A Study of Purposes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Malloy Lithoprinting, Inc, 1965), 69. Abdul Latif Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria 1800 - 1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 11.

³⁰ The American Board of Foreign Missions was established in 1820 in Boston Massachusetts and was the first US missionary institution with a foreign operation.

³¹ Henry Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 201.

³² Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, 68–71.

³³ Raḍwān, *Tārīkh Maṭba‘at Būlāq*, 10–11. Fākhūrī, *al-Jami‘ fī Tārīkh al-Ādab al-‘Arabī*, 24–25.

³⁴ Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, 68–69. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 71–74.

power and importance of the printing press and established their own publishing house in Beirut in 1834.³⁵

In 1860, however, civil war erupted in Syria. This signalled a turning point in the region and led to the closure of a number of schools.³⁶ An uprising of “Maronite Christian peasants against the Druze in the Mount Lebanon region spread to Damascus and beyond, to the south of Syria.”³⁷ With the Druze turning against the Maronites, the rebellion escalated into large-scale civil war. Around 20,000 Christians were killed by the Druze and 560 churches and 380 Christian villages were destroyed. The Druze and other Muslims also suffered heavy casualties.³⁸ In addition, the Ottoman government’s control over Arab intellectuals was also tightening and later reached its peak in the era of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842–1918).³⁹

Syrian intellectuals, fleeing both from the civil war and from tightening Ottoman control, left the region and sought new outlets for their publications in Egypt. Egypt at that time was ruled by Khedive Ismail (r.1863–1879), an enlightened man who welcomed the influx of educated Syrian men and women. His government established Western-style education and “subsidised magazines and helped to finance the nascent private press.”⁴⁰ In doing so he opened the way

³⁵ ‘Abd al-Karīm Maḥmūd Gharāybah, *Sūrīyah fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi ‘Ashar, 1740-1876* (Cairo: Jāmi‘at al-Duwal al-‘Arabīyah, Ma‘had al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabīyah al-‘Āliyah, 1961), 173–174. Frederick Bliss, *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1920), 102, 120. John Murchison Munro, *A Mutual Concern: The Story of the American University of Beirut* (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 6–11. Roderic Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History 1774-1923. The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 167–168. Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools*, 101.

³⁶ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 85.

³⁷ Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 71–74.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71–74. Harald Vocke, *The Lebanese War: Its Origins and Political Dimensions* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 22. Vladimir Borisovich Lutsky, *Modern History of the Arab Countries* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1969), 57.

³⁹ Shams al-Dīn al-Rifā‘ī, *Tārīkh al-Şihāfah al-Sūrīyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1969), 1: 86.

⁴⁰ Thomas Philipp, “Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt,” in L. Beck and N. Keddie (eds.), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 277–294. Marilyn Booth, “Constructions of Syrian Identity in the Women’s Press,” in Adel Beshara (ed.), *The Origins of Syrian Women’s Magazines in Egypt* Nationhood: Histories, Pioneers and Identity (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 223–252. Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt*, 7–10. Beth Baron, “Readers and the Women’s Press in Egypt,” in *Poetic*

for Syrian women to come to Egypt and to contribute their mark on Egyptian education and journalism.

Thus, at the turn of the nineteenth century, interactions with the West created an environment in which women could flourish in Egypt and Syria. This marked a new evolutionary phase now referred to as the “Arab Renaissance,” the “Arab Awakening” or the “Arab Enlightenment Movement.” Egypt and Syria, then home to the major urban centres of Cairo, Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo, had more economic resources and better-developed education systems than the rest of the Arab world and were thus best equipped to spearhead reform. It is therefore important to examine the role of women during the Arab Renaissance in Egypt and Syria, including the crucial link between the two countries and their combined impact.⁴¹

As a result of these developments, new debate surrounding female education and emancipation emerged. Women’s writing became more popular, allowing women to establish their own literary salons and societies and to begin to publish their own journals. This thesis shows the proactive position of Arab women in socio-political struggles and intellectual discussions in nineteenth century societies. The development of a movement of women’s writers was intertwined with the arrival of the printing press: key factors in the Arab Renaissance, leading to the emergence of Arab societies and literary salons.

The way in which women’s freedoms were encouraged and propagated by Arab male thinkers is explored in this study. Reforms, however, which challenged the norms surrounding women’s role in society and their education were equally relevant to men.

Today, vol. 15, no. 2, Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies: Modern Period II (1994), 217–240. Marilyn Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

⁴¹ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Folio Society, 2009), 112–113.

Ultimately, the male vision was to improve women's education and situation to serve the purpose of men in society and the family unit. While these men prompted a new vision of women and challenged the traditional boundaries that existed between men and women, their motivation was to fashion Western modernity to suit their own tradition and maintain the existing norms in society.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. This study examines the concept of the Arab Renaissance of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during which Arabs engaged with the ideas of the European Enlightenment. It explores the interaction between Europe and the Arab world, particularly Egypt and Syria and traces European influences on (mostly male) Arab thinking—especially on the role of women and women's education.
2. The study examines key women writers and thinkers and the development of early Arab women's liberation during the Arab Renaissance. It shows how female intellectual activity played an important role in empowering women at large. It also assesses the particular role played by women's literary salons and societies in raising the status of women in Egypt and Syria and in enabling women to play a greater role in public life.
3. This study explores how male Arab intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries challenged normative thinking on the role of women and championed women's education. Though they advocated for liberalism the reforms proposed by male reformers remained centred on men. The study shows that, ultimately, men's vision of a more "liberated woman" was limited largely to improving women's access to education so that they might become better mothers and wives, rather than enfranchising women as true equals in the social arena.

1.3 Literature Review

The literature on the Arab Renaissance, the role of both Western powers and Arab elites in introducing modernity to the Arab world and the concept of emerging women's liberation is reviewed. One of the most prominent scholarly debates concerning this period is the role of colonialism in bringing modern values and lifestyles to the Arab world. Peter Granar argues that Arab nations already had long-standing commercial relations with the West by the time of Napoleon.⁴² His views emphasise the idea that the ascent of Western powers in the Eastern Mediterranean sparked ideas of modernisation among Arab thinkers and leaders. Gran asserts that several Western powers actively pursued geopolitical and commercial interests in the Arab region from the beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, thereby reinforcing the notion that Arabs were little more than pawns in the game of modernisation.

Albert Hourani, however, suggests that the Arab world responded to the political and social changes occurring in Europe during the nineteenth century out of the realisation that they were lagging behind the modern world.⁴³ According to Hourani, by the end of "the eighteenth century the gap between the technical skills of some Western and northern European countries and those of the rest of the world grew wider."⁴⁴ He shows how Arab intellectuals of the time tried to implement Western ideas in their societies, but that these ideas underwent a process of Arabisation, with attempts to tailor modernity to Arab identity.⁴⁵ Hourani also draws attention to Western influence at the beginning of the nineteenth century, where educated males in the Arab world were firstly "aware of the ideas and institutions of modern Europe, and, secondly, started to feel its power."⁴⁶ He contends that the educated Arab elite

⁴² Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

⁴³ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 80.

⁴⁴ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 259.

⁴⁵ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

identified European influences within Arab countries as marking the beginning of modern thinking.

As the West was flourishing, especially in education, science and technology, the Arab world was in decline. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod argues that the Arab people lived in isolation in the light of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, many Arabs embraced Napoleon's French campaign in 1798 because they saw in it an opportunity to achieve advancement, development and progress in their homeland.⁴⁷

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl examines the Arab Renaissance from an Egyptian perspective and wrote about the impact of French military superiority following Napoleon's numerous victories against the Ottoman Empire. al-Shayyāl argues that Arab-Egyptians were impressed by French administrative organisations, legal structures and certain scientific innovations that French scholars had demonstrated to a group of awestruck Arab Muslim scholars.⁴⁸ One of these scholars, Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār (1766–1835), subsequently wrote of his admiration of the French scientific experiments.⁴⁹ al-Shayyāl argues that al-‘Aṭṭār was a prominent individual in the Arab Renaissance and his writing proclaimed his strong belief in the need for European development in all aspects of life, and especially in education.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, 12–20.

⁴⁸ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjamah fī Miṣr fī ‘Ahd al-Ḥamla al-Faransiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1951), 30.

⁴⁹ Historian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1753-1825) who witnessed the growing Western influence in Egypt, described that al-sheikh Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār pointed to the need for change in the Arab lands. al-‘Aṭṭār demonstrated the advancement in the sciences and education and specifically mentioned ‘the French scientific complex.’ This complex was an organisation modelled around European institutions which was established in Egypt. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Āthār fī al-Tarājim wa-al-Akhbār* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1997), 3: 348–351. ‘Alī Mubārak, *al-Khuṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyah* (Bulāq: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyah, 1888), 4: 38.

⁵⁰ al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjamah fī Miṣr*, 30–31.

André Raymond, however, disagrees with al-Shayyāl, saying that Western influence in Egypt was not seriously pursued until the 1820s, under Muḥammad ‘Alī, the semi-independent governor of Egypt (1805–1848).⁵¹ About the same time, the reformist Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) also concluded that the Ottomans would have to adopt the latest European military methods, technological inventions, administration, economic and organisation models if they were to have a place in the new world order.⁵² Thus, according to Raymond, European influence started when the Ottomans imported scores of European experts to both Cairo and Istanbul in order to help modernise the army, education system, administration and economy.⁵³

The low level of education in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire was a result of the concentration of Ottoman reforms in the capital Istanbul. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu shows that the Ottomans started their educational reforms under a Western system in the late eighteenth century. They began by opening new schools of engineering, teaching modern arithmetic, geometry and geography. Technical education started with the establishment of the Naval Engineering College in 1775, followed by the Infantry Engineering College in 1795.⁵⁴

Kamāl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf and Khaldoun Samman see Westernisation beginning in the Arab world from the late eighteenth century as an attempt to create a new Arab generation who would be on an equal footing with their contemporaries in the West.⁵⁵ Samman argues that following

⁵¹ André Raymond, *Cairo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 251.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 253.

⁵³ André Raymond, “The Management of the City,” in S.K. Jayyusi, R. Holod, A. Petruccioli and A. Raymond (eds.), in *The City in the Islamic World*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2008), 775–793.

⁵⁴ Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, “Some Critical Notes on the Introduction of Modern Sciences to the Ottoman State and the Relation between Science and Religion up to the End of the Nineteenth Century,” in Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (ed.), *Science, Technology and Learning in the Ottoman Empire* (Britain: TJ international Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall, 2004), 235–236.

⁵⁵ Kamāl ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, *al-Taḥkīr fī al-‘Almānīyah* (Cairo: Ru’yah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 2007), 27–29. Khaldoun Samman, *The Clash of Modernities: The Islamist Challenge to Jewish, Turkish, and Arab Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2011), 12–13.

the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Europe as the new regional, Arab intellectuals generally recognised that the Arab world required an urgent transformation in order to become advanced, developed and modern. They began searching for a strategic response that would allow them to follow the European model.⁵⁶

There is no doubt that contact with the West created a state of contradiction and dissonance in Arab societies. It introduced a number of complex issues that continue to reverberate to the present day, creating social and cultural divides between religious traditionalism and secularism. Some Arabs resisted European interference in their affairs and resisted the influence of European ways of thinking and living. Philip Hitti reports that Arabs at this time used the ideas and learning they acquired from the West to fight off European intervention. This method included one of the most powerful ideas exported from the West: “nationalism and the concept of the nation-state.”⁵⁷

The rise of Arab nationalism indeed became a factor in the push for self-determination and in the struggle for independence from foreign occupation.⁵⁸ However, the adoption of Western ideals, including increasing materialism, put Arab modernisers on a collision course with the values and traditions that had long prevailed in the Arab world. Muslims in the Arab world believed that the unity of the Muslim world should take precedence over nationalism. The growth of nationalist sentiment therefore led to internal and external conflicts.⁵⁹

Bernard Lewis approaches relations between East and West from an orientalist-imperialist perspective. Lewis considers Islam to be an historical challenge to the “West’s Judeo-

⁵⁶ Samman, *The Clash of Modernities*, 27.

⁵⁷ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 1–10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Christian heritage and its secularism.”⁶⁰ He believes that historically the Arab world played a vital role in the political sphere as earlier Arab civilisations were critical to the advancement of the West. Notably this region gave birth to the “three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.” Lewis argues that the rapid changes in the Arab world in general, and the Levant, in particular, were due to the role of “Western missionaries who were active in the region in the nineteenth century.”⁶¹ He contends that the Western- Arab disconnection was due to the latter’s inability to mirror the advancement and development of the West. This was largely due to lack of curiosity and interest and the Arab’s “unwillingness to have contact with non-Muslims.”⁶²

On the contrary, John Esposito argues that there was no dissonance between the West and the Arab world. He believes that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was dominated by an independence struggle against colonialism in the Arab world. He states that the Arabs’ “reaction towards the West is diverse and could be either: rejection, withdrawal, secularism, Westernisation, or Islamic modernisation.”⁶³ Esposito argues that the West’s reluctance to recognise the links between the three religions and the overarching Western idea of Arab inferiority drove a wedge between the West and the Arab world.⁶⁴

Esposito contends that within the Arab world the foundations of identity (language, history, religion and culture) are drawn upon and utilised when regional interests are challenged. He believes that the Arab world was capable of changes and of adapting to the ideas of Western

⁶⁰ Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslim deeply Resent the West, and Western Bitterness Will not be Easily Mollified,” in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 266, no. 3 (1990), 47–60.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam, Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 104–119.

⁶³ John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 124–127.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 124–127.

Enlightenment. There was no definite and inevitable incompatibility between the Arab world and Western ideas such as democracy.⁶⁵ Many of Esposito arguments are grounded upon his historical knowledge of the region. The key factor in the Arab-West contradiction, he states, was the effect of some historical events on Western-Arab bilateral relations. Accordingly, Esposito concludes that the Arab rejection of the West is due to political differences, rather than hatred and animosity and he insists that cooperation between the West and the East is crucially important.⁶⁶

According to Kate Zebiri, both Muslims and Christians made numerous mistakes during their interactions in the early modern period.⁶⁷ Zebiri argues that while Western perspectives on Islam and Arabs have evolved, the opposite is true about Muslim perspectives of the West. She notes that Christians undertook a serious study of Islam and the Middle East and initiated efforts to open channels of dialogue. Important Christian institutions were established in order to study Islam and the Arab region, but the reverse was not true for Muslim institutions studying the West. Christian scholars sought to understand Islam whereas few Muslim writers tried to understand Christianity.⁶⁸ Vinoth Ramachandra built on both Zebiri and Esposito's arguments to present his own analysis of what he terms "Islamophobia, Westophobia and 'Christophobia'".⁶⁹

The orientalist view of the Arab Renaissance is also important. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said provides further theoretical tools for understanding Arab-West relations.⁷⁰ Said contends that the West has always portrayed the Arabs as passive recipients of Western colonialism with

⁶⁵ Ibid., 191–211.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 240–249.

⁶⁷ Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians*, 94.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 94–98.

⁶⁹ Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1999), 44.

⁷⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1–20.

little or no agency or ambitions of their own with regard to the West and modernity.

Summing up this orientalist portrayal, Said states: “An Arab Oriental is that impossible creature whose libidinal energy drives him to paroxysms of overstimulation and yet, he is as a puppet in the eyes of the world, staring vacantly out at a modern landscape he can neither understand nor cope with.”⁷¹ Said frames Arab relations with the West in rather black-and-white terms: “in order to know who I am I must know what I am not.”⁷² This has the effect of shutting down the exploration of the dynamic, complex nature of the Arab world’s relationship with the West, and of the Arabs’ own endogenous drive to experiment with modernisation. Ussama Makdisi’s article “Ottoman Orientalism,” further entrenches Said’s superior–inferior dichotomy and expands it to relations between the centre of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century and its Arab provinces.⁷³ In the same vein, scholars with differing views such as Amira Sonbol, Samir Amin, and Maxime Rodinson have struggled with the idea that there might have been a significant independent impulse within nineteenth century Arab societies to look to Western ideas of progress and what they offered.⁷⁴

A significant amount of research has been conducted on the role of American missionaries in the Arab world during the nineteenth century. The work of Protestant missionaries in Syria in particular during the nineteenth century is seen within a supply and demand framework. Betty Anderson argues that these American missionaries provided education, beyond simply the religious curriculum, for both boys and girls, to fulfil a demand by the local communities to

⁷¹ Ibid., 312.

⁷² Ibid., 17–18.

⁷³ Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” in *American Historical Review*, vol. 107, no. 3 (2002), 1–32.

⁷⁴ Amira Sonbol, *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990). Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977). Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

provide education for their children.⁷⁵ From this example, the Western presence, at least in this part of the region, was not considered to be of foreign oppression.

The primary role of missionaries though was to promote religion. This mission changed gradually after the official pronouncement issued in 1824 by the Maronite Patriarch in Syria, which banned the distribution of Protestant religious texts in the Ottoman Empire.

Furthermore, the Patriarch's communicants were threatened with marginalisation and excommunication if they attempted to help the Protestants in their endeavours.⁷⁶

According to Caesar Farah, the initial strategy of the European missionaries was to convert people to Christianity. Schools were seen as platforms to spread Christianity -not as a means to educate local people. Henry Diab and Lars Wahlin argue that the missionaries faced challenges to stay in the area, particularly within educational systems and institutions.⁷⁷

Official declarations by the Patriarch led missionaries to focus on education, especially girls' education, and on schools whose purpose was educating the new generation about modern ideas and Western thought. Stephen Penrose acknowledges that initially the missionaries' main focus was selling and distributing scripture to Christian Arabs in their languages.⁷⁸ He, however, refutes the idea that the aim of the missionaries was to convert Muslims to Protestantism. He argues that to have a Muslim convert to Protestantism was like asking him to change his nationality. He gives the example of the response invariably given to the question, 'What is your nationality?' It is 'Moslem,' rather than Syrian, or Arabian.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Betty S Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 35–47.

⁷⁶ Caesar Farah, "Protestantism and British Diplomacy in Syria," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1976), 321.

⁷⁷ Henry Diab; Lars Wahlin, "The Geography of Education in Syria in 1882: With a Translation of 'Education in Syria' by Shahin Makarius," in *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 65, no. 2 (1983), 108.

⁷⁸ Stephen Penrose, *That They May Have Life: The Story of the American University of Beirut 1866-1941* (Beirut: The Trustees of the American University of Beirut, 1941), 131.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

Penrose, like Anderson, asserts that missionaries became increasingly involved in the broader provision of education.

Stefan Weber discusses in great depth the transformation from traditional schools to modern schools where he acknowledges the significant role played by Western missionaries.⁸⁰

Religious knowledge and traditional sciences had dominated education in the Arab world until the late eighteenth century. Partially due to “the spread of missionary-driven education,” the Arab people came to realise the importance of European progress in science, including non-religious sciences such as mathematics, engineering, and the natural sciences.⁸¹

Joseph George Rosengarten writes in great detail about Western missionary activity in Beirut. The Beirut Evangelical School for girls was established in 1828. It initially attracted students from elite Arab families in Syria and remains in operation to the present day. The demand for schools, particularly schools for girls, increased during this period. Until the Ottoman educational system began to provide education for females the missionaries were under pressure to fulfil this demand.⁸²

Kamal Salibi also argues that during late eighteenth century and prior to the intervention of the missionaries, “ignorance prevailed,” and further education was usually only for wealthy families. Even the upper-class “Druze and Maronites in Syria were often barely literate.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Stefan Weber, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808-1918)* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 297–310.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 129–131.

⁸² Joseph George Rosengarten, “The American Philosophical Society, 1743–1903,” in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Pennsylvania: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1903), 329–336. Anderson, *The American University of Beirut*, 112–115.

⁸³ Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (London: Praeger Press, 1966), 125.

Ottoman society did not value female education and even though schools for both boys and girls did exist, education for females was uncommon.⁸⁴

Timothy Mitchell shows how the intellectuals who were driving change were enthusiastic about creating a new educational system modelled on that of Europe. Educational change started with the “establishment of modern schools for boys and girls in the major capitals of the Arab world.”⁸⁵ This helped to create a new generation who would in turn lead progress and change. The rulers in Cairo and Damascus received help from the West to modernise their countries and Western experts helped them manage the new systems aimed at catching up with Western progress.⁸⁶ Modernisation included a focus on education, especially girls’ education and girls’ schools, the introduction of the printing press and the publication of newspapers and periodicals which presented the news about these new aspects of life to the wider community.⁸⁷ Educational reforms, women’s liberation and the role of journalism were essential in promoting change and disseminating new ideas and thus providing the foundations for modernisation in the Arab world. According to Mitchell, education and journalism were the instruments which directed changes in the new modern lifestyle of the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ These changes were reflected in adopting Western dress, food and social practices, as well as Western architectural styles in houses, palaces, and public buildings. Even mosques became Westernised in their style and construction.⁸⁹

Ilyās al-Ayyūbī argues that the visual impact of the West became pervasive in paintings and photographs, impacting on identity and beliefs. Images and statues which were forbidden in

⁸⁴ Diab and Wahlin, “The Geography of Education in Syria in 1882,” 108.

⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 66.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 66–68.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

Islamic culture became common in palaces, on publications, money and postage stamps. Change even extended to army uniforms and then spread to common people, prompting almost everyone (men and women) to change their style of dress. When people change their clothing style and adopt the style of dress of another community, they have embraced the other culture.⁹⁰ The increasing exposure to the complex elements of modern Western life led to changes in the features and orientations of traditional Arab thinking.⁹¹ Western influence, which manifested itself in modern educational systems, was followed closely by the Arabic popular press. It resulted in turn to significant changes in traditional Arab societies in general, and in gender relations in particular.

According to Luwīs ‘Awaḍ the social conditions and political issues under the Ottoman Empire led to the emergence of liberated women in the Arab world during the nineteenth century. ‘Awaḍ argues that the French campaign (1798–1801) influenced the social and political life.⁹² Samer Akkach agrees with ‘Awaḍ that social development and women’s freedom were developing due to western influence, however unlike ‘Awaḍ, Akkach claims that this was occurring before the nineteenth century.⁹³

In the latter part of the twentieth century a group of authors (mainly women) started to critically examine the role of women in the Arab Renaissance and Arab culture. The evolutionary process of the emancipation of Arab women has arguably suffered a few setbacks along the way. The emancipation of women in the Arab world did not happen overnight with the arrival of Western influence in the region in the nineteenth century. Raḍwá

⁹⁰ Ilyās al-Ayyūbī, *Tārīkh Miṣr fī ‘Ahd al-Khidw Ismā‘īl Bāshā min Sanat 1863 ilá Sanat 1879* (Cairo: Maktaba Madbūlī, 1990), 131–132.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹² Luwīs ‘Awaḍ, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-Miṣrī al-Hadūth* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1969).

⁹³ Samer Akkach, *Yawmīyāt Shāmīyah: Qirā‘ah fī al-Tārīkh al-Thaqāfī li-Dimashq al-‘Uthmānīyah fī al-Qarn al-thāmin ‘Ashar* (Beirut: Bīsān, 2015).

‘Āshūr argues that Arab women started writing and publishing well before World War I.⁹⁴ In her book *Arab Women Writers*, ‘Āshūr lists over than 1,200 women writers who were active in this period. Nikki Keddie also provides an inclusive account of “women’s history and their role in the Middle East from even before the rise of Islam until the present time.”⁹⁵

Some Muslim writers, among them Nouha al-Hegelan, contend that at the beginning of Islamic history, Muslim women had all of their cultural and spiritual rights bestowed upon them at birth, as a result of their inherent humanity.⁹⁶ al-Hegelan argues that the process of emancipation could not “just happen,”⁹⁷ emphasising that women in Pre-Islamic Arabia were expected to adhere to the cultural and tribal bonds: “Each tribe had its own laws regarding women. Some women were emancipated even by comparison with many of today’s standards; others lived in very chauvinistic societies. In some instances, women were chattels and men often buried their newly-born daughters alive.”⁹⁸ These issues cannot be extricated from the “socio-political history” of the region under the rule of the Ottomans prior to the confrontation with the West. Some commentators compare the period of Ottoman influence to the “Dark Ages” of Medieval Europe in terms of oppression, religious control and suppression of learning and human rights.⁹⁹

Nahla Abdo observes that, historically, the Arab states directed and restricted the lives and activities of women.¹⁰⁰ This had a significant impact on all parts of their lives, from laws

⁹⁴ Raḍwá ‘Āshūr; Mohammed Berrada, Ferial J. Ghazoul, Amina Rachid, Mandy McClure, “Introduction,” in Raḍwá ‘Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008).

⁹⁵ Nikki R. Keddie; Beth Baron, *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁹⁶ Nouha al-Hegelan, “Women in the Arab World,” in *Arab Perspectives*, vol. 1, no. 7 (1980), 4–7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Nahla Abdo, “Middle East Politics Through Feminist Lenses: Negotiating the Terms of Solidarity,” in *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1993), 29–38.

discriminating against them in vocations and education and to the *sharī'ah* (Islamic law) which controls the social and sexual lives of both men and women.¹⁰¹ According to Abdo, the roots of state intervention go back to the Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Hamid (1876–1909) who rejected the idea of equality between males and females and sought to strengthen the traditional family structure that prevailed at the time.¹⁰²

Kumari Jayawardena argues that the West depicted Arab women as backward. There was the perception that women faced difficulty in freeing themselves from the patriarchal bonds of Arab culture in which women were broadly considered inferior because of Islamic norms. Consequently, it was thought that the liberation of Arab women must take place through a process of imitation of western women. This process would allow Arab women to enter the modern liberated world and in turn liberate themselves from backward, Arab-Islamic culture.¹⁰³ As Leila Ahmed and Nilufer Gole observe, education is what crucially differentiates modern women from backward women. Many Arab women were influenced by the modernity of western thought¹⁰⁴ and began their education in order to follow the Western model.

Lisa Pollard argues that in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, both men and women intellectuals in Egypt called for educational reforms, especially schools for girl.¹⁰⁵ Hoda El Sadda shows that numerous Arab women were educated in Western missionary schools for girls and were very aware of their privilege. Cognisant of the majority of girls who were

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 29–38.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and nationalism in the third world*. (London: Zed Books, 1986).

¹⁰⁴ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 132–133. Nilufer Gole, *The Forbidden Modern Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 27–28.

¹⁰⁵ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt 1805/1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

growing up without any entitlement to schooling, many journalists used their positions to address social and gender inequities. They published articles that highlighted the unjust nature of the existing education system and demanded that something be done to rectify the situation.¹⁰⁶

According to Beth Baron, the advancement of the Arab “women’s press can be traced to the early 1890s.” Baron asserts that the writing of Arab women shed light upon the rights of females in work and education. Women’s journals of the time addressed issues such as education, work and domestic life, which encouraged people to debate such topics.¹⁰⁷ Baron shows the challenges that faced women intellectuals who were writing in male-dominated fields.

Capturing the challenging environment for women living in nineteenth century Syria, ‘Anbara Salām Khālīdī writes in *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist*:

If the narrow windows of the female realm of traditional Arab society were one day to widen a little to let in tiny whiffs of freedom that existed outside our female world, and it happens that some young woman breathes these in and experiences a lifting up of spirit, an Awakening of a yearning to look beyond the walls, or an excitement in her feelings of personal dignity, she would quickly be accused of recklessness and revolt, of daring to attack an august structure and of assailing the holiness of ancient tradition. Campaigns would be mounted against her of total contempt and humiliating

¹⁰⁶ Hoda El Sadda, *‘Ā’ishah Taymūr: Taḥaddiyāt al-Thābit wa-al-Mutaghiyer fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi’ ‘Ashar* (Cairo: Mu’assasat al-Mar’ah wa-al-Dhākarah, 2004), 129.

¹⁰⁷ Beth Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*.

mockery, forcing her spirit to retreat within, but it would not entirely be snuffed out.¹⁰⁸

Tellström also demonstrates that despite the changes in Arab-Western relations, the debate surrounding women's freedom flourished in Egypt in the late nineteenth century. Arguably, this was due to the presence of Syrian female migrants who had fled the "civil war in Mount Lebanon in 1860."¹⁰⁹ Some of these women had already received an education in Western missionary schools and had been exposed to Western ideals about women's liberation and rights. Tellström concludes that female Egyptian writers used examples illustrating Western women to further the case of females' education, and that Western writing was a significant influence on the educational writings of their Syrian female compatriots.¹¹⁰

In the same vein, Thomas Philipp contributes to our understanding of the Syrian diaspora in the second half of the nineteenth century after following the lives of Syrian women who travelled to Egypt. He found that these Syrian women added substantially to the gender debate. These immigrants, according to Philipp, were split between into three socio-occupational categories: the first consisted of "professionals such as journalists, editors, owners of periodicals and civil servants;" the second included businessmen and the third group was composed of artists and the working class.¹¹¹

According to Mervat Hatem, Arab women, especially Syrian women living in Egypt, played an essential role in raising both literary and intellectual levels. Hatem observes that situations

¹⁰⁸ 'Anbara Salām Khālidī; Tarif Khalidi, *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist: The Life and Activism of Anbara Salam Khalidi* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 1.

¹⁰⁹ Jenny Tellström, *The Promotion of Girls' Education in a late 19th Century Egyptian Women's Magazine: A Study of Western Feminsit Influences* (Lund University: Centre for Languages and Literature, 2014), 9.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

¹¹¹ Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1985).

and issues relevant to women were addressed through literature and this contributed to improve the situation of women, particularly with respect to education.¹¹² As Fruma Zachs and Sharon Halevi observe, the Arab Renaissance was an important intellectual movement in Arab history.¹¹³ Zachs and Halevi show that Syrian women in the late nineteenth century were influenced by the west, especially with respect to education.

Marilyn Booth recognises the advent and early advancement of Syrian women's journals in Egypt.¹¹⁴ A number of women writers became active through journalism and participation in literary salons, although Booth claims that women of the time feared following Western ideas.¹¹⁵ As Samar Bouthaina Khaldi shows, the new literary salon was a hybrid engagement between Western and Arab society. Khaldi argues that the question of the role of women was essential in shaping debates between two cultures.¹¹⁶ According to Lila Abu-Lughod, nineteenth century journalism and the discourse it raised, facilitated women to achieve a higher quality education and modernity.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Mervat Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of 'Ā'ishah Taymūr* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Mervat Hatem, "Secularist and Islamist discourses on modernity in Egypt and the evolution of the postcolonial nation-state," in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad; John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam, Gender and Social Change* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85–99.

¹¹³ Fruma Zachs; Sharon Halevi, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria: Intellectuals and Ideology in the Late Ottoman Period* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

¹¹⁴ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*. Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*.

¹¹⁵ Marilyn Booth; Anthony Gorman, *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 12.

¹¹⁶ Bouthaina Khaldi, *Egypt Awakening in the Early Twentieth Century Mayy Ziyadah's Intellectual Circles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Cairo: The American University, 1998).

A significant amount of research has been conducted into the role of female writers in the Arab world, such as Miriam Cooke,¹¹⁸ Fedwa Malti-Douglas,¹¹⁹ Lisa Suhair-Majaj,¹²⁰ and Joseph Zeidan.¹²¹ These scholars reveal the literary achievements of female authors whose writings were previously unknown or unrecognised as contributors in the Arab Renaissance.

Samar Karāmī and Hind Abū al-Sha'r observe the contribution of women's literature, including books and journals, into the nineteenth century. They portray how female writers shed light on the important topics of women's education, freedom and participating in the wider society.¹²² Arab women of the nineteenth century were activists in their own right who had to operate in a society that espoused absolute morality. As Rūz Ghurayyib observes, the number of female poets, writers and novelists indicates a feminist liberation movement in the making.¹²³ The narratives these poets advanced, however, conformed to the literary and stylistic forms and standards of their times. Their styles gradually became influenced or inspired by Western literary forms closer to the turn of the twentieth century.¹²⁴

Sarah Graham-Brown writes that social and economic reform movements from the mid-nineteenth century onwards frequently demanded that women play a more active role in Middle Eastern societies. She observes that these demands were at first primarily advanced

¹¹⁸ Margot Badran; Miriam Cooke, *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁹ Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹²⁰ Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women's Novels* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

¹²¹ Joseph Zeidan, *Arab Women Novelists: The Formative Years and beyond* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

¹²² Samar Karāmī, *al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisā'iyah fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 2008). Hind Abū al-Sha'r, *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabīyah fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* *Ashar: Kātibah, Mufakkirah, Mubdi'ah* (Amman: Amānat 'Ammān al-Kubrā, Mudīriyat al-Thaqāfah, 2011).

¹²³ Rūz Ghurayyib, *Nasamāt wa-A'āšir fī al-Shi'r al-Nisā'ī al-'Arabī al-Mu'āšir* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1980), 7–11.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9–11.

by men, however, by the late nineteenth century, females were more involved in these calls for greater contribution of their gender in public life.¹²⁵ In contrast, however, Margot Badran suggests that some women in Egypt began to advocate for women's liberation "as early as the 1870s, before men started to articulate their own feminist ideology."¹²⁶ Badran also observes that it was Arab women who were leading the women's movement, who were using journals, as well as publishing books, novels and poems, to improve women's rights.¹²⁷

One cannot conclude this literature review without mentioning the more recent developments in the study of modernity in the Arab World. Although this recent research has focused exclusively on the connections between Islam, modernity and the rise of secularism mainly in the later part of the twentieth century, these studies have to be considered. In *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Tala Asad examines the unique character of modern European societies and the secularism that develops more strongly with the end of the colonial enterprise. He argues that secularism is a neutral space that sidelines religious interference in politics and culture.¹²⁸

Building on Asad's work, Saba Mahmood's *The Politics of Piety*,¹²⁹ provides an ethnography of women's movements in Egypt, which were part of a larger Middle Eastern political reawakening. Using this ethnography, Saba's work interrogates the liberal and secular philosophy that shaped central understandings of current Islamic politics, agency, and

¹²⁵ Sarah Graham-Brown, "Women's Activism in the Middle East: A Historical Perspective," in Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2001), 23–33.

¹²⁶ Margot Badran, "Dual Liberation: Feminism and Nationalism in Egypt, 1870s–1925," in *Feminist Issues*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1988), 15–34.

¹²⁷ Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*.

¹²⁸ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹²⁹ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

freedom. Many critics considered Mahmood's position an abandonment of feminist politics and its emancipatory potential, thus negating the achievements of women in the Arab world. This important school of thought questions modernity and argues for an understanding of contemporary Islamic revival including fundamentalist movements as a unique form to be possibly considered "Islamic modernity." Although these authors' works have gained significant traction and many followers in recent years, it is not the purpose of this current study to engage with them as their focus has been and remains on the late twentieth century. It is the freedoms earned as a result of the work of women writers and intellectuals in the nineteenth century which are the central concern of this study.

Looking at the literature as a whole, there is a recognition that the majority of scholars have adopted a stereotypical position. As a whole, they represent the Arab-Western relationship, after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, as an ongoing fight against colonial dominance and western authority. The narrative of inferiority, victimhood and cultural imperialism permeates the literature on Western intervention in the nineteenth century; it diminishes the importance of Western encounters and their impact on Arab societies, including on Arab women's struggle for freedom, equality and civil society. The present study questions this narrative because it tends to obfuscate the way in which Arab thinkers of the nineteenth century (both men and women), embraced the West with open arms - despite its colonial agenda. Western modernity has been an uncompromising force in Arab society in both material and cultural manifestations. The study concludes that elite Arab women were inspired by the liberated women of Europe and that in turn these Arab women played a vital role in the Arab Renaissance. They influenced popular thought via journalism, literature, and cultural networks including literary salons, literary societies and participating in international conferences. Arab men and women both contributed toward advancing a sense of Arab

Renaissance which welcomed various aspects of modernity including new educational models and forms of mass communication. This led to significant changes in Arab culture and ultimately to the development of contemporary Arab society.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How did the Arab-Western interactions influence Arabs to engage with the ideas of the Western Enlightenment and bring about the emergence of the concept of the “liberated woman” in the nineteenth century?
2. How did Arab women intellectuals engage in and contribute to the nineteenth century Arab Renaissance?
3. How did Arab intellectuals initiate changes in the status of Arab women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and what was Arab men’s response to the emerging forces of change?

1.5 Significance of Research

Since the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon’s army in 1798, contemporary Arab scholars have overwhelmingly considered western ties to the Arab world to be centred around liberation struggles and a battle against colonial interests. This paper examines the acceptance of western thought and ideas by nineteenth century Arab thinkers, in spite of the colonial ties. The goals of development in science and urban lifestyle drove the majority of interactions between the two cultures. Numerous studies have concluded that the western influence on the Arab world in the nineteenth century was merely an extension of colonial agendas. In this study, however, the enthusiasm by which Arab societies embraced western ideas and social norms, is explored.

Arab-Western interactions during the Arab Renaissance also resulted in women's liberation and consequently, fundamental social change within traditional Arab communities. The literature written by Arab women during the period of the Arab Renaissance has not been a priority for most scholars focussing on this period. Examination of Arab women writers and their works closes a significant gap in the research into the role and rise of education and literacy in the Arab Renaissance.

The significance of this study also lies in shifting the scholarly focus on this period toward a more holistic and inclusive portrayal and understanding of the popular idea of the "liberated woman." It examines the dialogue between men and women in Arab society that came as a result of the changes in women's status in society, as well as the female reaction to this new conceptualisation of women.

The study explores the ways in which Arab women followed the example of the "liberated woman" of western societies. It offers important insights into Arab women's role in the Arab Renaissance, with a particular focus on the fields of journalism, social networks and literature and the role women played within these spheres. This thesis reveals how Arab women who were influenced by Western ideas and Western education, came to assume a vital role in the Arab Renaissance and in educating other women.

1.6 Scope of Research

The focus of this study is primarily Egypt and Syria, which were the two major countries within the Arab world that arguably formed the core of the Arab Renaissance in the nineteenth century. This study concentrates on major areas of cultural development such as the large cultural cities of Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, and Beirut (at the time part of Syria). It

focuses attention on the outcome of Arab-European interactions during the nineteenth century and the promotion of Western thought, with particular reference to the discourse surrounding the liberation of women in Egypt and Syria.

1.7 Limitations

This study examines the Arab Renaissance from the perspective of women who were instrumental in its formation, dispelling some commonly held myths about the status and role of women in traditional Arab society. However, this study limits its investigation to exploring the role of women in the making of the Arab Renaissance. The focus of this study is restricted to Egypt and Syria as studying the women's liberation movement in the Arab world as a whole would be too large an undertaking for a PhD thesis. Egypt and Syria were selected due to the rich history and deep historical roots of the women's liberation movement in each of these countries.

1.8 Research Method

The study of the writings of Arab women in the nineteenth century to evaluate the discourse of women's freedom by nineteenth century Egyptian and Syrian intellectuals requires employing a variety of approaches and methods, including the contextual analysis of the primary sources. Qualitative research methods, including the contextual analysis of primary and secondary sources, are used to evaluate the discourse of women's freedom by nineteenth century Egyptian and Syrian intellectuals.

A variety of empirical material has been collected and analysed for the purposes of this study, for example, women-initiated journals in the nineteenth century. Other such material included examples of narratives of personal experiences of 'Ā'ishah Taymūr and Wardah al-Yāzījī and

life stories of Hudá Sha‘rāwī and Nabawīyah Mūsá. The study critically examines and analyses the textual material collected from primary sources in the public domain which is available in printed and/or digital form.

Content analysis is utilised to aid the investigation into the writings produced by both male and female Arab intellectuals of the nineteenth century, along with a critical reading of the original Arabic literature from the period. The primary sources were accessed in Arabic wherever possible, and in English translation when the need arose. In this context, it is important to recognise that many of these Arab writers had been reading works in European languages which may have influenced their frame of reference. Examining how these Western texts were used by these Arab writers was part of the interrogative technique.

This study compares and contrasts the findings resulting from analysing the primary sources with this approach with other relevant secondary propositions by well-known contemporary academics. Many of these writers seemed to view the engagement of Arab writers with the West as more important than their actual engagement with the vernacular social and cultural environment in which they lived in both Egypt and Syria in the nineteenth century.

Content analysis is a broad “research technique for making valid inferences from a text to its context.”¹³⁰ The most important aspect of the application of content analysis to the work of writers in the humanities and social sciences is “discourse analysis.” Discourse has different meanings, but it is generally defined as textual material that gives larger meaning to sentences and explains how a particular phenomenon is represented by these words and sentences. Using this approach, one can learn from analysing the arguments of a writer and

¹³⁰ Klaus Krippendorff, “Content Analysis,” in E. Barnouw, G. Gerbner, W. Schramm, T. L. Worth, & L. Gross (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Communication*, vol. 1, (1989), 403–407.

how his/her use of language reveals certain biases or a tendency to stereotypes and hence how their inner positions permeate their accounts.

Researchers who conduct social analyses use discourse analysis to “understand how reality comes to be constituted in human interactions and in language, including written text.”¹³¹

This type of interrogation may not only address how a writer’s feeling is generated but also how his/her facts are constructed and explained. But there is also a different version of content analysis which goes beyond discourse which is what some have called “rhetorical analysis.”¹³² In contrast to discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis focuses on how texts are delivered to evaluate their success in reaching their intended audience, as well as the final actual effects it has on them. Researchers of this method rely on elements like tropes and styles of argumentation to unpack a writer’s work. Finally, ethnographic text analysis focuses on the actual analysis of the content that emerges from a deeper reading of texts.¹³³ This approach, when applied to narrative descriptions, requires a focus on the nuances of the situations, settings, and styles of a given author. Based on the individual case studies that follow, all of these methods are employed in this study to various degrees based on their fit to the individual writers and the material they produced.

While content analysis is not always used in literary criticism, its application can yield interesting outcomes as it allows one to interrogate and investigate the true motives of these writers by pointing out the contradictions in their positions. It also allows one to understand whether these contradictions were a product of a lack of confidence and self-doubt. Content analysis can clarify whether larger conflicts within Arab society required Arab authors to

¹³¹ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis an Introduction to Its Methodology* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014), 16.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

adopt a certain position while maintaining the right to make pragmatic exceptions that negate the original principle on which a case is being made. An example of this is Shiblī Shumayyil who while advocating strongly for women’s participation in public life argued vehemently that women are biologically inferior to men.¹³⁴

Examination of this literature, both Egyptian and Syrian publications, reveals a keen interest in the activities of women in the West but also an understanding of the limitations of copying or mimicking these activities at home. Gendered biographies as a discourse was an important instrument in analysing this east-west relationship in the writing of many of these women writers. Yet as Marilyn Booth argues these writings are also simultaneously “a site authorising mutual admiration, a territory where women’s solitary and collective struggles triumphed” even as others disparaged or rejected the West.¹³⁵ This study follows the same style of analysis as that established by Marilyn Booth in *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt: Culture of Society and the Press*.¹³⁶ Instead of focusing on the connection between these nineteenth century Egyptian and Syrian women writers chronologically, the study engages with the larger intellectual debates that were generated by them and their interaction with each other as well as with men and also the programs of action they proposed.

Of methodological interest is the work of Mervat Hatem who identifies differences between the women writers based on their ethnicity or religion in the nineteenth century. Previous studies have indicated that Christian and Jewish Women in Egypt lagged behind their Syrian counterparts who were more cosmopolitan in their outlook towards history and society.¹³⁷ By

¹³⁴ Jane H. Bayes; Nayereh Tohid, *Globalization, Gender, and Religion*

¹³⁵ Marilyn Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*, 53.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Mervat Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*. Mervat Hatem, “Egyptian Discourses on Gender and Political Liberalization: Do Secularist and Islamist Views Really Differ,” in *Middle East Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4 (1994), 661–676.

illustrating the connection between early Women writers and later ones, Hatem established a category which can be called a “Loose sisterhood” of women authors of various generations, religions and ethnicity who in their work demonstrated a commitment to a literary output that they all could share. It is important to note that Hatem’s method, in this case, is more informed by social science techniques than by literary criticism. However, this approach which emphasises the social history of the writers as a group (instead of simply focusing on the literary qualities of the writing) is very useful and has been employed when necessary because it adds a depth to the analysis of the work of Arab women of the nineteenth century.

1.9 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 Introduction

The introduction outlines the subject of the thesis: the role of men and women in the nineteenth century Arab Renaissance. It includes a general background, a literature review, and sections on research objectives, research questions, the significance and the scope of the research, limitations, and methodology.

Chapter 2 From Western Enlightenment to Arab Renaissance

Chapter 2 examines the Western Enlightenment and early modernity between the late eighteenth-century and beginning of World War I. This chapter shows how Arab intellectuals embraced the growing Western influence, particularly the ideals of the Enlightenment and the notion of scientific progress and how these Western ideas were adopted for the benefit of Arab society. The chapter explores the interaction between West and the Arab world, with a focus on Egypt and Syria in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, to trace European influence on the Arab modes of thinking, and examines cultural changes influenced by the Western Enlightenment, especially those related to women’s liberation. In so doing,

the chapter aims to show how (mostly male) Arab intellectuals' engagement with European ideas opened the discourse on the role of women in Arab society. In particular, it traces the discussion and debate on women's education and expounds shifting ideas about the family in Arab society.

Chapter 3 Educational Reforms for Arab Women

Chapter 3 focuses on the modernisation of Arab education, showing how educational reforms created a new generation of male Arab thinkers who then promoted women's education. It argues that educational reform in the Arab world was the impetus for all other reforms that took place during the nineteenth century, and that an important part of this reform was the establishment of schools for girls and the subsequent development in women's intellectual contributions via their own literary activities. This chapter examines the educated women who constituted the intellectual elite and created significant change in the lives of other women. The degree of this change, its direction, and its timing, have been contentious subjects. The chapter examines the leading female writers and thinkers of the age and highlights the crucial role played by women in empowering subsequent generations of Arab women to raise their voices in the public arena.

Chapter 4 Women and The New Mode of Communication

The nineteenth century saw the birth of Arab journalism that promoted the spread of new, modern ideas. Chapter 4 shows the emergence of Arab female journalists as an outcome of Arab-European interactions and how it led to popular debates on gender in *al-Muqtataf*. It highlights important female writers who established and participated in the foundation of Arab women's press and their literary contributions, as well as on the social, cultural, and (sometimes) legal obstacles they had to overcome. This includes cases studies of two

founders of women's periodicals, Hind Nawfal (1860–1920) and Alexandra Avierino (1872–1926), who made significant contributions to the early development of Arab journalistic culture. The chapter shows how Arab women played an important role in influencing public opinion and in creating greater freedom for women in Arab society.

Chapter 5 Women's Arenas of Discourse and Self-reflection

Chapter 5 explores the arenas of discourse of Arab women intellectuals beyond journalism in the broader society. Arab women of the nineteenth century clearly proved themselves astute social observers and activists, but it is less clear how their activism shaped social change. This chapter examines women's newly established literary societies and salons and the entrance of women into the international arena through their participation in international conferences. It demonstrates how female Arab intellectuals raised awareness of gender issues and developed women's political consciousness. Through their example and their influence, they helped women to break free from their traditional restricted lifestyle and to play more significant roles in society.

Chapter 6 Women's Liberation: Between Religious Thought and Secularism

Chapter 6 examines the dominant male discourses of nineteenth century Egypt and Syria. This involves cases studies of two advocates of women's liberation, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Qāsim Amīn who made significant contributions to the reform of gender relations. This chapter examines how the Arab male religious and secular leaders dealt with discourse of women's liberation, and how male intellectuals responded to women's achievements during the Arab Renaissance. This chapter examines how nineteenth century Arab men understood the relationship between women's liberation and modern education. This is supported by a

comparison of the different perspectives of male contemporaries Labībah Hāshim, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, and Nabawīyah Mūsá on women's liberation.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

This chapter summarises the findings of the research into the influence of the Western Enlightenment on the Arab Renaissance with special reference to the education reforms and the education of women. The rise of women's education was a powerful force for change. The research focuses specifically on women's education and changes in women's role through their writings, their literary salons and their publishing houses. Western ideas have left indelible marks on Arab society. Through this engagement, Arab women have become successful not only in securing key legal educational and martial reforms but also in demonstrating their essential equality with men.

Chapter 2

From Western Enlightenment to Arab Renaissance

Chapter 2 From Western Enlightenment to Arab Renaissance

2.1 Introduction

The Western Enlightenment was the intellectual movement that gained momentum and transformed philosophical, social and scientific thinking in the Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³⁸ The Western Enlightenment played a significant role in the Arab Renaissance which took place between the late eighteenth-century and beginning of World War I in 1914. The Arab Renaissance was not only a socio-cultural renaissance but was also the period in which the role of women and their participation in Arab society came under scrutiny and began to change. This chapter presents key ideas of the Western Enlightenment and shows how Western thinkers started to advocate for a separation of church and state, seeking to reach a more just world and emphasising individualism. This new society would be based upon new philosophies, namely those which endorsed free thinking and challenges to traditional religious authoritative figures. This chapter focuses attention on the interaction between the West and the Arabs during this time, focusing specifically on Egypt and Syria, and the way in which this interaction triggered a new intellectual movement in the Arab World. It investigates the way some Arab intellectuals in Egypt and Syria explored and adopted, often enthusiastically, many liberal ideas and integrated them into their own societies. It is the period referred to as the “Arab Awakening” or “Arab Renaissance.” Furthermore, it also endeavours to link the influence of the Western Enlightenment to this “Arab Renaissance” and to the resulting development, empowerment and participation of women within Arab society.

¹³⁸ The period is described in the literature as ‘The Enlightenment,’ ‘The Age of Enlightenment’ and ‘The Age of Reason.’ For the purpose of this thesis the term Western Enlightenment is used to distinguish between the Enlightenment of the West and the Arab Renaissance.

2.2 Western Enlightenment and Early Modernity

The Western Enlightenment was centred on the premise of building a future led by the regeneration of society and culture. This era allowed for Western politics and geopolitical structures to become crystallised and made it a period which could be identified as a stepping stone towards modernity. The foundations for intellectual development and industrial and scientific rationale were established during the course of the Western Enlightenment. The term “Enlightenment,” relates to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which saw significant advances in scientific knowledge and the value placed on this knowledge.¹³⁹ This scientific revolution brought about challenges to traditional authority and religious beliefs as well as a renewed education system. The work of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) challenged the generally accepted concept that “the planet Earth was the centre of the universe,” which in turn resulted in disputation with Biblical and religious authority.¹⁴⁰ Prior to this, intellectuals and philosophers were generally part of the clergy, but in the seventeenth century a more diverse and secular group of intellectuals began to emerge.¹⁴¹ As a result, the Bible was no longer the authority with regards to scientific matters but was seen as relevant only to matters of faith and belief.¹⁴²

One of the key characteristics of the Western Enlightenment in the seventeenth century was the changing attitude toward religion, reflected in conflict and collision between faith and reason, as well as religion and science. The growing significance of science and human

¹³⁹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ Ellen Meiksins Wood, “Modernity, Postmodernity or Capitalism?,” in *Review of International Political Economy*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1997), 548–549. Lwazi Lushaba, *Development as Modernity, Modernity as Development* (Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2009), 5.

¹⁴¹ Frank Edward Manuel, *The Enlightenment* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 3.

¹⁴² Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co, 1948), 131.

reason was associated with increasing irreverence towards religion and to the authority of the church. Western thinkers started to call for a “separation of church and state,”¹⁴³ seeking a society unfettered by religion, as a step towards a more just world. The primary focus of the era was to free the individual from a restrictive social and moral order.¹⁴⁴ Human intelligence and intellect were favoured, and society and nature were able to be framed through a rational and scientific lens. Many previously accepted realities, including the divine right of monarchs, were questioned, along with other elements of social and political life.¹⁴⁵ New contradictory trends emerged, along with the idea of secularism and growing anti-religious sentiment. This led to eighteenth century philosophers discussing and challenging established ideas surrounding the nature of man. The common Christian belief was that man, by nature, was evil, therefore, there a higher authority must exist to control this evil. Enlightenment ideas surrounding the “relationship between God, man and the world,” led to the emergence of new arguments. These suggested that human nature was not evil, as previously perceived, but rather humankind was, by nature, good or at least neutral. This new perspective provided an alternative position to traditional religious doctrine; however, it was not as popular as the newfound secular philosophies and ideas that became a fundamental part of modern intellectual thought.¹⁴⁶ The period also saw the rise of new trends of understanding what was previously unknown or ‘otherness’, shifting the preference from religion to anthropology. The polarity between faith and disbelief was replaced by one between knowledge and ignorance.

¹⁴³ Edward Graham Waring, *Deism and Natural Religion* (New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co, 1967), 107.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Birdsall, “The Second Great Awakening and the New England Social Order” in *Church History*, vol. 39, no. 3 (1970), 351.

¹⁴⁵ S J Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity* (Manchester: New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 15–16.

¹⁴⁶ Manuel, *The Enlightenment*, 4.

The idea that theology and religion were the key forces governing both nature and society was no longer accepted, and the period witnessed the formation of two significant lines of thought regarding the ideas of the Enlightenment. The first, known as the “radical Enlightenment,” was influenced by the “one-substance philosophy” of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). This propagated ideas of: “democracy, racial and sexual equality, individual liberty of lifestyle, full freedom of thought, expression, and the press, eradication of religious authority from the legislative process and education; and full separation of church and state.”¹⁴⁷ The second, more moderate line of thought of the Enlightenment, adopted its ideas from several philosophical systems including the writings of René Descartes (1596–1650), John Locke (1632–1704) and Isaac Newton (1643–1727).

Newton’s mathematical explanation of cosmic gravity clarified that objects in both heaven and earth behaved in a manner that led to the belief that natural laws controlled the universe. This resulted in the theological deduction that “God created the universe” and allowed the laws of nature to control it and then “retired from the scene.” These new understandings of universal law led to increased scepticism regarding religious beliefs such as scripture and miracles.¹⁴⁸ Thus Enlightenment thought was reflected in several opposing ideas including rationality and irrational thought, science and religion and the modern versus the pre-modern.¹⁴⁹ A relationship between human advancement and the Enlightenment was actualised because of the way in which both nature and society were shaped by moral, economic and technological advancement. The increasing influence of science led to what

¹⁴⁷ Benedictus Spinoza, *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, translated by Samuel Shirley (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), vii-viii.

¹⁴⁸ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 135.

¹⁴⁹ Hisham Sharabi, “Islam and Modernization in the Arab World,” in *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1965), 16–17.

Kant (1724–1804) described as, “Mankind’s final coming of age, the emancipation of the human consciousness from an immature state of ignorance and error.”¹⁵⁰

Gradually, the Enlightenment empowered the emergence of the secular state and non-religious education as well as the rise of rational thought and the decrease in the significance of religion in people’s lives.¹⁵¹ While England generated most of the innovative ideas, France was the messenger who delivered these ideas across the continents.¹⁵² In the eighteenth century, France became a centre for key thinkers, notably Montesquieu (1689–1755), Voltaire (1694–1778), and Rousseau (1712–1778).¹⁵³ Despite the movement being centred mainly in Western Europe, America was directly affected and many outstanding figures such as Thomas Paine (1737-1809) and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) emerged and rose to prominence with their writings and philosophies.¹⁵⁴

The role of women during the period of Enlightenment has come under great debate and discussion. Although the Western Enlightenment arguably endorsed ideas and theories of women’s empowerment, in reality, representation of women in Western history and society was also heavily marred by restriction and oppression. Women were underrepresented in public life and were considered inferior; their roles were considered to be within the limits of domesticity. Women did not have a presence within the sciences, despite reforms made in the

¹⁵⁰ Immanuel Kant, “What Is Enlightenment,” trans. Peter Gray, in *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West*, vols. 2, 2nd edn. (1954), I, 1071.

¹⁵¹ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4. Björn Wittrock, “Early Modernities: Varieties and Transitions,” in *Daedalus*, vol. 127, no. 3 (1998), 26–27.

¹⁵² Frank Edward Manuel, *The Enlightenment* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 6.

¹⁵³ S. J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion, the Myths of Modernity* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), 156, 195, 203, 184. Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964). Paul Hazard, *European thought in the 18th century: From Montesquieu to Lessing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 5–22. Arash Abizadeh, “Banishing the Particular: Rousseau on Rhetoric, Patrie, and the Passions,” in *Political Theory* (2001) 29.4: 556–582. Wayne Boucher, *Spinoza in English: A Bibliography from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Bristol, England; Sterling, Va.: Thoemmes Press, 1999), 3–8.

¹⁵⁴ Manuel, *The Enlightenment*, 12.

education of females. Although the study of Science had become more popular, men dominated the emerging scientific societies and academies which were becoming vital locations for research and development.¹⁵⁵ Key figures in the Enlightenment, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, theoretically endorsed the education of females and promoted a broader place for women in society. However, the idea that a female's education was merely to serve men's interests was maintained,

A woman's education must... be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.¹⁵⁶

Some women from higher classes were educated, although this was mostly through their own efforts or through support from private tutors, rather than receiving a formal education in educational establishments.¹⁵⁷ Scholarship and research, however, remained heavily dominated by males, with even educated females excluded from this sphere. This was partly due to the difficulty women faced in accessing research tools (e.g. microscopes), but also due to the prevailing notion of women being viewed as objects of domesticity and simply present to benefit men.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, women who were educated in the sciences were ridiculed and berated for neglecting domestic responsibilities.¹⁵⁹ Yet despite all of these barriers, some men maintained their support of women in the scientific field, assisting them to venture into a

¹⁵⁵ Barbara Whitehead, *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500–1800* (New York: Garland, 1991), 227.

¹⁵⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 359.

¹⁵⁷ Barbara Shearer, *Notable Women in the Physical Sciences: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 6–12.

¹⁵⁸ Whitehead, *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe*, 227.

¹⁵⁹ Patricia Phillips, *The Scientific Lady: A Social History of Women's Scientific Interests, 1520-1918* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 11–12.

range of scientific fields. The Italian physicist, Laura Bassi (1711–1778), was among prominent women scientists of the time. She was a PhD recipient from the University of Bologna who started her career in teaching in 1732.¹⁶⁰ The German astronomer, Caroline Herschel (1750–1848), also became an iconic figure due to her significant contributions to science.¹⁶¹ Another key female figure of the time, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), was a philosopher and writer who advocated for the rights of women. Her 1792 book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was one of the first feminist philosophy texts and in it she argues that the lack of female’s education is the reason for their supposed ‘inferiority’. She continues that women are not mere objects and property to be traded through marriage, but rather they too deserve equal education and fundamental rights. Furthermore, in this text, she criticises Rousseau, among others, and the idea that women should merely be educated based on their roles supporting men. Wollstonecraft refers to superficial women as ‘toys’ and asserts that this label was not due to their intellectual deficiencies but rather to the denial of their access to education.¹⁶²

The Enlightenment, as Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) stated, was a time of development and individual progress, as well as men and women’s freedom, tolerance and ability to question.¹⁶³ His retrospective view summarised the major ideas of the Enlightenment to include human and gender rights, democracy, gender equality and religious and scientific freedom, as well as egalitarianism in the racial and sexual spheres and the encouragement of

¹⁶⁰ Alberto Elena, “In lode della filosofessa di Bologna: An Introduction to Laura Bassi,” in *Isis*, vol. 82, no. 3 (1991), 510–518. Laura Bassi, *Miscellanea*, *The International Center for the History of Universities and Science* (Bologna: University of Bologna, 1732).

¹⁶¹ Between 1786–1897 Caroline Herschel discovered a total of eight comets. The first one was discovered on 1 August 1786. Marilyn B. Ogilvie, *Searching the Stars* (New York: History Press, 2011), 5.

¹⁶² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Boston: Peter Edes for Thomas and Andrews, Faust’s statue, 1792).

¹⁶³ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1945), 492–494.

scholars and scholarly activity by the state.¹⁶⁴ Russell believed that in order to maintain and propagate liberal ideas and rational thinking about government, scholars should be protected and allowed freedom and resources by patrons in the ruling classes.¹⁶⁵ The most prominent amongst these ideas was the fostering of education and applied sciences.

There is much debate surrounding the influence of women on the Enlightenment and the benefits they received. The patriarchal system hindered western women's ability to partake in Enlightenment endeavours, including participating in government.¹⁶⁶ However, in France, particularly, middle and upper class women were prominent in organising literary salons, (*salonnières*), as well as having a significant role in journalism as published writers.¹⁶⁷ These salons, together with particular educational societies, provoked discussion on critical matters including the women's role in society and progress.¹⁶⁸ As a result, there was increasing encouragement and participation of women in the public domain. Women started to become more visible and to actively take part in public matters; the salons acted as a catalyst for female intellectual thinkers to propel themselves further into the field of Enlightenment thought. They were supported by intellectuals such as the Anglo-Irish natural philosopher, chemist, and physicist Robert Boyle (1627–1691), the English satirical novelist Frances Burney (1752–1840) and many others who became proponents of women's involvement in all aspects of science.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ John Kent, "The Enlightenment," in Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (ed.), *Companion Encyclopaedia of Theology* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 251.

¹⁶⁵ Donald M. Reid, "The Syrian Christians and Early Socialism in the Arab World," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1974), 177–178.

¹⁶⁶ Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Women's Nature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 161.

¹⁶⁷ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 53.

¹⁶⁸ Hoda El Sadda, *'Ā'ishah Taymūr: Taḥaddiyāt al-Thābit wa-al-Mutaghiyer fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhākarah, 2004), 129. Hind Abū al-Sha'r, *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabīyah fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar: Kātibah, Mufakkirah, Mubdi'ah* (Amman: Amānat 'Ammān al-Kubrā, Mudīriyat al-Thaqāfah, 2011), 7–9.

¹⁶⁹ Edward Andrew, *Patrons of Enlightenment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 422.

2.3 Arab Interaction with Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The adoption of Western ideologies into Arab systems was believed to be a much-needed measure in the societies of the late eighteenth century. It helped the Islamic-Arab states loosen the grip of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷⁰ When Europeans set foot on Arab lands, the local Arab populations immediately began to embrace not only European military systems and arms but also their new ideas and social institutions. Commercial outposts were initially established on the Mediterranean shores, leading to a significant western influence encompassing the Arab region. Historically, from the Middle Ages, Venice, Genoa and Aragon were all key European sites of trade with the Near East. From the sixteenth century, the English, Dutch and French followed. Despite having limited interactions with Levantine (Syrian) merchants, Europeans were able to bring in new products including pepper, cloves, cinnamon, musk, silk, and other spices, to local Levantine marketplaces. In the nineteenth century, this trade increased considerably.¹⁷¹ French traveller Jean de Thévenot (1633–1667) was a prime example of Arab-Western interaction in the seventeenth century. His writings describe his travels from Istanbul to Cairo in 1656 and a consequent trip to Persia via Şaydā, Damascus, Mūşil and Baghdād in 1663. *Relation d'un Voyage Fait au Levant* published in 1664, is his most famous travel publication.¹⁷² The travels of Orientalist scholar Antoine Galland's (1646–1715) to the Middle East led to him translating the renowned collection of tales, the *Arabian Nights* published in French in 1704¹⁷³ (*Les Mille Et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits En Français*).¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Christopher de Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment: The Struggle Between Faith and Reason, 1798 to Modern Times* (Holland, OH: Dreamscape Media, LLC, 2017), 91–91.

¹⁷¹ Nasser Rabbat, *Encounters with Modernity in the Arab World* (West Haven, Connecticut: Yale Law School, 2014), 4.

¹⁷² Charles Foster, *Travellers in the Near East* (London: Stacey International, 2004), 26.

¹⁷³ Ibrahim Muhawi, "The Arabian Nights and the Question of Authorship," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2005), 323–337.

¹⁷⁴ Isabel Breskin, "On the Periphery of a Greater World: John Singleton Copley's Turquerie Portraits," in *Winterthur Portf*, vol. 36, no. 2/3 (2001), 97–123.

Western involvement in the Arab countries increased significantly in the late eighteenth century. Napoleon Bonaparte's troops occupied Egypt between 1798 and 1801 in what were three years of great significance to the Arab Renaissance and the move toward Western modernity.¹⁷⁵ Napoleon vowed to liberate the Arab people and help them achieve the progress and development of the West.¹⁷⁶ He was accompanied by a group of scholars and advisers to make the capture of Egypt appear as a paradigm of European generosity.¹⁷⁷ The French Revolution gave more credibility to Napoleon and his campaign to liberate and civilise the Arab region. This new interaction sparked an "Awakening" or "Renaissance" in the Arabs; the French presence in Egypt in 1798 initiated the first ongoing contact between the Arabs and Europeans. It was the first time that the Arabs came into such close contact with a foreign culture, owing to an extensive period of isolation in the Ottoman Empire. The Arabs were taken aback by the European progress in education and science. A large group of Arabs embraced the French movement as they considered this to offer a path forward toward advancement and enhancement in their respective cultures and societies.¹⁷⁸ Bonaparte, and his army, which included both scholars as well as mercenaries, projected an image of themselves as the saviours of the Arabs from Turkish Ottoman dictatorship. They vowed to initiate and establish the process of emancipation of the Arabs and guide them down the path of advancement and development that would enable them to move forward towards Enlightenment.

The European assertion that they would foster liberation and civilisation to the Arab world was further supported by the French Revolution. This sentiment was developed by the

¹⁷⁵ George M. Haddad; Niqula al-Turk, "The Historical Work of Niqula al-Turk 1763–1828," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 81, no. 3 (1961), 247–251. Nikki R Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 61.

¹⁷⁶ Luwīs 'Awaḍ, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-Miṣrī al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1969), 1: 256.

¹⁷⁷ Ibrahim Elbadawi, *Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit* (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe* (London, UK: Saqi Books, 2011).

French's own struggle in which they had developed a liberated, democratic system by removing a tyrannical monarch. This gave the Arabs a sense of security and ease with the presence of Western foreigners and they welcomed the idea of having Western people among them.¹⁷⁹ Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār (1766–1835), an Egyptian religious scholar noted his admiration of French modernity and his will to “change the conditions of our countries and gain new knowledge.”¹⁸⁰ Western developments in science and technology inspired Arab intellectuals with the result that many Arabs embraced the French campaign as an opportunity for their own progress and development.¹⁸¹ The first mention by Arab sources of this interaction between the Western and Arab countries is in the book of Egyptian Muslim scholar ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1753-1825) and Syrian Christian thinker Niqūlā al-Turk (1763-1828), who lived through the period of Arab-European interaction. In his work *Ḥamlat Būnābart ilā al-Sharq*, (*Bonaparte's Campaign to the East*), al-Turk analyses Western Armies and their superior technology and compares them to the military forces of Egypt at the time. He believed that military development and progress could be achieved by following Western examples.¹⁸²

al-Jabartī described the activities of the French campaign and provided evidence of the advancement and the civility of the French. Whenever he witnessed their advanced technology (especially when he visited French scientific institutions) his writing revealed how impressed he was.¹⁸³ With a conservative and traditional background, al-Jabartī, praised the French scientific advancement and was in awe of what French scholars presented to him,

¹⁷⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 783–790.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Āthār fī al-Tarājim wa-al-Akḥbār* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1997), 3: 348–351. ‘Alī Mubārak, *al-Khuṭaṭ al-Tawfīqīyah* (Būlāq: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyah, 1888), 4: 38.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Philipp, “The French and the French Revolution in the Works of al-Jabarti,” in *Eighteenth Century Egypt: The Arabic Manuscript Sources*, ed. Daniel Crecelius (Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1990), 140.

¹⁸² Niqūlā al-Turk, *Ḥamlat Būnābart ilā al-Sharq* (Lebanon: Jarrūs Bris, 1993), 89.

¹⁸³ Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* Eugene Rogan ([London], UK: Penguin, 2010), 63.

and he sought to be enlightened by them.¹⁸⁴ He praised specifically the educational reform and developments that were taking place at the time and commented on the influence of French scholars who were with Napoleon's campaign,

If any of the Muslims came to them in order to look round they did not prevent him from entering their most cherished place and if they found in him any appetite or desire for knowledge they showed their friendship and love for him, and they would bring out all kinds of pictures and maps, and animals and birds and plants, and histories of the ancients and of nations and tales of the prophets. I went to them often, and they showed me all that.¹⁸⁵

From the perspective of al-Jabartī's and his contemporary scholars, the French scientific institution, *Institut d'Égypte*, was a cultural manifestation that led to scholars becoming impressed by the West. The institute arose as a result of interaction with Europe and was an organisation modelled on the Institute de France.¹⁸⁶ In 1798, the *Institut d'Égypte* was established with Napoleon himself serving as president of the institute. The institute was divided into the sections of arts, physics, political economy, mathematics and literature.¹⁸⁷ It contained several sub-departments which included disciplines such as cartography which was considered to be a significant tool in the creation of knowledge. During Napoleon's campaign, this institute was vital as a centre for cultural and scientific research. The institute sought "to abolish the tyranny of the Mamelukes, to promote agriculture through the

¹⁸⁴ Shmuel Moreh, "Napoleon and the French Impact on Egyptian Society in the Eyes of al-Jabarti," in Irene A. Bierman (ed.), *Napoleon in Egypt* (Los Angeles: Gustave E. von Grunbaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, 2003), 64.

¹⁸⁵ al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, 3: 349–351. Cited in Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Folio Society, 2009), 266.

¹⁸⁶ al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, 3: 348–351.

¹⁸⁷ Henry Laurens, *L'Expédition d'Égypte (1798-1801), Nouvelle Édition* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997), 235.

construction of irrigation systems,” to open “communication between the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf, to offer the Orient the useful example of Western industry, and to procure for the inhabitants of Egypt all the advantages of a perfected civilisation.”¹⁸⁸ In short, the main aim of *Institut d'Égypte* was to be a centre for the furthering of Egyptian scientific works.

Arab intellectuals, including al-Jabartī, were impressed by the work conducted at the institute. al-Jabartī was not only fascinated by the advancement of French science but also the French judicial system. He made the distinction between ‘good justice’ and ‘bad justice,’ and provided an example of the Mamlūk concept of justice, as ‘bad.’ The French method of justice was portrayed as an example of ‘good justice,’ as seen through the sentence served to Kléber’s murderer,¹⁸⁹ who received the death sentence after a comprehensive trial.¹⁹⁰

A number of Arab intellectuals began to emerge who propagated new liberal thoughts and ideas, specifically ideas on education.¹⁹¹ Most of these intellectuals had been educated abroad as a result of Muḥammad ‘Alī’s expeditions to Europe. In his desire to build and train a European style army, he sent a select group to Europe to learn Western ways.¹⁹² He also sent students whose main aim was to study the French language. The principle motive behind this initiative was to have trained individuals who also had the acumen for translating French

¹⁸⁸ Bouthaina Khaldi, *Egypt Awakening in the Early Twentieth Century Mayy Ziyadah’s Intellectual Circles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 16.

¹⁸⁹ In 1798–1799, Jean-Baptiste Kléber (1753–1800) was a military commander who participated both in the Egyptian and the Syrian campaigns accompanying Napoleon to Egypt. Kléber was the commander of the French campaign in Egypt and was assassinated by a student (Suleimān al-Ḥalabī, 1777–1800) in Cairo in 1800. Henry Laurens, *al-Ḥamlah al-Firansīyah fī Miṣr: Bonaparte wa-al-Islām* (Cairo: Sīnā, 1995).

¹⁹⁰ al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Āthār*, 3: 117.

¹⁹¹ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ḥarakah al-Thaqāfīyah fī ‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Alī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1951), 29. Charles Augustus Murray, *A Short Memoir of Mohammed Ali, Founder of the Vice-royalty of Egypt* (London: Quaritch, 1898), 56.

¹⁹² Nezar AlSayyad, “Ali Mubarak’s Cairo: Between the Testimony of ‘Alamuddin and the Imaginary of the Khatat,” in Nezar AlSayyad, Irene Bierman and Nasser Rabat, (eds.), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham: Lexington Press, 2005), 49–66.

military manuals into Arabic. On returning to Egypt, each of them had a desire for reform and development in many areas, including the issue of the position of women in society.¹⁹³

A leading Arab intellectual, Muḥammad Maḏhar Bāshā (1809–1873), spent several years in France on a scientific mission. On his return to Cairo he became Minister for Public Works.¹⁹⁴ When he was in Paris, Maḏhar Bāshā was rewarded with a gift from French scholars. The reward was a token of appreciation for the manner in which he had described the French urban landscape. His eloquence is depicted in the following passage,

When I got to Marseille, I beheld a view that I had never seen before: the beauty of the towering buildings, and the paved streets wide and straight. And then I heard strange noises. Turning, I saw horse-drawn wagons.¹⁹⁵

Maḏhar Bāshā's eloquently stated observations highlighted a distinct difference between French and Arab societies, a difference, which could be seen and explained but not easily labelled or defined. Maḏhar Bāshā added,

For me, this was the first time [I saw] anything like this. I was also so impressed when I saw women, without covering, in the streets, squares, and parks, walking freely in their beautiful dress, forbidden in our tradition and culture. In Paris, I was impressed with the sights of people picnicking in the orchards. I visited great halls that had beautiful pictures [of people] by famous painters.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ El Sadda, *‘Ā’ishah Taymūr*, 129.

¹⁹⁴ Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A’lām, Qāmūs Tarājīm li-Ashhar al-Rijāl wa-al-Nisā’ min al-‘Arab wa-al-Musta’ribīn wa-al-Mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1992), 105.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Umar Ṭūsūn, *al-Ba’thāt al-‘Ilmīyah fi ‘Ahd Muḥammad Alī thumma fi ‘Ahd al-Abbās al-Awwal wa-Sa’id* (Alexandria: Maṭba‘at Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1934), 19–20.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

Orientalist paintings during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Western artists such as Jean Baptiste Vanmour (1671–1737), Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702–1789), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) and Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), depicted many elements of Islamic and Arab culture. They often included what they perceived to be visual spectacles in the Arab world, such as exotic, lounging odalisques, as well as grand palaces along with their infamous *harems* and public baths.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, Western travellers, painters, and photographers who were attracted to the area, introduced the harem and the private world of Arab women's upper classes to audiences who were both fascinated and repulsed by what they witnessed and read. The private worlds of Egypt's upper classes were presented in the lives of *Harem*, described in *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) by Edward William Lane.¹⁹⁸ Lane depicted the life of women as a life of both pleasure and deprivation and presented them engaging in activities such as pipe smoking, coffee drinking, reclining, gossiping, and visiting other harems.¹⁹⁹ Although, it is important to note that several contemporary scholars, including Edward Said, argue that these orientalist writings hid the actual roles that upper-class women held in Arab society and the many activities they were involved in. This, in turn, resulted in the European fascination with what was portrayed as depraved oriental women.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Jean Léon Gérôme, *Gerome: A Collection of the Works of J.L.* (New York: Hall, 1881). Karin H Grimme, *Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1780-1867* (Hong Kong: Taschen, 2006). Naji B. Oueijan, *The Progress of an Image: The East in English Literature* (New York: P. Lang, 1996), 13–19. Jean Léon Gérôme; Gerald M Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (London: Sotheby's Publications, 1986), 8–10.

¹⁹⁸ Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: M.A. Nattali, 1846).

¹⁹⁹ Afaf Marsot, "The Revolutionary Gentlewoman," in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978). Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1982), 521–534. Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 57–60.

²⁰⁰ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt 1805/1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 49–50.

As the Arabs remained dedicated to acquiring information, skill and knowledge from the West, the West witnessed the dawn of “Arab Renaissance” within the Arab lands. It was viewed as a universal, civilisational and cross-cultural trend that was motivated by new mediums of learning and education (schools and universities), and the proactive use of modern media platforms. Media such as newspapers and magazines collectively played a significant role in forging advancements in education and journalism. These media became a means for increased positive interactivity between the Arabs and European arrivals and helped the former to embrace the Western way of thought and living. The interaction with Europe resulted in the development of more liberal thought, specifically with regards to women.²⁰¹ The Arab Renaissance was a positive omen for all females in the region.²⁰²

The awareness of women making progress in Arab societies was linked with the notion of ‘mothering’ a nation. This belief was the central thought in most of Buṭrus al-Bustānī’s 1849 discourse.²⁰³ He was among the first to realise and associate the development of a nation with the development of women. As a result, he strongly endorsed progressive ideas such as women’s education and he advocated that Arab women need not be kept in seclusion but should be allowed to participate in nation-building.²⁰⁴

The period between 1800–1939, in the Arab world generally but in Egypt and Syria in particular, has been viewed as an “Age of European Empires.”²⁰⁵ The nineteenth century saw Western expansion gaining momentum in the region, beginning in the late 1700s. The

²⁰¹ Rabbat, *Encounters with Modernity*, 7.

²⁰² Ellen Anne McLarney; Ossama Boshra, *Soft Force: Women in Egypt’s Islamic Awakening* (Princeton, New Jersey; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

²⁰³ Buṭrus al-Bustānī, “Ta’līm al-Nisā’,” in Yusuf Qizma al-Khuri (ed.), *al-Jam’iyah al-Sūriyah lil-al-‘Ulūm wa-al-Funūn 1847-1852* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥamrā’, 1900), 45–53.

²⁰⁴ Kerry McBroome, *Revolutionaries: The Women of the Egyptian Uprising* (New York: Brooklyn, 2013), 18.

²⁰⁵ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 258.

outcomes of the Arab relationship with the West lead to the understanding that the Western-style advancement and progress could be achieved through technology, the secularisation of education, and the participating of women in society. Arab scholars and reformers believed that in that period the movement towards reform and innovation was much stronger in Egypt than in Syria.

2.4 Arab Liberal Thought and Arab Renaissance

The *Nahḍah*, which can be translated as ‘Renaissance’ or ‘Awakening’, was sparked by ideas which grasped the magnitude of the scientific and organisational disparity between the west and the east. This term which stemmed from the Arabic root *n-h-ḍ*, gave the meaning of “rising” or “standing up,” and developed into not simply a copy of the European Renaissance, but more specifically an era of Renaissance within Arab culture, as well as liberal thought and Enlightenment ideas. It (*the Nahḍah*) occurred initially in Egypt and then gradually migrated to Ottoman-controlled Arabic-speaking pockets of Syria.²⁰⁶ This “Awakening” and “Renaissance,” aimed at bridging the gap between “East” and “West,” was an attempt by the reformers and intellectuals of the Arab world to follow the advancement and progress in the “West.” The *Nahḍah* is “often seen as the beginning of the modern intellectual revival of the Arab peoples when European Enlightenment ideas” of liberalisation and reform were adopted by Arab intellectuals, (such as Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and Buṭrus al-Bustānī), from the early nineteenth century onwards. “Arab Renaissance,” was the term used by Arab intellectuals to explain the awareness of modernity and the process by which this came about. New views toward heritage were developed and the difficulties in adapting to new circumstances were

²⁰⁶ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789–1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 67.

revealed.²⁰⁷ Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804–1887), a Syrian intellectual, who spent part of his life moving between Malta, Britain and France, noted,

I feel so sad of the lack of Western urbanisation in the Islamic countries... especially when I think about the achievements the West has in all kinds of knowledge, mastering the crafts in all fields and disseminating the interests and the benefits, so our countries needed modernisation by following that Western progress.²⁰⁸

The “*Nahḍah*,” according to many scholars emerged as the harbinger of nationalism, secular perspectives and modernisation.²⁰⁹ Arab intellectuals wanted to bring about change, so they embraced Western development in all aspects of life, creating a critical historic movement called the “Arab Renaissance.” But the evolutionary path toward this change was not without its problems. Although the Arab World had warmed to the liberalist views and ideologies supported by the Enlightenment, the situation in the Arab world was quite distinct from that of Europe. The movement in Europe was built upon strong foundations and thoroughly developed ideas, whereas the Arab states were grappling with major concerns of dictatorship, literacy and penury. As a result, the transition from ignorance towards modern Renaissance and Enlightenment was a complicated one for the Arab world.

Following the example of the West, liberal thought was applied to education and problem solving, as Arab thinkers became more open to experimentation. They initiated reforms, leading to a range of changes in the literary, educational, social, and religious spheres,

²⁰⁷ Fruma Zachs, “Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria? Revisiting the American Presbyterian Missionaries,” in *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2001), 145–173.

²⁰⁸ Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, *al-Riḥlah al-Mawsūmah bi-al-Wāsiṭah ilá Ma‘rifat Māliṭah: wa-Kashf al-Mukhabbā ‘an Funūn Awrubbā* (Tunis: Maṭba‘at al-Dawlah al-Tūnisīyah, 1283 [1867]), 3.

²⁰⁹ Hala Auji, *Printing Arab Modernity: Book Culture and the American Press in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Leiden: Boston Brill, 2016), 35.

including improvements in the situation of women. The changes started with the establishment of modern practices including the printing press and the publication of newspapers and periodicals. Interestingly, these publications were focused on presenting news of the improving conditions of women.²¹⁰ The onset of the “*Nahḍah*” and the printing press in both Egypt and Syria enabled the dissemination of European knowledge and information and became an important driver of the “Arab Renaissance” period.

Arab intellectuals and scholars soon began to realise that the development and advancement of Arab states would only be possible through the construction of more libraries and through the acquisition and printing of educative materials which all could read. al-Shidyāq observed that Western bookshelves and libraries did not contain any Arabic literature or books. In regard to this, he described a library in Malta where he resided at the time,

In Malta, anyone who wants to read a book from the library can go there and read it; they can even take the book home. There are 33,000 volumes, but none of them are written in Arabic. There are a number of shops with various books. In Europe, the books are inexpensive. Obviously, this encourages people to gain knowledge and self-instruction.²¹¹

The first use of the term “Renaissance” in relation to Arab people emerged through the work of nineteenth century writers in the Arab world. They described the significant contribution the West presented to the East, which began, according to the nineteenth century intellectual Jirjī Zaydān (1861–1914), beginning with the invasion of Egypt in 1798.²¹²

²¹⁰ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66.

²¹¹ al-Shidyāq, *al-Riḥlah*, 208.

²¹² Thomas Philipp, *Jurji Zaidan and the Foundations of Arab Nationalism* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 75.

However, despite this nineteenth century date being widely accepted, some other intellectuals suggest that the rise of liberal thought and these social change movements were only introduced in the middle of the nineteenth century.²¹³ This second half of the century witnessed momentum within the movement which led to social change and development within institutions, including the emergence of female Arab writers, as well as males who openly supported these women. The ideals of the “*Nahḍah*” continued to play a pivotal role, especially during this period as it triggered great shifts in the socio-political systems. Arab scholars have remarked that the “*Nahḍah*” was an important stage of the Arab Enlightenment and Westernisation. The “*Nahḍah*” led to an increasing number of Arab intellectuals embracing the concept of the “Arab Renaissance,” and also developing an acceptance for diverse cultural perspectives, technologies, and beliefs. This was especially evident with regards to creating changes to educational systems within the Ottoman Empire, through the adaptation of European models into Arab society. Many movements and initiatives were established for improving the cultural and educational landscape in Egypt and Syria. Arab scholars point to the establishment of “The Syrian Society for the Arts and Sciences” whose mission was to promote education for women and for the spread of knowledge.²¹⁴ The development of educational facilities which taught Western ideas had a large social and cultural impact on Arab individuals. Graduates from the missionary schools became the first modern Arab journalists, lawyers, writers, teachers, doctors and editors.²¹⁵ Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī

²¹³ Nada Tomiche, “*Nahḍah*,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by P. Bearman et al., 2nd ed (Ledian: E. J. Brill, 2008), 7: 9000. H. A. R. Gibb; Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 9–12.

²¹⁴ Iskandar Bārūdī, *Hayāt Kurnīliyūs Fān Dayk* (Bi‘abdā: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Uthmānīyah, 1900), 5–8.

²¹⁵ “Appendix C” for a list of schools for girls in the nineteenth century, Egypt and Syria.

(1847–1906), a Syrian from among these graduates, composed a poem in the form of an ode to patriotism, “Arise, ye Arabs and awake!”²¹⁶ The poem begins with a call to Arabs,

“Be alert oh Arabs, awaken.

Disaster has become rife and overwhelming (lit: you are drowning to your knees)”

This poem holds special significance as it was a patriotic tribute, a provocative expression (written in 1883) for the Arab nation. The poem contains verses which glorify Arab achievements and developments of Arab literature. It also talks about the way forward for the Arabs, the future which they must carve from their own history. Moreover, the poem also contains lines which emphatically denounce several aspects present in Arab society, such as abusive government, to which the Syrian nation and its people had become target. This poem, full of provocative language and powerful ideas, was read out in low-key voices by members of the Syrian Scientific Society.²¹⁷ Although these examples illustrate “Awakening,” there is still no definite moment to mark the exact start of this Arab Awakening.

In the years preceding the Arab Renaissance and during the rules of Sultan Selim III (r.1789–1807),²¹⁸ and Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), Ottoman institutions were reorganised and developed. A series of reforms called *tanẓīmāt* marked a period of reorganisation of the Ottoman Empire and an attempt to strengthen Ottoman authority. This was in response to

²¹⁶ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), 11.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11–13.

²¹⁸ Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004), 4.

confrontation and rising nationalist movements within Ottoman lands, as well as the external infiltration of foreign powers.²¹⁹

Beginning in the 1830s, the Ottoman *tanẓīmāt* saw the introduction of a range of educational, military, and administrative reforms.²²⁰ These reforms aimed to unify the Ottoman lands through permitting the diverse non-Muslim populations of the area to enjoy greater civil liberties. A document titled: *The Noble Edict of the Rose Chamber* in 1839, stated that “all Ottoman citizens were treated equally under the law, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity.”²²¹ The *tanẓīmāt* focused significantly on westernising the Empire, and modernising its military, as well as its economic and educational institutions. These reforms had a significant effect on Arab-Ottoman socio-economic relations, particularly in Syria. As many non-Muslims lived in the region, the *tanẓīmāt* allowed for social and economic developments which progressively ended feudalism and led to the birth of a modern bourgeoisie.²²² The beginning of bourgeoisie in Syria brought about social and cultural developments on many levels but especially by increasing educational access, literacy and the establishment of publishing institutions and a platform for journalism.

A crucial step in the evolution of the Arab Renaissance was the introduction of the first printing press into Arab countries by European Christian missionaries. In 1702, the first printing press was established in Aleppo, the second in Choueir (Mount Lebanon) in 1733, and the third in Beirut in 1751. The printing presses in Aleppo and Beirut worked for only a

²¹⁹ Moshe Moaz, “Syrian Urban Politics in the *Tanẓīmāt* Period between 1840 and 1861,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1966), 277–301. Zafer Toprak, “Modernization and Commercialization in the *Tanzimat* Period: 1838-1875,” in *New Perspectives on Turkey*, vol. 7 (1992), 57–70.

²²⁰ Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, 84. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal*, 67–160. John Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature, 1800-1970* (New York: Martin's Press 1971), 32, 61.

²²¹ Alexander Mikaberidze, *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 876.

²²² Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 5.

short period of time, while the printing press in Choueir continued throughout the eighteenth century.²²³ Christian missionaries started publishing translations of the Bible in Arabic.²²⁴

In 1834, Protestant missionaries relocated their centre from Malta to Beirut and brought their existing press with them. The printing press culture in Syria gained immense popularity as locals utilised this emerging technology for individual goals.²²⁵ By the 1870s, there were over forty printing presses in Syria. Printing, plus the establishment of new education facilities schools by the missionaries, played an important role in constructing and spreading the ideas of the Arab Renaissance.

Contemporary scholars provide a descriptive account of the transformation of schools – from traditional to modern.²²⁶ Owing to these developments, Syria's entire image, as a country, was altered at various levels – namely its culture, architecture, modern society, and city planning. Missionaries spread Western-style education through their schools in Syria, along with the introduction of new styles, habits, and ways of thinking. In 1834, the first girls' school was founded in Beirut.²²⁷ Much literature had been developed about the evolution of Arab cities at the time. Scholars described the development of social life that accompanied the construction and urbanisation of Arab cities that occurred during the nineteenth century.²²⁸ As the socio-organisational alterations continued, literary and educational endeavours were on the rise in many parts of the Arab World. Furthermore, several literary-scientific associations were established and gained popularity. In 1847, missionaries and

²²³ Jirjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Hilāl, 1911), 45. Raḍwān, *Tārīkh Maṭba'at Būlāq*, 11–17.

²²⁴ Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Badawī, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 8.

²²⁵ Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), 46.

²²⁶ Stefan Weber, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808-1918)* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2009), 133.

²²⁷ American Missionaries "Eli Smith and his wife established the first girls school in Beirut in 1834," Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*, 52.

²²⁸ André Raymond, *Arab Cities in the Ottoman Period* (Cairo; Paris: Dār al-Fikr, 2002), 85–86.

Arab Christian intellectuals established and together formed the first Scientific and Literary association in Beirut. This association charted its own constitution and became the first official Learned Society, “The Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences.”²²⁹ This society had three main goals: first, the acquisition of science and art, on the part of its members, by means of mutual communication, discourses, and reports; second, the collecting of books, and papers, whether printed or manuscripts, but especially those which were in the Arabic language and were likely to be of use to the Society. The third aim was the promotion of an interest in scientific knowledge, as well as the arts, regardless of religious issues that surrounded these fields, as the society did not concern itself with such matters.²³⁰ At each meeting, one or two members would present a discourse about a scientific topic which they believed to be important in raising the intellectual level of the other members and Arab society as a whole. These speeches were transcribed and published as papers that were distributed to each member. In a short time, each member had an impressive collection of important papers which became “significant indicators of the genius and position of the society and its members.”²³¹ Members of the society presented papers on several topics, such as, “*The Education of Women*” (*Ta’līm al-Nisā’*) and “A New Discovery” (*Iktishāf Jadīd*) by Buṭrus al-Bustānī; “On the Delights and Utilities of Science” (*Mabāhij wa-Manāhij al-‘Ulūm*) and “On the Superiority of the Moderns over the Ancients” (*Tafawwuq al-Mu‘āṣirīn ‘alā al-Qudamā’*) by Cornelius Van Dyck; “On the Sciences of the Arabs” (*al-‘Ulūm ‘inda al-‘Arab*) by Nāṣīf Yāzījī; “On the Origin of Commerce, and its Vicissitudes” (*Aṣl al-Tijārah wa Aḥwālihā*) by Mīkhā’īl Mudawwar; “On the Training of Children,” (*Tadrīb al-Atfāl*) by Henry De Forest; and “A Discourse on Plants” (*An al-Nabātāt*) by Nawfal Ni‘mat Allāh.²³²

²²⁹ Yūsuf Qizma al-Khūrī, *A’māl al-Jam’īyah al-‘Ilmīyah al-Sūrīyah, 1868-1869* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥamrā’, 1990), 9.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 477.

²³¹ Ephraim Avigdor Speiser, *The United States and The Near East* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1947), 14.

²³² Salisbury, “Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences,” 478.

The principle aim for most members of the Society was to reach out and inspire people to learn more about the world, without religious or political interference. Despite government restrictions and religious opposition, these learned societies thrived and inspired many people to appreciate the wonders of science and art from a more informed perspective. The members of these societies enjoyed a privileged sense of camaraderie at the forefront of scientific and artistic discovery.²³³

As the Society worked towards opening up more and more avenues for literary expression, Arab intellectuals travelled great distances in order to capture both experiences and expressions to add weight and depth to their writings. Furthermore, society worked towards opening up several new avenues for literary expression. One of the greatest names to emerge was the Egyptian intellectual Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–1873) was sent to Paris in 1826 in a group of forty-four students and later became one of the great thinkers of the Arab Renaissance.²³⁴ He was a pioneer and considered to be one of the “first generation” of liberal Arab intellectuals as he introduced liberal French Enlightenment ideas to nineteenth century Arab minds. Originally from Ṭaḥṭā, Upper Egypt, his education was sponsored despite his impoverished background. He was sent to al-Azhar School and Mosque, which was considered the centre of knowledge and thought at the time. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was under the tutelage of Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār, a renowned intellectual who had experienced the Napoleon’s French campaign first-hand. al-‘Aṭṭār had visited *Institut d’Égypte*, where he witnessed Western progress directly.²³⁵ However, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was despatched to France as the imam and

²³³ Cheikho, *Tārīkh al-Ādāb*, 75.

²³⁴ Rogan, *The Arabs*, 106. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ḥaḍrāwī, *Nuzhat al-Fikar fīmā maḍā min al-Ḥawādith wa-al-‘Ibar fī Tarājim Rijāl al-Qarn al-Thānī ‘Ashar wa-al-Thālith ‘Ashar* (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1996), 1: 411.

²³⁵ Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz* (Cairo: Dār al-Taqaḍdum, 1905), 226.

chaperone for the group who were sent to study the society and culture in France and bring back ideas to Egypt.²³⁶ Despite this role, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī took it as a personal opportunity to also study French society for five years (1826–1831). He read widely on the French Enlightenment and the French language, reading Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montesquieu.²³⁷ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī “returned to Egypt in 1831 and he published his book” *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz* in which he narrated his impression of France. *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz* has been described as an attempt by al-Ṭaḥṭāwī to introduce western ideas to his surroundings.²³⁸ He placed great value on the relationships he built with French scholars through his work, as they in turn provided commentary on his writings.²³⁹

al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s book exemplifies his attempt to create networks with the west. He is considered “the first to set out to write a comprehensive account of Western society and culture.”²⁴⁰ Furthermore, the *Takhlīṣ* is the first book to mention many countries outside Europe that were unknown to his society at the time, thus creating an awareness of these regions and expanding the Arab consciousness.²⁴¹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī provided a translation of the French constitution into Arabic, as well as a comprehensive description of the French Revolution. He wrote about French democratic thought while expressing his support of these new developments and ideas.²⁴² He was one of the first to recognise the clear distinction created by the French between aspects of cultural and liberal thought. He explained the idea that the material dimension is extremely broad and encompasses myriad examples of life, from the design of something as simple as a spoon to the layout of a city. This dimension included aspects such

²³⁶ Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 32–33. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 91.

²³⁷ Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travellers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 114.

²³⁸ Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 34.

²³⁹ In the fifth section of *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz*, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī publishes letters that he exchanged with French scholars, such as Monsieur Jomard.

²⁴⁰ Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, 114.

²⁴¹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz*, 21–23

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 170–177.

as industry, transport, built environments and new modes of construction as well as architecture. The cultural dimension is inclusive of human aspects including good moral character, religious virtues, equality, freedom, etiquette and politeness, diplomacy and several other values that dictate morality and principles in society.²⁴³ He wrote: “Paris is the best-constructed city in Europe and one of the finest cities of the Franks ... The French nation is the greatest of all the Frankish nations, especially in the fields of science, education, the arts, literature, and architecture.”²⁴⁴ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī praised scientific development and stated: “The best of science is in the land of the Franks.”²⁴⁵ Besides that, he was impressed by the organisation and cleanliness of Parisians who were constantly striving to make progress in their work.²⁴⁶ A visit to a royal palace allowed him to conclude that, “The basic principle with the French is that everything is done for the sake of beauty and elegance, rather than for [excessive] ornamentation, the outward show of wealth or vainglory.”²⁴⁷ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī promoted the idea that Arabs were extremely capable of becoming just like the West and they would greatly benefit from these changes. Furthermore, he highly praised the benefits of schools, education and progress. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s book is considered to be a comprehensive presentation of Arab development and laid out a model for the continuing development of Arab-Islamic civilisation.

al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was the first Arab intellectual to foster women’s empowerment. He brought women’s issues up in his writings and appealed for their rights to be equal to those of men in society. His writing is considered to be the first model of women’s liberation which is

²⁴³ Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Manāḥij al-Albāb al-Miṣrīyah fī Mabāḥij al-Ādāb al-‘Aṣrīyah* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Sharikat al-Raghā’ib, 1912), 6.

²⁴⁴ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz*, 69.

²⁴⁵ Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric 1826-1831*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi, 2004), 99. Rogan, *The Arabs*, 107.

²⁴⁶ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz*, 80–81.

²⁴⁷ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 218.

inclusive and addresses the need to re-evaluate the status of women and allow them better access to education, based on historical requirements.²⁴⁸ Moreover, he introduced Western ideas, particularly those about government, which he witnessed in France. He was recorded as “one of the first modern Arab writers” to endorse and spread ideas of women’s progress.²⁴⁹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī worked toward developing the relationship between the genders, by recreating French society’s equality between both males and females. This included descriptions of the role French women played in business and the greater autonomy Western women possessed with regards to areas including education, decision-making and marriage.²⁵⁰ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s was cognisant of his position as a religious figure in al-Azhar and the potential issues that may arise from introducing Western ideas, specifically issues relating to women. As his audience was highly conservative, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was quick to explain that the excessive freedom, specifically sexually, of French women did not lessen from their virtue. Furthermore, he challenged the prevalent opinion that wearing the veil made a woman more honourable, arguing that it was, in fact, a matter of education and “whether she is accustomed to loving only one man [or] sharing her love among others, and whether there are peace and harmony between the couple.”²⁵¹

al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was careful to frame his discourse on Western liberal ideas through the lens of the Islamic tradition. His fascination with several aspects of statecraft, urban planning and the efficiency of civil order in Paris was evident through his descriptions of the settings within cafés and the elaborate adornments, including mirrors, as well as the individuals who frequented these places and the French women who worked in them.²⁵² al-Ṭaḥṭāwī

²⁴⁸ Ma‘n Ziyādah, *Ma‘ālim ‘alā Ṭarīq Taḥdīth al-Fikr al-‘Arabī* (Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Waṭanī, 2007), 187.

²⁴⁹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 218.

²⁵⁰ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz*, 40.

²⁵¹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 105.

²⁵² al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz*, 60.

juxtaposed these cafes with those in Egypt with their cane chairs and the absence of women, commenting, “men are slaves to the women [in France] and under their command, irrespective of whether they are pretty or not.”²⁵³ He described the beauty of French women, expressing that he enjoyed their way of talking as they were intelligent and loved travel, stating: “they are like men in every respect.”²⁵⁴

al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s vision for Arab women was contradictory to that for Western women. He did not want the same liberation he supported in French women to be granted to Arab women. He was shocked by the bare heads, arms and necks of French women saying, “women, in general, uncovered their bodies, especially around their necks, but they never showed their legs.” He stated that despite dressing well, French women were a little immodest.²⁵⁵ He maintained his praise for liberal culture and material advancement, specifically with regards to women’s issues, and at the same time he commented on the impressive advancements achieved by the French in everything but religion. As a religious traditionalist, he cautioned that improper religious education would lead to the “perils of humanism,” as the French “believes in human reason only.”²⁵⁶ Arab people who seek to educate themselves via French philosophy, without being proficient in the *Qur’ān* and without having a devout belief in the prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*), will ultimately lose conviction.²⁵⁷ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī felt obliged to remove sections from his book *Takhlīs al-Ibrīz* (1834) that explained Western scientific theories surrounding the Earth revolving around the sun.²⁵⁸ These changes portrayed the way in which he attempted to disconnect cultural progress and advancement from the material

²⁵³ Ibid., 61.

²⁵⁴ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 219.

²⁵⁵ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī noted French women’s use of umbrellas. Men did not use umbrellas as it was believed to be feminine behaviour. He also described the thin belts worn by women to emphasise their figures and to appear more seductive. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīs al-Ibrīz*, 76.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 178.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 178.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 58.

sphere of the Enlightenment. He considered religion to be a rather sensitive topic and was often critical of the absence of religion from French life as well as the extravagance of their lifestyle and hesitation in helping those around them.²⁵⁹

al-Ṭaḥṭāwī also advocated implementing methods of French advancement into the political system, as well as the openness and logic that the French held toward women's liberation and tolerance. He praised the education of the French²⁶⁰ and admired their acceptance of reason and logic in understanding nature and technological advancement, as well as the fact that the common person was literate in their society.²⁶¹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was shocked by the way in which “religion could be replaced by rationality” and the French rejection of the concept of fate.²⁶² However, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī accepted that a heavy reliance on fate led to making many excuses and general regression.²⁶³ Arab scholars sought Enlightenment through tradition or religion. “It is in the sense that they are presented here as having their own Enlightenment and not in the sense of sharing the Western approach.”²⁶⁴ Muslim intellectuals never participated in the new Christian irreverence toward religion and contempt for tradition. Islamic liberalism and secularism, upon which Islamic modernity was to be based, maintained their own peculiarities that rendered them distinct from Western examples.

al-Ṭaḥṭāwī also noted how Arab thinkers were drawn to European ideas, including the many freedoms and rights enjoyed by Western women with marriage, education and decision-making. Egyptian society lacked the literacy levels of the common French man, woman or

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 86.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 143–144.

²⁶¹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 173.

²⁶² Ibid., 178–179.

²⁶³ Ibid., 180.

²⁶⁴ Samer Akkach, *Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: One world, 2007), Introduction.

child. Thus, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī emphasised the requirement to endorse advancement and education, despite his concerns about Arab minds being heavily influenced by French philosophy and thought.²⁶⁵ His writings passionately introduced western ideas and presented them with appreciation and adulation in order to challenge stereotypes within his society by observing realities of new liberal ideas. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and other pioneers of Arab Renaissance of the nineteenth century wrestled with interactions between tradition and modernity.²⁶⁶ The Arab Renaissance experience, as inspired by the Western Enlightenment led to tremendous social, political, and cultural change as well as dramatic transformations in traditional methods of Arab thinking. The Arab Renaissance was a “vast cultural movement that dominated the period of the nineteenth century, originating in Syria and flowering in Egypt.”²⁶⁷ Through education, especially for women, it sought to adapt the progress of the West.²⁶⁸ Though they might have been enlightened by Western ideas, the Arab liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century were confused about how to deal with their traditions.

2.5 Conclusion

Following an often-enthusiastic interaction with Europe, Arab thinkers and reformers took on the challenge of modernising their societies and institutions, in an effort to deliver prosperity akin to that in the West. Arab intellectuals, specifically in Egypt and Syria, were keen and welcoming of liberal thought and modern ideas and they actively sought to renew and reform their societies. Arab intellectuals were cognisant of their inferior economic and military positions in comparison to the West but rather than being resentful of this reality, they sought to adopt scientific ideas that they considered the necessary foundation for development and

²⁶⁵ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *An Imam in Paris*, 298.

²⁶⁶ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 4–7.

²⁶⁷ Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi, “Modern Trends in Islamic Education,” in *Religious Education*, vol. 84, no. 2 (1989), 186–200. Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), vii.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vii.

advancement. This chapter has demonstrated how, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, liberal thinking acquired new connotations that led to a call for greater freedoms including the education and the liberation of women. It has explored how Western ideas began to flow and circulate when Arab scholars published books describing their travel experiences throughout nineteenth century Europe. It examined the broad implications of liberal ideas which affected traditional views on education, religion, and society as a whole. Western Enlightenment ideas were tailored by Arab thinkers to their own societies in a way that presented their economic benefits and led to an Arab Renaissance. These ideas were vital in reforming governments, education and halting the regression of the Arab world. The observation of life in Paris and other centres of the Western Enlightenment by these Arab intellectuals, revealed for them that Western women enjoyed more equality with their male counterparts. Arab intellectuals tried to bring the Arab world closer to Europe through the adoption and tailoring of Enlightenment values based on rationalism. They were fascinated by Western intellectual development and scientific achievements. In their attempts to remedy the state of decline they perceived of their own society, they embarked upon wide-scale reforms, trying to emulate the progress of the West.

Chapter 3

Educational Reforms for Arab Women

Chapter 3 Educational Reforms for Arab Women

3.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the nineteenth century many Arab countries were still controlled by the waning Ottoman Empire. Arab political intellectuals at the time were acutely aware of the gap between Arab and Western societies and believed that educational reform was an essential step to achieve modernity. This chapter shows how the Arab world engaged enthusiastically with countries like France, aiming for development both scientifically and educationally. The cultural exchange of ideas between the East and West increased in the eighteenth century and a modern European-style educational system was developed and implemented. Intellectuals from Europe were recruited in order to manage and organise these new modern academies and educational institutions which in turn resulted in change and advancement in Arab society.

This chapter outlines how Arab men contributed to women's education, inspired in particular by American Protestant missionaries to Syria. Arab male intellectuals engaged enthusiastically with the ideals of the Western Enlightenment, liberalism, and modernity, including the education and liberation of women. This chapter concentrate on the life and works of Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883), a prominent Syrian Christian scholar and intellectual and strong advocate for women's education. al-Bustānī was encouraged by close contact with Westerners in Syria to adopt and adapt their discourse on modernity. al-Bustānī believed “that women, as mothers and wives, had a pivotal role to play in shaping Arab society.” Advancing the education of women, therefore, became the key to founding modern Arab society and the homeland.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Arab women began to benefit from the spread of education and increasingly enjoyed active participation in intellectual and literary affairs. Although their contributions remained largely invisible to most of the Arab public, women were nevertheless integral to the Arab Renaissance.²⁶⁹ Some women, especially those from upper-class families, were raised in relatively tolerant environments. They received a private but broad education that enabled them to participate in and contribute to social movements and key cultural issues.

Prominent educated women, Wardah al-Yāzījī, (1838–1924) and ‘Ā’ishah Taymūr (1840–1902), are considered by many scholars to be pioneers in the fields of modern Arabic writing and literature about women’s issues. The work of these important intellectuals and the advancement of women’s literature is explored in this chapter.

3.2 A New Educational Model

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the French colonisation of Egypt (1798-1801) made Arabs more aware of the vast contrasts between their respective education systems and reinforced the need for educational reform in the Arab world. New models of education came about from the exchange of ideas and individuals between the West and East, internationally and within the Arab region.²⁷⁰

In Europe, the most important changes to come about in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were educational reforms that focused on increasing greater literacy and numeracy

²⁶⁹ Anbara Salam Khalid, *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 116.

²⁷⁰ Mobility: “The ability to move or be moved freely and easily; The ability to move between different levels in society or employment.” Kevin Hannam; Mimi Sheller; John Urry, “Editorial: Motilities, Immobilities and Moorings,” in *Motilities*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2006), 1–22.

as well as introducing better language and scientific education.²⁷¹ Compulsory education for both males and females was introduced in France. The French government declared “mandatory education for children between the ages of six and thirteen.”²⁷² These reforms led to a significant improvement in the lives of both the peasants and working classes. Increased rates of literacy across Europe resulted in increased social mobility²⁷³ as literate individuals were able to access better opportunities of employment, regardless of their class.²⁷⁴ It also led to greater opportunities for women to participate in the scientific, medical and engineering fields.

Conversely, early nineteenth century Arab education continued to be exclusive and limited to wealthier families. There were, however, schools attached to major mosques in cities while *Qur’ānic* schools in villages gave wider opportunities to some poorer children. Mosques were considered to be centres of scholarly education and access to literacy.²⁷⁵

Aḥmad Bāshā Nishanjī, who ruled Egypt from 1748 to 1751, was known to have an interest in science and mathematics. He met with the religious leaders and scholars of al-Azhar Mosque including ‘Abd Allāh Shabrāwī (d. 1758), Sālim Nafrāwī (d. 1754), and Sulaymān al-Manṣūrī (d. 1755-6), to ask whether any of al-Azhar scholars might have similar interests

²⁷¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66.

²⁷² Christina de Bellaigue, *Schooling and Identity in England and France, 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), 11–13.

²⁷³ “Social mobility is the degree to which, in a given society, an individual’s social status can change throughout the course of his or her life, or the degree to which that individual’s offspring and subsequent generations move up and down the class system. In other words, it is the movement of individuals, families, or groups within a social space mapped by status, occupation, income, and similar variables through which members of a society may be defined.” Michelle Jackson; John H Goldthorpe; Colin Mills, “Education, Employers and Class Mobility,” in *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* edited by Kevin T. Leicht. Elsevier, vol. 23 (2005), 3–33. Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility* (New York: The Free Press, 1959).

²⁷⁴ Christina de Bellaigue, *Schooling and Identity in England and France, 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), 11–13.

²⁷⁵ Mosque study circles were called a *ḥalqa*, meaning ‘circle,’ usually referring to students surrounding a professor. There were many *ḥalqa* in mosques. *Ḥalqa* sizes varied depending on the subject and professor’s reputation.

in science and mathematics. He spoke with them about their knowledge and education, particularly about their skills in mathematics. The three al-Azhar scholars replied that they knew little about mathematics, and what they did know was only learnt in their homes. Aḥmad Bāshā was disappointed with their responses and the situation of the al-Azhar scholars, which reflected the low educational level in Arab countries during that period.²⁷⁶

Education and scientific knowledge in the Ottoman era was limited only to that knowledge considered to be useful from the conservative standpoint of religion. The leading sheikhs at that time had the authority to oversee the dissemination of knowledge and education in the Arab world. They thus emphasised the scientific applications relating only to religious rites and to the provisions of religious law. Study for students was mainly focused on Arabic and religious education as well as literature and *Qur'ānic* knowledge.²⁷⁷ The science of astronomy, for example, was confined to calculations surrounding daily prayer times and fasting and was not utilised outside a religious framework.²⁷⁸ This was clearly explained in the writings of Sheikh Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī (d. 1778), who was the head of al-Azhar, an important educational place in the Arab world. al-Damanhūrī assumed the leadership of al-Azhar from 1768 to 1778. He rose from rural village life to become the head of al-Azhar.

al-Damanhūrī wrote an extensive record of his studies, listing his teachers (*sheikhs*), how he received his education, the teachers who taught using traditional books and methods, the works he studied, the books and treatises he wrote, and finally the *ijāzāt* (sing. *ijāzah*, certificate or license) he obtained. The list reveals that he studied religious and linguistic

²⁷⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Āthār fī al-Tarājim wa-al-Akhbār* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1997), 1: 132.

²⁷⁷ ‘Alī Mubārak, *al-Khuṭaṭ al-Tawfīqīyah* (Bulāq: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kubrā al-Amīrīyah, 1888), 4: 13–14, 25–26.

²⁷⁸ Nelly Hanna, “‘Abd Allah al-Shubrawī,” in Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (eds.), *Arabic Literary Bibliography, 1350-1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 376–385.

sciences, as well as logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and natural science and were taught using traditional methods under religious authority. In his manuscript, al-Damanhūrī provided a description of science education at that time and how students, like himself, received their education towards the end of the eighteenth century. When a student completed his study with a particular sheikh he would then be granted an *ijāzah* which certified that he had finished the study of specific courses and that he was qualified to teach them. *Ijāzah* was given by an individual teacher, who could personally attest to that student's knowledge.²⁷⁹

Islamic education pre-nineteenth century was predominantly delivered in informal settings and focused on memorisation and rote learning.²⁸⁰ Tuition started in schools located within mosques and consisted of seminars and weekly study circles, *ḥalqāt*.²⁸¹ The main subjects were principles of faith and jurisprudence, however, there were additional lessons teaching prophetic tradition, language and literature. The main books taught at that time, in fields such as language, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine belonged mostly to the philosophies and traditions of medieval Islam.²⁸² Some scholars in the mosques were also being taught advanced mathematics and sciences, although they were not considered to be vital topics to learn.²⁸³ Education in these schools was based on writing learning and memorising facts, rather than engaging in critical thinking and individual inquiry.²⁸⁴ Arab classrooms were not

²⁷⁹ George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 140.

²⁸⁰ Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 85.

²⁸¹ Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Khafājī, *al-Azhar fī Alf ‘Ām* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azharīyah lil-Turāth, 1988), 3: 217.

²⁸² Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī, *al-Laṭāyif al-Nurīyah fī al-Minah Damanhūrīyah* (Cairo: The Walters Art Museum, MS 1710).

²⁸³ Indira Falk Gesink, “Islamic Reformation: A History of Madrasa Reform and Legal Change in Egypt,” in *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 50, no. 30 (2006), 325–345.

²⁸⁴ Students were able to become teachers after obtaining their *ijāzah*. Each subject had an overseeing professor and students remained loyal to their professor until he passed away. Students were able to teach one subject while remaining students in another and they had the freedom to choose study material, a professor and when they would be attending. Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 21–22.

organised and structured as Western classrooms, but were rather teachers sitting with their students in the mosque. Little attention was given to the progress and advancement of the students and “the method was one of argumentation and dispute, not lecturing.”²⁸⁵

Prior to the nineteenth century, religious knowledge and traditional sciences dominated education in Syria as they had in Egypt. While Aleppo and Damascus were the great centres of learning, colleges could be found in the mosques of many other Syrian towns and local schools were also found in smaller settlements.²⁸⁶ Schooling was largely by rote learning and dictation, focusing on the *Qur'ān*, but girls were rarely encouraged to attend. At the same time, Christian schools followed the same model and similar curriculum, but Christian values and texts were substituted for Muslim ones, and the Christian minister replaced by the teacher. In Syria, by the early nineteenth century Christian schools had almost disappeared and literacy was low among Syrian Christians.²⁸⁷ Religious knowledge and traditional sciences supporting religious beliefs dominated education in Egypt and Syria until the late eighteenth century. Religious scholars were vital to the operations of state and civil affairs.²⁸⁸ They formed a distinct social class which prevented any renewal of education or evolution of intellectual ideas because of the fear of losing their powerful position in society.

Gradually, some religious scholars came to realise the importance of European progress in education and that there were other important non-religious courses that should be taught including mathematics, engineering, and the natural sciences. This growing awareness of the

²⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 80.

²⁸⁶ H A R Gibb; Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (London: Oxford University, 1957), 154. Abdul Latif Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria 1800 -1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 47.

²⁸⁷ Kamal Salibi, *Tārīkh Lubnān al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār lil-Nashr, 1972), 125.

²⁸⁸ Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Nūrī, 1983), 70.

need for an extended curriculum helped local government to develop and implement changes to the educational system. Continued interaction with Europe meant that education became an urgent matter. The awareness of the necessity of modern education for the development of Arab society resulted in the establishment of Western style schools and Western style curriculum and teaching methods.²⁸⁹ With the establishment of schools for boys, a call for women's education and the need to establish schools for girls followed.

3.3 Schools for Girls

Egyptian historian, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1753–1825), was very interested in the French influence. He focussed his attention on the French scientific institute in Egypt and the development and advancement it encouraged.²⁹⁰ In the same period, shortly following the French withdrawal in 1801, Muḥammad 'Alī was recognised by the Ottomans as *wāli* governor of Egypt in 1805. He like al-Jabartī was also very interested in western style sciences and models of education and he initiated educational reforms by establishing schools.²⁹¹ 'Alī introduced modern educational systems that emphasised reforms in policy and science, with the founding of the Cairo's first modern school, in 1816, through a deliberate modernisation policy.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 71.

²⁹⁰ al-Jabartī, 3: 57.

²⁹¹ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt 1805/1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 20–21. Ra'ūf 'Abbās Ḥamid, *Tārīkh Jāmi'āt al-Qāhira* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2007), 14–15. Nash'at al-Dīhī, *Muḥammad 'Alī Bāshā* (Cairo: Dār al-Jumhūrīyah lil-Ṣiḥāfah, 2009), 26. Jonathan P. Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period," in Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 61.

²⁹² According to al-Jabartī, in 1816 Muḥammad 'Alī ordered the construction of a school in the castle courtyard (Qala'at Salāḥ ad-Dīn). A bureaucrat called Ḥasan Afandī, also known as Darwīsh al-Mūṣilī, was appointed director of and teacher in *Muhandis Khāna*. On the 12th of September 1820, a presidential decree was issued by Muḥammad 'Alī to allocate a suitable place in the castle for teaching and to assign one of the good scholars to give students lessons in Engineering and Italian language. Then on the 16th of September 1820, al-Khawāja Qustī, a foreigner, was employed to teach engineering and Italian language to the students. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, 4: 205. André Raymond, *Arab Cities in the Ottoman Period* (Cairo: Paris: Dār al-Fikr, 2002), 85–86. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Manāḥij al-Albāb*, 399. Lieutenant Colonel P. G. Elgood, *The Transit of Egypt* (London: Edward Arnold, 1928), 53.

‘Alī invited European experts from Italy and later France, to help to establish and advise on the development of curricula and to teach in these new schools. Young students were also sent to Europe, primarily to France, to study politics, language, science and culture in order to adopt new ideas and apply them to Egyptian institutions.²⁹³ These students, in turn, established and ran engineering, medical, agricultural, military and language colleges and institutions, assisted by the European experts.²⁹⁴

Similar attempts at modernisation were also undertaken by the Ottoman government.

Beginning in the 1830s, the *tanẓīmāt* reforms (or reorganisation of the empire), produced an array of educational, military, and administrative reforms.²⁹⁵ Schools were established and reorganised according to a European model, sometimes with French and other European teachers, in part to train civil servants and military officers.²⁹⁶ The new, modern curriculum initially included traditional Arabic subjects, as well as arithmetic, history, geography, and hygiene, but increasingly also mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, civics, Ottoman Turkish, French, and Persian.

²⁹³ State academic missions to Italy began in 1809, followed by France. The Italian language was the first to be included in the curriculum as many experts in the schools were foreign. Hoda Yousef, “Seeking the Educational Cure: Egypt and European Education, 1805-1920s,” in *European Education*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2013), 51–66. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Rāfi‘ī, *‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Alī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1982), 397–398.

²⁹⁴ The development of education during Muḥammad ‘Alī’s reign came in several stages. The first stage between, 1811 to 1836, established 67 schools under the authority of the Department of the Military. Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 31. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ḥarakah al-Thaqāfiyah fī ‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Alī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1951).

²⁹⁵ Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, 84. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789–1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1962), 67–160. John Haywood, *Modern Arabic literature, 1800-1970* (New York: Martin’s Press 1971), 32, 61. Moshe Moaz, “Syrian Urban Politics in the Tanzimat Period between 1840 and 1861,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1966), 277–301. Eugene L Rogan, *The Arabs: A History Eugene Rogan* ([London], UK: Penguin, 2010), 109.

²⁹⁶ “A ministry of public instruction was created under ‘Abd al-Majīd in 1847 to administer the new system of education. From then until the issue of the education law in 1869, a fully-fledged new school system was established. Though intended to supplement the traditional system it began henceforth to undermine and finally to supplant it.” Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria*, 134.

Typically, the new schools were open to students of all religions of both sexes. Schools for girls were also established but there were sometimes difficulties finding appropriate teachers. As a consequence, the curricula of girls' schools were less academic and concentrated on more manual subjects such as domestic science, sewing and embroidery.²⁹⁷

Coinciding with these internal developments, American and British Christian missionaries began to arrive in Syria in the 1820s and were later followed by the French, Germans, and Russians.²⁹⁸ While the missionaries main aim was clearly religious conversion of the local population, they also introduced and imported Western educational ideas, including schooling for girls. In the 1850s, Egypt's Coptic Christian community formally established schools solely for girls.²⁹⁹

Interestingly, even before this, the Egyptian government, with the help of the French Doctor Antonio Clot (1793–1868), established schools, *Hakimah*, to train female health workers.³⁰⁰ They were established initially as schools of midwifery, but students nevertheless received an extensive medical education, as well as basic literacy skills. Obstetrics, gynaecology, basic surgical techniques, vaccination, and pharmacy all formed part of a six-year programme.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 66.

²⁹⁸ Lorella Ventura, "History, Religion and Progress: The View of the 'Modernity' of the American Protestant Missionaries in Late Ottoman Syria," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3 (2014), 442–456. Ellen Fleischmann, "Our Moslem Sisters: Women of Greater Syria in the eyes of American Protestant Missionary Women," in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1998), 307–323.

²⁹⁹ Marie Bryce, "From Mission to Modernity: Evangelicals, Reformers, and Education in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," in *History of Education*, vol. 42, no. 5 (2013), 675–676.

³⁰⁰ Antoine Clot, was a French doctor who served in the army and established the school. He was known as Clot Bey while practising in Egypt and became the eventual Head of the School of Medicine in Egypt. Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 127. Soheir Morsy, "Islamic Clinics in Egypt," in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1988), 355–369.

The first school was set up in 1832, with graduates (who were addressed as “doctor”) going on to work in state-sponsored public health programmes. Their roles included the collection of data and information on female and infant mortality, and maternal health care.³⁰¹ This was the first formal teaching of obstetrics in the Arab world.³⁰² So revolutionary was the program that it conflicted with traditional Arab society that specifically forbade the education of girls, therefore making it difficult for the school to recruit students. As a consequence, the school’s administrators sought out girls and women from the local slave market to become students.³⁰³

While affluent, middle-class Arab fathers and mothers (many of whom had received no education themselves) often endorsed female education, they preferred home schooling, rather than allowing their girls to mix with boys and those from lower classes.³⁰⁴ Gradually, this preference shifted as support for education for girls grew and it started to be recognised as an important asset and a mark of prestige among middle-class families.³⁰⁵ The first generation of female writers in the Arab Renaissance—often educated at home or graduates of the first few girls’ schools—extolled the benefits of education for women.³⁰⁶

Many of these women graduates also worked as teachers or school administrators. They founded literary magazines in which they offered publishing opportunities to their students, teachers, parents, and school directors, sometimes setting aside special columns for these groups. By printing details about the new schools—the curricula, facilities, teachers, graduates, administrators, and benefactors—they effectively advertised not just the value of

³⁰¹ Aḥmad ‘Izzat ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm fī ‘Aṣr Muḥammad ‘Alī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1938), 297.

³⁰² Laila abou laghud, *remaking women*, 35–63.

³⁰³ James Williams, *Education in Egypt before British Control* (Birmingham: Juckes, 1939), 83.

³⁰⁴ Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt*, 123.

³⁰⁵ Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 105–106.

³⁰⁶ Marilyn Booth, *Before Qāsim Amīn: Writing Women’s History in 1890s Egypt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 365.

women's education in a general sense, but also stressed the qualities of the new institutions.³⁰⁷

In 1873, Egypt's first official girls' school, al-Siyūfiyah, was opened by Cheshmet Hanim, Isma'il's third wife.³⁰⁸ The school was dedicated to the training of Muslim girls. At that time both Muslim and non-Muslim upper-class families normally hired foreign governesses and tutors to teach their children. Students of al-Siyūfiyah school were among the children of landowners, white slaves and government officials. The 298 students who were enrolled there in 1875 learned Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, religion (including the *Qur'ān* and morals), needlework, and laundry. In 1879, the deposition of Isma'il led to his wife leaving the school and the project was taken over by the *waqf*³⁰⁹ administration. al-Siyūfiyah was then combined with a similar school for girls founded by the *waqf* administration and re-named al-Saniah.³¹⁰

In the nineteenth century Arab world, it was not unheard of for a girl to attend her village *Qur'ānic* school (*kuttab*), to study with a *sheikhah* (a female religious scholar), or to study at home with tutors hired to teach the *Qur'ān*, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish, as well as embroidery and needlework.³¹¹ But late-nineteenth century advocates of women's education sought a new, revolutionary approach: education should follow the European example, with a standardised and expanded curriculum, open to all classes and to women.

³⁰⁷ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 124. 'Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta'līm*, 297.

³⁰⁸ Cheshmet Afet Hanim (1830–1907) was the Princess consort of Khedive Isma'il of Egypt. Khedive Isma'il grandson of Muḥammad 'Alī and ruled Egypt and Sudan from 1863 to 1879. Inās Ḥusnī Bahjī, *Miṣr fī 'Ahd al-Khidwī Ismā'il* (Amman: Markaz al-Kitāb al-Akādīmī, 2017), 5–15.

³⁰⁹ *Waqf*: This refers to the Arabic word for "pious endowment." Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges. Waqf* "It is endowment of property, or money, under Islamic law, the income can be generated for charitable purposes such as mosques and hospitals." Muḥammad Kamāl; Abdullah Saeed; Christina Mayer, *Essential dictionary of Islamic thought* (Henley Beach, S. Aust.: Seaview Press, 2001), 215.

³¹⁰ Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 104.

³¹¹ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 124.

3.4 Men's Contribution to Women's Education

As a result of the interaction between the Arab and Western worlds, structural, social and economic changes set the renegotiation of gender relations in motion. These changes encouraged debate on issues such as modernisation, nationalism, and the re-construction of local Arab society and the family unit.³¹² Male intellectuals felt the need to find solutions to maintain their traditional positions while still promoting the advancement and improvement of Arab society.

Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883) is considered to be one of the leading figures of the Arab Renaissance which was predominantly centred around Syria and Egypt. Arab contemporaries and historians describe him as a brilliant scholar, a leading educator, and one of the first Arab male intellectuals to speak out in favour of women's education. Scholar and women's advocate, Syrian Jurjī Niqūla Bāz (1881–1959), said al-Bustānī “was the first to support women in Syria and the first advocate on behalf of Syrian women who called for their education.”³¹³ His advocating for the improvement of education of females was successful in Syria at the time despite existing Arab traditions that closed off education to most women. al-Bustānī was the first Syrian to establish a national school (*al-Madrasah al-Waṭaniyah*) and the first to establish a scientific journal and a political newspaper in Syria.³¹⁴ His legacy

³¹² Margaret L. Meriwether, “Women and Economic Change in Nineteenth Century Syria-The Case of Aleppo,” in Judith E. Tucker (ed.), *Arab Women: Old Boundaries New Boundaries* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 65–83. Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 34–36. Akram Fouad Khater, ““House” to “Goddess of the House”: Gender, Class, and Silk in 19th Century Mount Lebanon,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 28 (1996), 325–348.

³¹³ Jurjī Niqūlā Bāz, *al-Nisā'iyāt* (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Abbāsīyah, 1919), 52.

³¹⁴ Jirjī Zaydān, *Tarajim Mashāhīr al-Sharq fī-al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘ ‘Ashar* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Hilāl, 1922), 30. *al-Madrasah al-Waṭaniyah* was located in Beirut and situated among the beautiful green trees which provide shade and a pleasant learning environment to the students. All students were equal, and the school accepted all students no matter their religion or their background. All teachers considered their students like family, and they sat and ate the same food together. Each class had a limited number of students commensurate with the capacities of each teacher. Teachers had to teach materials that suited the “spirit of the age.” Although the school taught different languages, (Arabic, Turkish, French, English, Latin), the main focus was on Arabic. Also cited by Khalil Abou Rjaili, “Boutros al-Boustānī 1819–1883,” in *Prospects*, vol. 23, no. 1–2 (1993), 125–133.

provided an ongoing discourse on the moral and social progress of women which was infused with both Arab and Western thinking. His work influenced debate and discussion for decades after his death.

Arab intellectuals struggled to explain what they perceived to be the decline of Arab civilisation throughout the Ottoman period in contrast with the advancement and progress of Europe. For al-Bustānī and many of his contemporaries, the reversal of fortunes could be explained by “a decline in the quality of learning in the schools.” Arab civilisation had thrived when its intellectual life was strong, even serving as a model for Europe. Now, the great task was to restore momentum, even by learning from the Western example.³¹⁵ al-Bustānī was particularly inspired by the American discourse on women’s roles and religious educational theories that Protestant missionaries from the US brought with them to the Arab society in the 1820s. Nevertheless, he adapted these ideas with Arab notions, culture and patriotism, shaping his vision to fit Arab society of the time. Essentially, he formulated what were considered to be crucial reforms to women’s education that would, he argued, lead to a better, more unified society.

As a young man, al-Bustānī was obviously very impressed by Western education. He witnessed what appeared to him to be the technological, political, military, and scientific superiority of the West. al-Bustānī, a Lebanese Maronite, was from a family who lived in a small village. Early in his life he showed a keen intelligence that was fostered by his teachers. At age 11, al-Bustānī was sent to what was then Syria’s most illustrious school, ‘*Ayn Waraqah* on Mount Lebanon. There he spent the next decade learning Syriac and Latin, as

³¹⁵ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789–1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1962), 100.

well as French, Italian, and English.³¹⁶ In Bāz’s view, al-Bustānī sympathy for women and desire to reform their place in society stemmed from his childhood experience. al-Bustānī’s father passed away when he was five years old and he was raised by his mother. Bāz believed this prompted al-Bustānī to later focus on women’s education. al-Bustānī was particularly concerned for mothers who were kept from schooling because of the need for them to take care of their children—just as his mother had done.³¹⁷

After completing his studies in 1840 al-Bustānī went to Beirut, which at that time was a major Syrian centre of learning and commerce. He was hired by the British Army as an interpreter, but it was his close association with American missionaries that seems to have shaped his thinking on women’s education.³¹⁸ At that time, Syria, and especially Beirut, had become a focus for American Protestant missionaries, and the Americans learnt of al-Bustānī’s growing reputation as an interpreter.³¹⁹ In 1846, al-Bustānī began serving at the US consulate in Beirut. Later, al-Bustānī converted to Protestantism and the the missionary school hired him as a teacher and a translator, where he was said to have excelled at both.³²⁰ al-Bustānī joined the Americans in their evangelical outreach and became close friends with leading missionaries Cornelius Van Dyke (1818–1895) and Eli Smith (1801–1857). In 1848, Smith hired him as an assistant to work together to translate the Bible into Arabic.³²¹ al-Bustānī also served as a lecturer and published a number of textbooks and articles. He became fascinated by the

³¹⁶ al-Bustānī learnt grammar, logic, history, geometry, geography, philosophy, literature, theology and law. Zaydān, *Tarajim Mashāhīr al-Sharq*, 27–33.

³¹⁷ Bāz, *al-Nisā’iyyāt*, 52. Stephen Sheehi, “Buṭrus al-Bustānī Syria’s Ideologue of the Age,” in Adel Beshara (ed.), *The Origins of Syrian Nationhood: Histories, Pioneers and Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 58.

³¹⁸ Zaydān, *Tarajim Mashāhīr al-Sharq*, 28.

³¹⁹ Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 187–189. The British had intervened on behalf of the Ottomans in order to expel the Egyptian governor of Syria, Ibrāhīm Bāshā.

³²⁰ Zaydān, *Tarajim Mashāhīr al-Sharq*, 28.

³²¹ Ussama Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 3 (1997), 680–713.

American discourse on the education of women.³²² He was inspired by the idea that Arab women could and should have their role in society expanded so that they could champion these modern principles and pass these principles to the next generation.

In 1844, al-Bustānī's married Rāḥīl al-Bustānī (née 'Aṭa) (1826–1894), a protégé of Eli Smith's family; she had been raised and educated from the age of eight by Smith and his wife, school principal, Sarah (née Huntington) (1802–1836).³²³ Rāḥīl was, therefore, one of the first generation of Syrian women educated in an American missionary school for girls.³²⁴ In al-Bustānī's conception of "modern society," his wife, Rāḥīl, would be responsible for maintaining the Arabic language, morality, and culture. It was her duty and privilege to look after her children's education for the future of their country.

Sarah Smith is credited to be the an founder of female education in the Arab world.³²⁵ In Sarah's memoirs of her time in Syria, she expressed surprise and dismay at the comparatively low education of Arab women and girls.³²⁶ Eli remarked, however, that his wife would not have had much success in Syria if her school had not been focused on saving girls' souls.³²⁷ But while the central purpose of Sarah's school was ostensibly religious, she believed, at least

³²² Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," in *American Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2 (1992), 192–215. Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective," in *American Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1976), 187–205.

³²³ Rāḥīl's position in the family was "midway between a daughter and a servant." Edward William Hooker, *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith* (United State: New York, 1845), 371. Christine Lindner, "Rāḥīl 'Aṭa al-Bustānī: Wife and Mother of the Nahḍah," in: Adel Beshara, ed., *Butrus al-Bustani: Spirit of the Age* (Melbourn: Iphoenix, 2014), 49–67. Yūsuf Qizma al-Khūrī, *Rajul Šābiq li- 'Aṣrihi: al-Mu'allim Butrus al-Bustānī, 1819-1883* (Beirut: Bīsān; 'Ammān: al-Ma'had al-Malakī lil-Dirāsāt al-Dīnīyah, 1995), 28.

³²⁴ The school was run under Rāḥīl 'Aṭa's direction in 1835. She was successful despite some of the male missionaries' scepticism of female education. Dana Lee Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 78–80.

³²⁵ Some sources indicate that Sarah Smith did not found the first females school but she arrived in 1834 and her work in the region had a strong impact on female education. Rao Humpherys Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools in the Levant: A Study of Purposes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Malloy Lithoprinting, Inc, 1965), 119.

³²⁶ Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools*, 120. Hooker, *Memoir*, 22.

³²⁷ Ibid., 120. Ibid., 371.

as far as Rāḥīl is concerned, that the main reason for girls' education "was not to Europeanise her, and thereby unfit her to live contently and usefully among her countrymen, where she was to have her abode."³²⁸

Unusual for an Arab woman of the time, Rāḥīl studied English as well as Arabic language and literature, together with geography, simple arithmetic, scripture, and sacred music. In the Smith household, Rāḥīl received daily tuition from Sarah and was said to have obtained a high sense of morality.³²⁹ Rāḥīl evidently gained a desire for learning from Sarah which she passed on to her own nine children,³³⁰ some of whom became influential intellectuals of their time.³³¹ Rāḥīl thus fulfilled al-Bustānī's vision of the essential characteristics of an educated woman, which he outlined in a lecture on women's education in 1849.³³²

Rāḥīl worked alongside her husband at *al-Madrasah al-Waṭanīyah* (the National School), which, in the 1860s, al-Bustānī tried to turn into a school expressly for girls.³³³ Even though this attempt failed, al-Bustānī worked, in partnership with Rāḥīl, to improve the education of boys and girls. Scholars considered him and his wife to be the embodiment of an almost ideal native Arab couple: educated, literate, and where the wife was a pious literate woman for whom building their home and raising their family were her primary responsibilities.³³⁴ al-

³²⁸ Hooker, *Memoir*, 371.

³²⁹ Ibid., 120. Hooker, *Memoir*, 22. Marilyn Booth, "She herself was the Ultimate Rule: Arabic Biographies of Missionary Teachers and their Pupils," in *Islam and Christians-Muslim Relations*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2002), 427–448.

³³⁰ Buṭrus and Rāḥīl al-Bustānī children: Sarah Marie (1844–1866), journalist Salim (1846–1884), novelist Adelaide, Martha (1849–1933), Louise Kathrine (1853–1923), Emma, Amin Judson (1859–?), journalist Najib William (1862–1919), Nasib (1866–?), and novelist Alice (1870–1926). Christine Lindner, "Rāḥīl 'Aṭa al-Bustānī: Wife and Mother of the Nahḍah," in: Adel Beshara, ed., *Buṭrus al-Bustānī: Spirit of the Age* (Melbourn: Iphoenix, 2014), 49–67.

³³¹ Ellen Fleischmann, "The Impact of American Protestant Missions in Lebanon on the Construction of Female Identity, 1860–1950," in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2002), 411–426.

³³² Fruma Zachs; Sharon Halevi, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria: Intellectuals and Ideology in the Late Ottoman Period* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 1.

³³³ Bāz, *al-Nisā' ūyāt*, 52.

³³⁴ Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 196.

Bustānī's family life and the role of Rāḥīl in particular became a model for the modern Arab family and for women in Arab society. Rāḥīl was depicted as,

A paragon of the elite reformist image of modern women. The perfect companion and mother, she extended her domestic work to include the school her husband had founded.³³⁵

In the early 1840s al-Bustānī promoted female education in the context of the “Syrian Society for the Acquisition of Sciences and Arts.”³³⁶ This society, founded by Cornelius Van Dyck in Beirut, 1846, brought together American missionaries and Arab Christian intellectuals. The Society provided opportunity for intellectual discussion and helped to form the thinking of prominent cultural and intellectual personalities, including al-Bustānī himself.³³⁷ Members would present lectures on topics they felt would raise the collective general intellect of Arabs. These speeches were published as papers that together formed an impressive collection of essays and served as “significant indicators of the genius and position of the society and its members.”³³⁸

It was primarily in this Society that al-Bustānī took part in discussions about the state of Arab education, in particular women's education. Van Dyck, for instance, spoke praising the virtues and benefits of the combined studies of science and education (*ilm*). He stressed that both mothers and fathers should educate their children, encouraging them to spend their free

³³⁵ Ibid., 437.

³³⁶ Christine Beth Lindner; Anthony Gorman; Andrew Newman, *Negotiating the Field: American Protestant Missionaries in Ottoman Syria, 1823 to 1860* (Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2009), 59.

³³⁷ Yūsuf Qizma al-Khūrī, *A'māl al-Jam'iyah al-'Ilmīyah al-Sūrīyah, 1868-1869* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥamrā', 1990), 9.

³³⁸ Ephraim Avigdor Speiser, *The United States and The Middle East* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1947), 14.

time acquiring knowledge.³³⁹ The American missionary, Henry de Forest, criticised the rate of female illiteracy in Syria, calling for the education of Arab women. Like Van Dyck, de Forest stressed the value of home education and the significant role parents could play by as principal caregivers. In lectures and discussions at the Society and, increasingly, further afield, he emphasised the idea of education for women as a way to achieve modernity and improve family and society. At a meeting of the Syrian Learned Society in 1849, al-Bustānī's presented on *The Education of Women (Ta'lim al-Nisā')* in which he advocated women's education.³⁴⁰ The lecture was inspired by his time with the American missionaries but his vision went beyond that of his American friends: he was trying to find a way to maintain the unity of Arab society and his homeland.

In 1858, al-Bustānī gave a lecture titled "The Literature of the Arabs" (*Ādāb al-'Arab*). In it, he introduced the term *inḥād*, referring to the idea of Awakening a sense of the former glory of the Arab language and culture.³⁴¹ He used this term to stress that, in their current condition, Arab women were in a kind of forced slumber. They were, in his words, *al-Jins al-Miskīn* (the deprived sex), and were unable to improve their own condition. This had inevitably led to the decline in the condition of society. He noted that Arab development was lagging behind the West and consequently, the provision of appropriate women's education was needed to open the way to progress and modernity,

In a nation's reformation, the first rung in the ladder is the education of women from childhood. Those who neglect women and girls and expect society to progress simply

³³⁹ Cornelius Van Dyck, "Fī Lidhat al-'Ilm wa-Fawā'iduh," in Yusuf Qizma al-Khuri (ed.), *al-Jam'iyah al-Sūriyah lil-al-'Ulūm wa-al-Funūn 1847-1852* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥamrā', 1900), 27-31.

³⁴⁰ Buṭrus al-Bustānī, "Ta'lim al-Nisā'," in Yusuf Qizma al-Khuri (ed.), *al-Jam'iyah al-Sūriyah lil-al-'Ulūm wa-al-Funūn 1847-1852* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥamrā', 1900), 45-53. Marilyn Booth, *The Long 1890s in Egypt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 370.

³⁴¹ Zachs; Halevi, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria*, 3.

by educating men and boys are like a person walking with one foot on the earth, and the other in the clouds.³⁴²

To achieve a higher standard of education for women, Arab men would need to be prepared to grant a greater freedom and higher social status for women. al-Bustānī argued that a woman as the senior manager of her household, took care of the entire family and home. For this reason, she was central to the advancement of society and her role should not be taken lightly nor romanticised; through education she would become a good person and organiser—educated but still docile,³⁴³

God did not create women to be worshipped like an idol. They were not made to be kept at home, unemployed, idly chatting to each other. A woman's business is not limited to cleaning the house. A proper education will broaden a woman's thinking, awaken her consciousness, help her to develop ethics, guide her behaviour, improve her organisational skills, and teach her to be gentle, affectionate and kind.³⁴⁴

Gradually, al-Bustānī detached himself from the community of American missionaries and developed his own approach on the need of education.³⁴⁵ Having witnessed the Mount Lebanon Civil War (1860) and the subsequent sectarian violence, al-Bustānī's advocacy on education naturally took a secular turn.³⁴⁶ Rejecting religions, he instead promoted modernity

³⁴² Henry Jessup, *The Women of the Arabs* (New York: Dodd and Mead, Publishers, 1873), 160.

³⁴³ al-Bustānī, "Ta'lim al-Nisā'," 52.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 52.

³⁴⁵ Khūrī, *Rajul Šābiq li-'Ašrihi*, 63–64.

³⁴⁶ The roots of the conflict can be traced back to a quarrel between a Druze and Maronite boy in the town of Beit-Merri. This feud resulted in a disagreement between their families that led to conflicts and fighting in neighbouring towns, pitting Druzes against Maronites. The violence then developed into open, bloody civil war. Charles Henry Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites Under the Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860* (Boston: Elibron, 2005). Leila Fawaz, "The City and the Mountain: Beirut's Political Radius in the Nineteenth Century as Revealed in the Crisis of 1860," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1984), 489–495.

through *al-Madrasah al-Waṭanīyah* (the National School), Arabism and women's education.³⁴⁷ al-Bustānī authored 11 Arabic broadsheets, in 1860, known as *Nafīr Sūrīyah* "The Clarion Call of Syria," (1860–1861). He also wrote pamphlets in reaction to the damage caused by the civil war, essentially criticising the sectarianism plaguing the country.³⁴⁸ He argued that education and knowledge leads to Enlightenment. The birth of ideals would inevitably be the death of fanaticism. In September 1860, al-Bustānī requested that people "bury their differences and to awake and unite for the common benefit of the nation."³⁴⁹ He is credited with planting the seed of nationalism in Syria, an idea that had not previously been proposed. The broadsheets which followed were intended to create a doctrine that would encompass the nation and free people from religious extremism.

al-Bustānī raised the question, why do countrymen, "who drink the same water, breathe the same air and speak the same language, kill and destroy one another?"³⁵⁰ He perceived ignorance to be the source of fanaticism and religious conflict.³⁵¹ al-Bustānī's perspectives changed after evaluating the state of the nation after the Civil War. al-Bustānī understood the need to educate people, especially females, in order to create unity and strength within the nation. He believed that nation-building was the ultimate outcome for humans and in order for this nation to prosper, they must be aware of the principles that promoted the development of strength and respect. He emphasised that the only way to achieve this was through the

³⁴⁷ Fū'ād Afram al-Bustānī, *al-Mu'allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Ādāb al-Sharqīyah, 1952), 75.

³⁴⁸ Ussama Makdisi says that al-Bustānī "that was far more explicit than anything Ottoman statesmen had envisioned, a citizenship that was not simply decreed by imperial fiat but that was developed, taught, and embraced simultaneously at an imperial and local level." "These pamphlets were addressed to "abnā' al-waṭan" (compatriots) and each was signed "muhibb li'l-waṭan" (which means the person who loves his/her homeland). al-Bustānī's aim was to find "a bond transcending religious, sectarian and political affiliations." Ussama Makdisi, "After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2002), 601–617. Adel Beshara, *Butrus al-Bustani, Spirit of the Age* (Melbourne: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 170.

³⁴⁹ Buṭrus al-Bustānī, *Nafīr Sūrīyah*, no. 1, 29, September (1860). Abou Rjaili, "Boutros al-Boustānī," vol. 23, no. 1–2 (1993), 125–133.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 1, 29, September (1860).

³⁵¹ al-Bustānī, *Nafīr Sūrīyah*, no. 9, 14, January (1861).

education of women and men. al-Bustānī sought an institution through which to propagate his ideas on nationhood; he saw that the State, rather than the Church, should be required to provide education.³⁵² Thus, national education should no longer be sectarian in nature.

Although al-Bustānī did not mention any specific cases relating to the overlap of spiritual and political authority he believed that this kind of trouble is common to all the religious communities of Syria. For this reason, al-Bustānī established the National School in Beirut, 1863.³⁵³ He maintained that a school was the basic role for, “sowing the seeds of union and love in young people, men and women, whose souls are still pure. The seeds will grow with these young souls, and it is the nation that will reap the harvest.”³⁵⁴ The school’s motto was “Love of the nation is part of faith.”³⁵⁵ The school was all inclusive, irrespective of religion or creed and it was based on principals of nationalism. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, al-Bustānī and his son Salīm became strong proponents of a more significant role for women in Syrian society, together they published several articles in their periodical *al-Jinān* about their views on the position of the New Woman (*al-Mar’ah al-Jadīdah*) in society. They believed that women would play a significant role in building Syrian-Arab patriotism as a key counterpart to men.

In al-Bustānī’s perspective, the idea of the position of women in general is similar to that of one’s motherland. al-Bustānī’s view that women through motherhood are not simple educators but their devotion to childrearing was promoted as an invaluable field of knowledge on which women ought to focus. al-Bustānī believed children gained knowledge

³⁵² Ibid., no. 10, 22, February (1861).

³⁵³ Afram al-Bustānī, *al-Mu’allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī*, 75.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 76.

³⁵⁵ Report written by Buṭrus al-Bustānī and published in his review *al-Jinān*, vol. 4 (1873), 62.

and morals through the milk they drank as children³⁵⁶ and that they should “sip the good water of science and upstanding morals from the pure springs of civilisation which will then spread to their organs and be infused in them permanently.”³⁵⁷ In fact, al-Bustānī’s coined the maxim that became popular among Arabs, “She who rocks the cradle with her right-hand moves the world with her arm.”³⁵⁸ al-Bustānī did not proffer for discussion concepts of self-actualisation for women, political rights, professional or career training. He focussed solely on the goal of training girls to become mothers who could have a positive influence upon their children and be a companion to their husbands. Hence, they could lead their society and the homeland to progress.³⁵⁹

In subsequent lectures, al-Bustānī spoke of the kind of education a woman should have. He stressed that civilised women should be literate in their native tongue so that they could both read and express themselves properly in their daily lives. Women should be taught how to raise a child, since raising children was not, to al-Bustānī, instinctive, but rather a learnt behaviour. Finally, they should learn home economics, including cooking and serving, as well as geography, history, arithmetic and caring for the sick.³⁶⁰ al-Bustānī believed that an educated woman should acquire those qualities in order to ensure her happiness in marriage, as a wife and mother. His vision for women’s education was much broader than mainstream culture of the time allowed; a culture that was inherently restrictive to the stereotypical gender roles. Despite his relatively enlightened vision, his model kept a woman from publicly challenging men and denied her exposure to Western culture,

³⁵⁶ al-Bustānī, “Ta‘līm al-Nisā’,” 52.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 53.

³⁵⁸ al-Bustānī “Ta‘līm al-Nisā’,” 53. Apparently written independently of William Ross Wallace’s 1865 poem. The Hand that Rocks the Cradle poem can be found in: Northrop Henry Davenport, *Beautiful Gems of Thought and Sentiment* (Boston: The Colins-Patten Co, 1890).

³⁵⁹ Rao Humpherys Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools in the Levant: A Study of Purposes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Malloy Lithoprinting, Inc, 1965), 126.

³⁶⁰ al-Bustānī, “Ta‘līm al-Nisā’,” 50.

It is impossible to determine how much knowledge a woman should receive in the aforementioned fields, nor do I mean to say that women should limit themselves to these fields. [But]...women ought to learn what makes them wise but not arrogant, fortunate without the need of proof, and useful without a reputation; encourages them to know what is right and love what is true, rectifies their thoughts, disciplines their mind, teaches them to reason, compare, analyse, compose, and organise, and incite them to prefer the real and the truthful over the modern and the festive and so forth.³⁶¹

al-Bustānī introduced his ideas gradually to a society still struggling with modernity and the notion of women's education. This can perhaps explain his view that even an educated woman should know her place in society. She should be educated but not so much that she puts the patriarchal gender relationship at risk,

I say to the civilised woman that being a very useful and important member of the group should not lead her to narcissism and arrogance or compel her to belittle her husband even if she is more knowledgeable because minor issues should not annul the essentials. A woman's place alongside that of a man is known and she should not cross that line under any circumstances.³⁶²

al-Bustānī's view of gender dynamics was firmly patriarchal but non-traditional and he makes clear that education alone will not change the status of women. He believed instead that it was necessary to rethink a man and woman's relationship within marriage. A man

³⁶¹ Ibid., 50.

³⁶² Ibid., 52. Cited in Fruma Zachs; Yuval Ben-Bassat, "Women's Visibility in Petitions from Greater Syria during the late Ottoman Period," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2015), 765.

should not rule his wife, seeing her as his property. Rather he believed that the role of each sex is complementary to the other as each has virtues unique to themselves. He states further that “women have certain qualities that men cannot exercise and vice versa” but both have an equal stake and say in the marriage.³⁶³ In marriage, women are social partners in the progress of humankind. In al-Bustani’s model, the place of women was not only re-defined, but their educational abilities were brought to the fore. The result was that woman acquired unprecedented social significance through education and therefore society could advance, progress and achieve modernity.³⁶⁴

al-Bustānī, like other intellectuals of his generation, endorsed new relationships between men and women. He aspired to transform the family through a reform in women’s education which would inevitably benefit modern society. Despite his admiration for Western ideas and despite adopting and adapting some aspects of Western thought, al-Bustānī was careful to guard against any lapse of society into Western moral decay. al-Bustānī believed that Arab society needed to be brought to a middle “ground between the traditional East and the modern, more licentious West.” In the *Lecture on Human Society and a Comparison between Arab and European Customs* (1869), he reflects on the “obscenity” of the Western habit of allowing men and women to kiss in public and to dance in ways that would “shock an Arab, even if he is Westernised.” al-Bustānī’s hope was that the Arab culture would not fall into this state of degeneracy; Arab society in general was reluctant to accept women as equals in public life and did not allow them to take management roles in daily life,

³⁶³ Ibid., 47.

³⁶⁴ Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools*, 126.

This is why women are in this difficult position of ignorance and misery, whereas the history of civilisation in Europe suggests that progress began after women were granted a better status and better education. Preferencing women in some contexts is one way to raise the status of this sex and thereby reduce the risks which arise when women are left in a state of ignorance and depravity.³⁶⁵

al-Bustānī's lectures questioned the role of women not only in Syria but the Arab world in general, in a manner that was daring and audacious for the time. They led to a new image of women's role straddling "the boundaries between tradition and modernity, religious and secular attitudes, Western and Arab ideals, and traditional notions of femininity and masculinity."³⁶⁶ Although al-Bustānī did not promote equality between the sexes, his reflections and ideas presented an unheard-of equivalence that would lay the foundations for future discussion on the role of women and their rights into Arab society. Furthermore, his talks led to more vigorous discussions in the Syrian and Egyptian press in the 1880s and 1890s.³⁶⁷ Although issues of gender equality and Arab women's rights were not discussed, the ideas prompted critical analysis and modern thinking in social and intellectual circles alike. The impact of al-Bustānī's thought, coupled with the atmosphere and ideas generated by other intellectuals, including Nāṣif al-Yāzījī, inspired a movement championing the importance of women's education.

³⁶⁵ Buṭrus al-Bustānī, "Khitāb fī al-Hay'ah al-Ijtimā'īyah wa-al-Muqāblah bayna al-'Awā'id al-'Arabīyah wa-al-Afranjīyah," in *A'māl al-Jam'īyah al-Sūrīyah 1868-1869* (Beirut: Dar al-Huda, 1990), 214.

³⁶⁶ Michale Scott Kimmel, "From Conscience and Common Sense to "Feminism for Men": Pro-Feminist Men's Rhetorics of Support for Women's equality," in *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, vol. 17 (1997), 9. Deniz Kandiyoti, "The Paradoxes of Masculinity: Some Thoughts on Segregated Societies," in Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (eds.), *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 197–198. Marilyn Booth, "Woman in Islam: Men and the Women's Press," in *Turn-of-the-20th-Century Egypt*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 33/2 (2001), 171–201.

³⁶⁷ Khūrī, *Rajul Šābiq li-'Aṣrihi*, 27, 28.

3.5 Educated Women

Arab women emerged as a powerful sign of identity, of modern Arab people and the homeland. They began to benefit from the spread of education in the latter end of the nineteenth century. Wardah al-Yāzījī, (b.1838) was a pioneer of women's writing in Kafir Shima, modern day Lebanon. She was from an upper-class scholarly family; her father and brothers were famous writers of the period. Wardah al-Yāzījī received a high level of western-style education in a Christian school established by missionaries. Her father, al-Sheikh Nāṣīf al-Yāzījī (1800–1871), established the *Syrian Scientific Society* with al-Bustānī in 1847. The main activities of the society included organising a symposium where members gave speeches and lectures on Arabic heritage, tradition and language, which began to take a nationalist tone. al-Sheikh al-Yāzījī who endorsed this nationalism, composed an Arabic encyclopaedia that included within it vocabulary from Arabic language and literature. After the 1860s, he was considered an influential Arab nationalist leader.³⁶⁸

Wardah al-Yāzījī's father taught her Arabic literature, poetry, even training her to use poetry in correspondence with his literary colleagues.³⁶⁹ In this environment, al-Yāzījī understood that the female's education was a key to create nationalism and the homeland. al-Yāzījī established a reputation as a celebrated poet and author of heartfelt eulogies.³⁷⁰ She became a teacher at a local missionary school in order to assist with the education of her siblings. She married Francis Shamoun in 1866, with whom she had five children. She continued to write

³⁶⁸ Nāṣīf al-Yāzījī, a Lebanese Christian, born in 1800, was known for his diligence and prodigious memory. He was an avid reader and literature enthusiast who aimed to revive the past through classic Arabic literature. He was known for his books of grammar, logic and prosody in which he attempted to copy the style of classic Arab writers. al-Yāzījī and al-Bustānī established the *Syrian Scientific Society* in 1847. 'Abd al-Jabbār Ḥasan al-Jubūrī, *al-Aḥzāb wa-al-Jam'iyāt al-Siyāsiyah fi al-Quṭr al-Sūrī* (Baghdad: Dār al-Ḥurrīyah lil-Tibā'ah, 1980), 7. David Grafton, *The contested origins of the 1865 Arabic Bible* (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2016), 31–32.

³⁶⁹ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 186. Hoda El Sadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 34. Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 77.

³⁷⁰ Ziyādah, *Wardah al-Yāzījī*, 12–13.

after her marriage and in 1867 published the book, *Ḥadīqat al-Ward*, in 1867,³⁷¹ the first book written by a woman to be published in the Arab world.³⁷² al-Yāzījī's book enjoyed considerable success and was republished in an increasingly expanded form in 1887, 1894 and 1914. Her book is considered as the first anthology by an Arab poet to be reprinted more than twice in the nineteenth century.³⁷³ Her book comprised eulogies and elegies that adhered strictly to the classical conventions of these genres. She wrote several love poems but she evidently felt shackled by traditions that constrained how a woman might express her feelings since she employed many devices that disassociated her from the emotions in her works.³⁷⁴ al-Yāzījī wrote to her contemporary 'Ā'ishah Taymūr describing her admiration for the latter's book by evoking the famous love story (*Jamīl Buthaynah*) from the seventeenth century,

You are special among women. So how could I but
 Love a peerless lover?
 I learned from you
 How to compose love poetry and evoked
 Like Buthaynah's love evoked in Jamīl.³⁷⁵

The poetry of al-Yāzījī represents the initial stages of the Arab Renaissance for female writers, as it "revived the traditions and aesthetics of poetry in the Golden Ages."³⁷⁶ Despite

³⁷¹ Raḍwā 'Āshūr; Mohammed Berrada, Ferial J. Ghazoul, Amina Rachid, Mandy McClure, "Introduction," in Raḍwā 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 9–18.

³⁷² The collection was expanded and republished in 1887 and 1914 respectively. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 172.

³⁷³ Ziyādah, *Wardah al-Yāzījī*, 12.

³⁷⁴ Dorothy Benson, "Women and Poetry in the Arab Middle East," in *The Poetry Ireland*, no. 25 (1989), 102–108.

³⁷⁵ Wardah al-Yāzījī; Mayy Ziyādah, *Wardah al-Yāzījī* (Cairo: Maṭba'at 'al-Balāgh, 1924), 22.

³⁷⁶ Raḍwā 'Āshūr, *Arab Women's Writers: A Critical Reference Guide 1873-1999* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 49.

Western and liberal influences on her education and upbringing, al-Yāzījī's poetry remained within the boundaries of Arab tradition and was seen as a revival of Arabic classical literature. Male contemporaries, however, criticised her poetry for its femininity,³⁷⁷ while scholars described al-Yāzījī's work as lacking originality and warmth, and still dominated by masculine characteristics. It is hard to know about al-Yāzījī's life; there is no clue in her poetry to her personal life or sense of personal fulfilment and happiness. al-Yāzījī's life followed the traditional path of marriage, birth and death³⁷⁸ yet her poetry inspired numerous intellectual women, despite condemnation from male peers. Important Arab scholar and writer, Mayy Ziyādah (1886–1941), went on to become a teacher of al-Yāzījī's works. Ziyādah wrote that al-Yāzījī employed different ways to disassociate herself from the feelings she wished to express in her poems, possibly because such expressions of feeling were considered inappropriate in women. al-Yāzījī never expressed her own feelings and concerns in her poetry,³⁷⁹

Even as al-Yāzījī tells us that the lines are composed about a female friend, we realise that they include matters meant for a male friend, but she conceals them behind the veil of the feminine pronoun to adhere to norms requiring a woman to hide her emotions, even in poetry.³⁸⁰

al-Yāzījī produced some articles on the subject of women for *al-Diya'*—a magazine founded by her brother, Ibrahim, in Cairo in 1898. She described “the Eastern Women” and criticised the fashion of blindly imitating the more superficial aspects of Western women, such as their

³⁷⁷ Yumna al-'Id, “Lebanon,” in Raḍwá 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 45.

³⁷⁸ Jūzīf Zaydān, *Arab Women Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond* (New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995), 57.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁸⁰ Ziyādah, *Wardah al-Yāzījī*, 22.

clothes, styles and the use of non-Arabic phrases. On the other hand, al-Yāzījī drew attention to what she regarded as the more admirable traits of Western women, such as their composure, their pursuit of the arts, science, and noble activities, which emphasised their duty to family, community, and nation-building.³⁸¹ al-Yāzījī, herself, appeared as a pioneer in a male-dominated profession but also supported her family, community and nation-building. She expressed the meaning of homeland that she had learned from her nationalist family. Through al-Yāzījī's writing, one can find her attempting to reconcile Western modernity while shaping her vision to fit the society of the time. Ultimately, she created a positive precedent that would allow more women writers to express themselves, thereby effectively shaping cultural life in the Arab world.³⁸²

As with al-Yāzījī in Syria, early women's writers and modern historians have attached social importance to the emergence of as a key nineteenth century female Egyptian poet, Taymūr. She has been described as standing with the "avant-garde of the women's Awakening."³⁸³ As an Arab woman in the modern period, Taymūr's works were distinctive and important in both prose or poetry.³⁸⁴ She raised the possibility for many more Arab women writers to express themselves and many were inspired by her perseverance and aspirations.³⁸⁵ In 1922, Mayy Ziyādah's biography of Taymūr was simultaneously a literary study from a female viewpoint of a woman writer and also the establishment of a new status for women's writing in the modern age. Ziyādah sees Taymūr as,

³⁸¹ Ibid., 15–16.

³⁸² Benson, "Women and Poetry in the Arab Middle East," 102–108.

³⁸³ Mayy Ziyādah, *Hilyat al-Ṭirāz* (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib, 1952), 34.

³⁸⁴ Marilyn Booth, "Locating Women's Autobiographical Writing in Colonial Egypt," in *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2013), 36–60. Maḥmūd Taymūr, *al-Shakhṣīyāt al-'Ishrūn: Ṣuwar li-Shakhṣīyāt min al-Māḍī al-Qarīb* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 5. Lūsī Ya'qūb, *al-Ussrah al-Taymūriyah wa-al-Adab al-'Arabī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1993), 57.

³⁸⁵ Ferial Jabouri Ghazoul, "Literature, Gender, and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of 'Ā'ishah Taymūr by Mervat F. Hatem," in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2013), 108–110.

A vanguard of women in the new age, who know their rights to freedom of emotion and their legitimacy within their natural limits. She was in the vanguard not only in the East but in the entire civilised world.³⁸⁶

Taymūr was born in 1840 into an aristocratic family, many of whom had long provided private instruction for their girls.³⁸⁷ Taymūr's family was liberal, enlightened, modern, and her father strongly supported her education. Taymūr's father also ignored the tradition of patriarchal power preventing his conservative wife's ambition to "raise a woman of the needle rather than the pen." Taymūr's father eventually came to an agreement with her mother and he provided Taymūr with tutors in Ottoman Turkish, Persian, jurisprudence, and Arabic grammar.³⁸⁸ As a result, she established an unconventional view of the roles between men and women, and continued her battles to achieve her own rights until she married.³⁸⁹ She remembered her mother,

My mother was my goddess of compassion and virtue and my treasure of knowledge and experience. She did her best to teach me weaving and embroidery, which she saw as tools. She explained things clearly and cleverly, but I was not receptive. I was unwilling to improve myself in these feminine occupations. I used to run from her like prey fleeing the net.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁶ Mayy Ziyādah, *'Ā'ishah Taymūr, Shā'irat al-Ṭalī'a* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Nawfal, 1975), 162.

³⁸⁷ Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period," 145.

³⁸⁸ Hoda El Sadda, *'Ā'ishah Taymūr: Tahaddiyāt al-Thābit wa-al-Mutaghiyer fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhākarah, 2004), 129. Ziyādah, *Hilyat al-ṭirāz*, 64.

³⁸⁹ Ziyādah, *Hilyat al-ṭirāz*, 56.

³⁹⁰ 'Ā'ishah al-Taymūrīyah, *Natā'ij al-Aḥwāl fī al-Aqwāl wa-al-Af'āl* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Muḥammad Afandī Muṣṭafā, 1887), 2–3.

Her mother believed that Arab girls learned discipline and concentration through these traditional skills. When Taymūr showed very little interest in these skills, conflict broke out between mother and daughter,³⁹¹

Even though I was genuinely inclined to [literature], I still sought my mother's approval but continued to abhor the feminine occupations. I used to go out to the [reception area of the house reserved for men] (*slamlīk*), to hear the writers.³⁹²

Taymūr worked hard to make a place for herself in the cultural milieu of the nineteenth century and to justify the importance of her literary contributions. She stressed the value of her writing to other women who were deprived of knowledge and the company of learned men. She knew this condition well by her own isolation, as a woman from the upper class who was deprived of the life experiences to which men had sole access.³⁹³ She began her book, *Natā'ij al-Aḥwāl fī al-Aqwāl wa-al-Af'āl*, by discussing her status in the family and drawing attention to the importance of her work,

Compassion for all those wronged parties who experienced what I experienced, and suffered what I suffered, led me to invent a story for them; to distract them from their troubles when thoughts close in and to divert them from their sorrows in the exile of loneliness, which is so much worse than exile from one's home.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ El Sadda, *'Ā'ishah Taymūr*, 112.

³⁹² Ziyādah, *Ḥilyat al-Ṭirāz*, 68.

³⁹³ Mervat Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of 'Ā'ishah Taymūr* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 47–48. Imilī Naṣr Allāh, *Nisā' Rā'idāt min al-Sharq* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah al-Lubnānīyah, 2001), 57.

³⁹⁴ al-Taymūrīyah, *Natā'ij al-Aḥwāl*, 4.

Taymūr's book was considered to be the most famous book of its time³⁹⁵ and also the first attempt to write fiction by an Arab woman. This was the model of the early Arabic novel which was melodramatic and sought both to entertain and convey a moral point.³⁹⁶ Ziyādah considered the traditionalism in Taymūr's writing to be a flaw, attributing it to imitation and imperfect poetic vision. Most literary historians have followed her, ignoring this important beginning that combined the old and the new.³⁹⁷ Taymūr belonged to the transitional generation of writers who received an Arabic, Islamic education, who were raised in the traditions of classical Arabic poetry, and who were absorbed in the music of its rhetorical language.³⁹⁸ They used these traditional techniques even as important transformations to Arabic literature and society as a whole were occurring.³⁹⁹ Her nascent literary career took a turn after her marriage. "Marriage meant domestic responsibilities, including motherhood." Taymūr showed special attachment to and took great pride in her daughter Tawḥidah,

After ten years [of marriage], the first fruit of my heart, Tawḥidah, who is part of me and my joyous spirit, reached nine years. I enjoyed watching her spending her days, from morning till noon, between the pens and the ink bottles, and during the rest of the day and evening; she made the most beautiful crafts.⁴⁰⁰

In *Mir'āt al-Taa'mmul fī al-Umūr*, Taymūr discussed women's unequal status in Arab society. She critiqued the conduct of husbands and wives in light of changing circumstances

³⁹⁵ El Sadda, *'Ā'ishah Taymūr*, 129. Ziyādah, *'Ā'ishah Taymūr*, 206.

³⁹⁶ M. M. Badawi, *A Short History*, 99.

³⁹⁷ Muḥammad Rushdī Ḥasan, *Athar al-Maqāma fī Nashā' al-Qiṣṣa al-Qaṣīra al-Ḥadītha* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1974).

³⁹⁸ Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 8.

³⁹⁹ Mervat Hatem, *Writing About Life Through Loss: 'Ā'ishah Taymūr's Elegies and the Subversion of the Arabic Canon* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 231.

⁴⁰⁰ Ziyādah, *Hilyat al-Ṭirāz*, 68. Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 151–194.

and the attendant, inevitable advancement in the social roles of men and women.⁴⁰¹ She writes about “a lion that is too lazy to hunt,” leaving his mate to take over the job until she becomes wholly responsible for feeding him. When the lion tries to impose his authority, the lioness laughs saying,

That was when you were you and I was I. Now the situation is reversed, and I have become you and you me. I now owe you what you owed me, and you owe me what I owed you.⁴⁰²

Taymūr expressed her sincerity of emotion,⁴⁰³ which showed the beauty of her poetic language, the power of her imagery, and the beauty of her tone; but she often “speaks in the language of men.”⁴⁰⁴ Ziyādah attributed this to the fact that men who held the reins of the poetic tradition encouraged Taymūr and others like her to imitate their style to achieve recognition and appreciation. Later, ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād (1889–1964) praised her poetry saying it was as good as any man of the time. He considered Taymūr an exception to the rule, as he believed that women were no good at poetry, “because femininity in and of itself does not express its emotions . . . Indeed, it is more suited to concealing and suppressing emotion.”⁴⁰⁵

Following on from Taymūr, literary and cultural writing was taken up by many Arab women who came to Egypt looking for a favourable climate for self-expression and creative writing. Many women writers made valuable contributions to newspapers and journals and thus

⁴⁰¹ El Sadda, *‘Ā’ishah Taymūr*, 109.

⁴⁰² ‘Ā’ishah al-Taymūriyah, *Mir’āt al-Taa’mmul fī al-Umūr* (Cairo: Multaqā al-Mara’h wa-al-Dhākīrah, 2002), 7.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād, *Shu‘arā’ Misr wa-Bī’ātuhum fī al-Jīl al-Mādī* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1972), 72.

shaped the cultural life in Syria, Egypt and the Arab world. Taymūr and al-Yāzījī were simultaneously admired and criticised for their creativity and their traditionalism. Their works constituted critical milestones in the birth and development of modern Arabic literature and women's writing. These two women became pioneers and role models for generations to come, inspiring them through their participation in society and writings in the newly emerging press and journals.

3.6 Conclusion

The influence of Western progressive values and ideals on Arab education and Arab society in the nineteenth century was nothing short of revolutionary. Early in the century, Arab male scholars and reformers avidly sought to adopt the Western model of education, recognising it as the key to social, scientific, and political advancement in Arab countries. Integral to this vision was the education of women since this appeared to go hand in hand with European development and hence Arab development too. During the nineteenth century, the notion of patriotism grew among the Arab middle class because of the exposure to Western culture. Due to the need to create a modern society, the place of women was redefined and women's education was considered to be among the vital building blocks of modern civilised society. As the Arab middle class in the region increasingly focused on patriotism, domestic life also became more important as the foundation of the future society. In this framework, a new, more extensive role was gradually assigned to women within the patriarchal framework: one of educational authority. The outcome was the emergence of some of the first and most influential Arab female thinkers and writers of the century. These women were growing up in open minded families whose head of the family, either the father or the eldest brother, encouraged and supported their education. The head of these families disregarded the existing "rules" placed on women and emphasised the role of women in the advancement of society as

a whole. In this atmosphere created by men, women managed to participate and contribute their views in society. While there were still obstacles that prevented their contributions from being fully recognised by members of the Arab cultural elite, the intellectual work of these nineteenth century women subsequently inspired and enabled a new generation of Arab women.

Chapter 4

Women and The New Mode of Communication

Chapter 4 Women and The New Mode of Communication

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the key figures in the gender relation discourse in both Egypt and Syria. It describes the expanding network of the earliest Arab women journalists and their evolving influence and argues that the efforts of the first generation of female journalists inspired more young women to write publicly. The chapter explores the views of prominent Arab male intellectuals who encouraged women to become educated and the subsequent development of women's literature. Attention is focussed on the journal *al-Muqataṭaf*,⁴⁰⁶ and its role in the development of a new discourse on gender relations and the role of women in the Arab society. *al-Muqataṭaf* illustrated the ongoing exchange of intellectual ideas between the Syria and Egypt during the Arab Renaissance. This chapter also examines the intellectual life and key publishing projects of two important Syrian figures who shaped the Arab women's movement at the turn of the nineteenth century; Hind Nawfal and Alexandra Avierino,⁴⁰⁷ were the first females to publish journals in Egypt in the late 1890s.

4.2 The First Group of Arab Women Journalists

Syrian Khalīl al-Khūrī (1836–1907) established the first private Arabic periodical *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār* in Beirut in 1858.⁴⁰⁸ Readership of the newspaper became widespread throughout the region with its coverage of political, scientific, commercial, literary and historical topics

⁴⁰⁶ *al-Muqataṭaf* founded in Syria in 1876 and later transferred to Egypt in 1885.

⁴⁰⁷ Another women's journal, *Mir'āt al-Hasnā'* was founded by Maryam Mazhar in Cairo 1896. Mazhar, however, was the nom de plume of Salīm Sarkīs (1867–1926), a male Syrian writer living in Egypt. Sarkīs wanted to encourage women to write but faced censorship in Syria and legal problems in Egypt, and his journal was eventually forced to close. Jirjī Zaydān, "Mir'āt al-Hasnā'," in *al-Hilāl*, issue. 5, no. 6 (1896), 240. Salīm Sarkīs, "Man Hiya Maryam Mazhar?" in *Majallāt Sarkīs*, issue. 2, no. 21 (1907), 645–651. 'Abd al-Raḥīm Ghālib, *Mi'at 'Ām min Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah: Lisān al-Hāl* (Beirut: Jarrūs Bris, 1988). Ismā'īl Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufyāt Thā'irāt* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah al-Lubnānīyah, 1997), 31. Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 16.

⁴⁰⁸ Fruma Zachs, "Under Eastern Eyes: East on West in the Arabic Press of the Nahḍah Period," in *Studia Islamica*, vol. 106, no. 1 (2011), 124–143. Fruma Zachs; Sharon Halevi, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria: Intellectuals and Ideology in the Late Ottoman Period* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 9.

across 3000 issues over 50 years.⁴⁰⁹ The journal attracted 400 subscriptions in its first three months, highlighting the significant appetite for professional journalism across the Arab world. The main topic of discussion was the news of the region, specifically the commercial and economic affairs of Beirut, but foreign news, news commentary and even some official Ottoman announcements also appeared within its pages. *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār* also included book reviews, excerpts, advertisements and novels⁴¹⁰ and occasionally, witty and humorous anecdotes such as “The Invention of a New Telegraph,” printed in 1858,

If you wish to transfer information fast from one place to another, you should tell it to a woman. After that you will see, in a short time, the message will pass from one person to another faster than the blink of an eye.⁴¹¹

al-Khūrī’s joke received harsh criticism from female readers stating: “We expected pleasing scents from the flowers of this garden, instead we smelt distasteful and insulting odours.”⁴¹²

Women in Tripoli encouraged Beirut women to respond to this offensive statement saying: “This is a common and ill-mannered accusation that is unacceptable from the press.”⁴¹³

al-Khūrī replied that he had merely copied the joke from an English newspaper, evidently surprised by the growing volume of women’s outcry. He published an apology titled: “An apology to the women of Tripoli.” This quarrel, the first of its kind in the Arabic press, highlighted the fact that educated Arab women were actively engaged in defending

⁴⁰⁹ Marilyn Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2001). Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt*. Fruma Zachs, “Building a Cultural Identity: The Case of Khalil al-Khuri,” in Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (eds.), *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon* (Würzburg: Ergon in Kommission, 2004), 30.

⁴¹⁰ Henry Jessup, *The Women of the Arabs* (New York: Dodd and Mead, Publishers, 1873).

⁴¹¹ Khalīl al-Khūrī, “Ikhtirā’ al-Tilighrāf al-Jadīd,” in *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār* (1858), 4.

⁴¹² Khalīl al-Khūrī, “Ṭalab al-Samāh,” in *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār* (1858), 3.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

themselves against misogyny and that they had strong networks across the region. Moreover, these women were clearly readers of *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār*, a fact that seems to have surprised the unsuspecting al-Khūrī and his editorial staff, who came under enormous pressure to retract their statements. al-Khūrī immediately recognised the presence of a significant female readership and subsequently tailored articles and editorials for them and simultaneously increased his revenue. He never again published remarks that were disparaging of women, knowing that in doing so, he risked antagonising female readers.⁴¹⁴ Journalists, like al-Khūrī, as well as many Arab male intellectuals and scholars, were beginning to recognise the vital presence of female readers. They then began to discuss the role of women in society, acknowledging that this required far greater discussion and debate than previously recognised. These issues were raised and discussed in several articles published in periodicals of the time, including *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār* and *al-Jinān*.

The rise of women's literacy and education brought with it with a growing demand for texts about women's health, in particular. In 1837, the first midwifery school in Egypt was opened by the Egyptian government with French female administration.⁴¹⁵ Yet despite this, medical health-care for women remained a largely undiscussed issue. It was not socially acceptable at the time for Arab girls to study in this midwifery school. This led to the Egyptian government bringing foreign women, particularly French women, to take on these roles of midwifery students.⁴¹⁶ The Egyptian government sourced women from the local slave market to be students.⁴¹⁷ To encourage local enrolments in the school, the Egyptian government provided

⁴¹⁴ Khalīl al-Khūrī, "al-Kitāb al-Faransāwī al-Musammā bi-al-Nisā'," in *Ḥadīqat al-Akḥbār* (1859), 4.

⁴¹⁵ Ra'ūf 'Abbās Ḥāmid; Nāṣir Aḥmad Ibrāhīm, *al-Ṭawā'if al-Miḥanīyah wa-al-Ijtimā'īyah fī Miṣr fī al-'Aṣr al-'Uḥmānī* (Cairo: Markaz al-Buḥūth wa-al-Dirāsāt al-Ijtimā'īyah, 2013), 246–247.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁴¹⁷ Naguib Mahfouz, *The History of Medical Education in Egypt* (Cairo: Government Press, 1935), 71. Ḥāmid; Ibrāhīm; *al-Ṭawā'if al-Miḥanīyah*, 248.

the few students already enrolled with a salary, food and transportation, which at the time was normally a donkey.⁴¹⁸

The physician Muḥammad ‘Alī Bāshā al-Ḥakīm (1813–1876), was the chair of the national medical association and responsible for the midwifery school. In 1865, he and his assistant Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, founded the first medical journal *Ya ‘sūb al-Ṭib* in Egypt. The journal attracted writers in modern medical science, including some midwives who wrote on childcare and household management.⁴¹⁹ One of these midwives was Jalīla Tarmahān (d. 1899), the first female journalist in Egypt to discuss medical issues within published articles. Tarmahān was one of the few women to graduate from this new midwifery school. Tarmahān was of Ethiopian descent but raised in Egypt and was therefore allowed to pursue studies in the medical field. Her ground-breaking article on midwifery was published in *Ya ‘sūb al-Ṭib* in 1865.⁴²⁰ Tarmahān was appointed assistant schoolmistress at the midwifery school after completing her studies. She was later promoted to the chief instructor—a position she held until her death.⁴²¹ Female writers such as Tarmahān were aware of underprivileged Arab girls like herself who were denied access to any schooling. They used their position as journalists to address this inequality by writing articles describing the injustices within the community and the urgent need for reform.

⁴¹⁸ Ḥāmid; Ibrāhīm, *al-Ṭawā’if al-Mihanīyah*, 250.

⁴¹⁹ Jirjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughā al-‘Arabīyah* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Hilāl, 1911), 4: 180.

⁴²⁰ Jalīla Tarmahān taught at the midwifery school. ‘Umar Ṭūsūn, *al-Ba‘thāt al-‘Ilmīyah fī ‘Ahd Muḥammad Alī thumma fī ‘Ahd al-‘Abbās al-Awwal wa-Sa‘īd* (Alexandria: Maṭba‘at Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1934), 564. Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-‘Ālām, Qāmūs Tarājīm li-Ashhar al-Rijāl wa-al-Nisā’ min al-‘Arab wa-al-Musta‘ribīn wa-al-Mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1992), 2: 132. ‘Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālah, *‘Ālām al-Nisā’ fī ‘Ālamay al-‘Arab wa-al-Islām* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1982), 307–308. Naomi Sakr, *Women and Media in the Middle East: Power Through Self-Expression* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 40. Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt*, 53.

⁴²¹ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Cairo: The American University, 1998), 48–49. Fatima Sadiqi, *Women Writing Africa: The Northern Region* (New York: Feminist Press, 2009), 25.

In 1870, Salīm al-Bustānī (1848–1884), the son of Arab Renaissance luminary Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883), published *al-Jinān*. This political magazine was to become one of the most important and prestigious Arab literary publications of the period. *al-Jinān*'s readership extended across the Arab world and into the Arab diaspora in Europe.⁴²² Among its correspondents and contributors were several well-known names in literary and political circles, including such leading figures of the Arab Renaissance as: Beirut's Nāṣīf al-Yāzījī (1800–1871) and Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī (1847–1906); Alexandria's 'Īsā al-Ma'lūf (1869–1956); the Western missionaries Cornelius Van Dyck (1818–1895) and George Post (1838–1909); and the Egyptian Minister of Education and reformer, 'Alī Mubārak (1823–1891). *al-Jinān* was a platform for lively interactions between writers and readers on the rights of women during that time. In 1870, the first issue included Jibrā'īl Ṣadiqa's article *On the Rights of Women* in which he argued for equal gender rights.⁴²³

al-Jinān reported on both local and international affairs, provided commentary, and also included satire and literary criticism. The magazine published original Arabic fiction and also translated serialised works by European novelists, many of whom delved into issues of gender relations and women's literacy.⁴²⁴ For the first time, Arab women, (notably Adelaide al-Bustānī and Mariyānā Marrāsh)⁴²⁵ published their writings under their own names in a popular journal. Adelaide al-Bustānī was among a number of women's writers who drew on themes of gender relations and women's literacy in their writings.⁴²⁶ Her novella *Henry and Amelia* (1870) was a love story in which al-Bustānī conveyed the ease with which women's

⁴²² Fīlīb Dī Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-'Arabīyah* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Adabīyah, 1913), 1: 226–228.

⁴²³ Adelaide al-Bustānī, "Henry wa Amelia," in *al-Jinān*, issue. 1 (1870), 366–367, 406–407. Jibrā'īl Ṣadiqa, "Fī Ḥuqūq al-Nisā'," *al-Jinān*, issue. 1 (1870), 401–402.

⁴²⁴ Jessup, *The Women of the Arabs*, 136.

⁴²⁵ Mayy Ziyādah, "Wardah al-Yāzījī," in *al-Muqtataf*, issue. 65 (1924), 3.

⁴²⁶ al-Bustānī, "Henry wa Amelia," 266–267, 404–407.

reputations in society were jeopardised by romantic liaisons with men and the injustices of traditional views of marriage.

Adelaide al-Bustānī was raised in a family that prized the voices and education of women and, following the publication of her novella, she encouraged her readers to read and disseminate women's writing as much as that of men.⁴²⁷ Adelaide and Marrāsh, together with Salīm al-Bustānī, *al-Jinān's* editor, were cognisant of their existing readers and often addressed these women directly. Salīm acknowledged the effect this had on decisions he made during the process of editing, saying it was very natural for him to cater to the needs of such a large part of the magazine's readership,

As there are gentlemen who read *al-Jinān* there are also some ladies who read women's writing, and the men should also read the ladies' writing and thoughts. And for that reason, *al-Jinān* has opened the door for women.⁴²⁸

Like Adelaide al-Bustānī, the Aleppo-based Mariyānā Marrāsh (1848–1919) was born into an intellectual family. Marrāsh was well educated in Arabic, French and English and well-travelled. She founded an influential literary salon for men and women. She was one of the first women to publish *Shāmat al-Jinān*, a non-fiction article in her own name which appeared in the popular Arab press. It is for this reason that the contemporary historian, Fīlīb Tarrāzī, wrote of Marrāsh as the first Arab female journalist.⁴²⁹ *Shāmat al-Jinān*, is an elegant

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 266–267, 407.

⁴²⁸ Salīm al-Bustānī, "Asma," in *al-Jinān*, issue. 4 (1873), 826–27.

⁴²⁹ Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Şihāfah al-'Arabīyah*, 1: 399.

article in which Marrāsh defended her gender from the insults of male poets. She believed that they had falsely accused women of being “cowardly and avaricious.”⁴³⁰

Marrāsh contested the notion that a woman is unable to cultivate more noble traits due to her lower social position. Instead of blindly imitating masculine traits, women and women writers should cultivate values, standards and understanding.⁴³¹ Marrāsh’s contemporary, the journalist and novelist Jibrā’ī Dalāl (1836–1899) welcomed her as the herald of a new era in the writing of Arab women,

The advent of female journalists and poets in these dark times is pivotal. Even for men, as our history shows, reading and writing were uncommon. [Marrāsh] came like a new, shining star set in the middle of the night sky.⁴³²

The works of Adelaide al-Bustānī and Mariyānā Marrāsh inspired females in Egypt and Syria, and in 1871, Wastin Masarraḥ of Alexandria,⁴³³ published her views on the topic of female education in an article in *al-Jinān*. Masarraḥ called upon female readers to insist that they receive an education, “to enter the gardens of education and knowledge as well as the sciences, despite potential male disagreement.”⁴³⁴ This, Masarraḥ believed, would allow them to establish a solid support to their children, which in turn would gain them the respect and affections of their men. Masarraḥ’s explicit appeal to women is significant, as many of the

⁴³⁰ Jūrj Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah fī ‘Aṣr al-Nahḍah, 1849-1928* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), 234–235. Mariyānā Marrāsh, “Shāmat al-Jinān,” in *al-Jinān*, issue. 1 (1870), 467–68.

⁴³¹ Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah*, 234–235. Marrāsh, “Shāmat al-Jinān,” 467–68.

⁴³² Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah*, 1: 403.

⁴³³ Wastin Masarraḥ was a wife of writer Salīm Ilyās Ḥamawī. He was the owner of journal *al-Kawkab al-Sharqī* in 1873. Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah*, 2: 55. Fruma Zachs; Sharon Halevi, “From Difā‘ al-Nisā’ to Mas’alat al-Nisā’ in Greater Syria: Readers and Writers Debate Women and Their Rights, 1858–1900,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4 (2009), 615–633.

⁴³⁴ Masarraḥ, “al-Tarbiyah” 54–56.

female writers of *al-Jinān* displayed a consciousness of the increase in their female readers and addressed them directly. Masarrah said,

This must be the day when women abandon their fears and innovate in the field of literature. We should take off the dresses of loafing and laziness and wear work clothes. We are the daughters of the nineteenth century, which is more civilised than other eras in human history. We must show men what we can do in literature and science. Let us eagerly compete [with them] to reap the rewards of science and literature and open the doors of their favour. If men say to us we are idle, we will reply—by patience and persistence we achieve our goals.⁴³⁵

Mariyānā Marrāsh's brother, the prominent Syrian intellectual Fransīs Marrāsh (1836–1873),⁴³⁶ spoke in favour of educating women but with a wary and cautious tone. In *Women Between Barbarity and Civilisation*, he argued that educating a woman was the way to lead her to civilisation. In his opinion, human life emerged from woman and education. Character and morals stem from her.⁴³⁷ In *On Female Education*, he explores the importance of exposing women to “reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar and the domestic arts.”⁴³⁸ Since God created man before woman, she is assumed to be his assistant and therefore the education of women ought to focus on those subjects which supported men. Fransīs Marrāsh argued that it was not necessary to involve women in science as to do so would diminish their femininity by presuming to place themselves above man.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 54–56.

⁴³⁶ Jamāl Bārūt, *Ḥarakat al-Tanwīr al-‘Arabīyah fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi ‘Ashar* (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1994), 63.

⁴³⁷ Fransīs Marrāsh, “al-Mar’ah bayn al-Khushūnah wa-al-Tamaddun” in *al-Jinān*, issue. 3 (1872), 588.

⁴³⁸ Zachs; Halevi, “From Difā‘ al-Nisā’,” 615–633.

⁴³⁹ Fransīs Marrāsh, “Fī Ta‘līm al-Mar’ah,” in *al-Jinān*, issue. 3 (1872), 769.

In 1872, Farīda Shakūr wrote in *al-Jinān* of ignorance being a woman's weakness and highlighted the need for a program of education specifically designed for women. Shakūr stressed that males and females are intellectually equal, insisting that women can contribute significantly to social progress and to the welfare of their families. She entered the discussion about women's education to set an example for other young women who were so acutely conscious of their responsibility to influence the next generation of female intellectuals.⁴⁴⁰

Journalists such as Salīm al-Bustānī and Salīm Kassāb (1841–1907), were much less wary of women's education than Fransīs Marrāsh and were even supportive of these ideas. al-Bustānī and Kassāb believed that education of female readers, as well as their children, would provide a great service to society and that they should, in fact, be rewarded for it.⁴⁴¹ In an article addressing those young women completing their education in Beirut, Kassāb contends that the social roles of men and women are in fact complementary and that the position of women was a reflection of the state of the nation. Thus, as mentioned (earlier) in Chapter two, the advancement of women was perceived to be a benefit to the country as a whole, as the family was the foundation of society.⁴⁴² Women, therefore, had a unique responsibility to be educators of the coming generation; if they were ignorant and superstitious, their children would, in turn, be ignorant.⁴⁴³

Journalism, therefore, with its new communicative tools of newspapers and journals became a modern phenomenon in promoting education in the region as well as enabling news and new ideas and perspectives to flow in from Western countries. Journalism was also one of the few vocations not strictly closed to a new generation of educated women. Clearly cognisant

⁴⁴⁰ Farīda Shakūr, "Fī al-Nisā'," in *al-Jinān*, issue. 5 (1874), 279.

⁴⁴¹ Salīm Kassab, "Ta'thīr al-Wālidah," in *al-Jinān*, issue. 16 (1885), 140.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 140.

of their place as role models, these women attracted a substantial following of female and male readers, including editors, publishers and notable leaders of the Arab Renaissance. While there had certainly been Arab female writers before, it was not until the 1860s and 1870s that women began to write publicly and openly; that is, under their own names—first in specialist journals and later in the popular press. Their legacy is an unprecedented opening up of the public space by Arab women for Arab women; a space that enabled and emboldened women to raise issues and profoundly reshape the discourse on gender relations in the Arab world.

4.3 The Social Darwinian Debate on Gender in *al-Muqataṭaf*

The monthly journal *al-Muqataṭaf* was founded and spearheaded by editors and instructors Ya‘qūb Ṣarrūf (1852–1927) and Fāris Nimr (1857–1951). They were influential intellectuals and students at the Syrian Protestant College (now known as American University in Beirut). The monthly *al-Muqataṭaf* developed a strong following among both women and men throughout the region, growing in reputation for its dedication to scientific and artistic advancement. It regularly included original articles, translations and summaries of “scientific proceedings, papers, news and book reviews chosen from journals such as *Scientific American*, *Science*, *The Nineteenth Century* and *The Times*.”⁴⁴⁴ In 1882, the journal published its initial article on Women but it also often featured articles by female writers, such as Yaquṭ Ṣarrūf and Maryam Makāryūs, the wife of *al-Muqataṭaf*’s manager Shāhīn Makāryūs, and sister of Fāris Nimr (*al-Muqataṭaf*’s editor).⁴⁴⁵ Articles appeared on women’s education,

⁴⁴⁴ Nadia Farag, “The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of *al-Muqataṭaf*,” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, issue 8 (1972), 73–83. Marwa Elshakry, “The Gospel of Science and American Evangelicalism in Late Ottoman Beirut,” in *Past and Present* 196 (2007), 173–214.

⁴⁴⁵ Byron D. Cannon, “Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society: The Interim Role of the Masonic Press in Cairo - (al-Lataif, 1885-1895),” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1985), 463–484. Marilyn Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 192.

women's roles in medicine as well as educating children, fashion and biographical writing. Articles often profiled notable Western women, including Catherine the Great and the philosopher Catherine Trotter Cockburn. In addition, prominent Western writers on the issues of women were also featured such as John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁴⁴⁶ Together, the female contributors of *al-Muqtaṭaf* and their readers became familiar with the works of the key intellectuals of their age from both the Arab and Western worlds. Their articles were highly influential, initiating and facilitating discussion of women's rights within the pages of the magazine and in other journals.⁴⁴⁷

Several polemical articles were published in *al-Muqtaṭaf*. These biographies of important female figures were published in order to promote discussion on the rights and education of women. For example, Maryam Makāryūs (1860–1888), a significant woman of her time, published an article on the seventh-century poetess al-Khansa'.⁴⁴⁸ In it, Makāryūs was not simply criticising al-Khansa's biographers for overlooking the important role her mother played in ensuring she was educated, but she was also highlighting the lack of interest in the Arab world of al-Khansa's life. Makāryūs's own mother played a significant role in her education. Due to this, Makāryūs was aware of the importance of being a role-model for her own children; she and her mother shaped the intellectual course of their daughters' lives.⁴⁴⁹ Makāryūs gave her daughter further insight into the significance of this role. She encouraged her daughter and her female readers to read and to recognise the significant link between reading and the development of moral character. Accordingly, Makāryūs suggested analysing educational texts, including biographies about the lives of female pioneers.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women (A Feminist Literature Classic)* (Cork: E-Artnow Editions, 2013). Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Address to the Legislature of New York* (Albany [N.Y.]: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1854).

⁴⁴⁷ Shams Shiḥādah, "al-Ḥaqq Awlā ann Yuqāl" in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 8 (1883), 203–207.

⁴⁴⁸ Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces*, 41.

⁴⁴⁹ Zachs; Halevi, "From Difā' al-Nisā'," 615–633.

⁴⁵⁰ Maryam Makāryūs, "al-Khansa'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue.9 (1885), 622–626.

Male voices, critical of the discussion on women's rights, were also included in *al-Muqtaṭaf*. In 1886, Amīn Abū Khāṭir, presenting himself as an advocate for the rights of women, despite arguing that as the focus on equality had developed, women had disregarded their domestic duties. He stated that women were lacking self-restraint specifically in spending on what he considered to be 'frivolities.' He admitted, however, that there were exceptions; there were some women who were able to maintain their duties despite acquiring these newfound rights, saying that, "it would be incorrect to generalise to all women based on their example."⁴⁵¹

In late 1886, a debate on the connection between women's rights and women's intellectual capacity ensued between Najīb Anṭūniyūs of Alexandria and Wadī' al-Khūrī of Beirut. Anṭūniyūs stressed that females possessed "limited power." While al-Khūrī had argued in favour of better rights for females and depicted their "mental and intellectual prowess" through the use of examples of female figures in France and ancient Egypt. He explained that women's intellectual capacity was recognised by some developed nations, by giving women voting rights in municipal and state elections, in Europe and the United States.⁴⁵² Anṭūniyūs arguments contradicted this by arguing that full equality was unachievable because women differ physiologically to men. He concluded that society would be ruined by those proposing equal rights to both men and women and allowing them to leave the domain of home.⁴⁵³ Anṭūniyūs reiterated the perspectives of leading Western scientists during that time period where he argued that the power of female was limited because of the role that biological

⁴⁵¹ Amīn Abū Khāṭir, "Ḥuqūq al-Nisā'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue.10 (1886), 62–623.

⁴⁵² Ellen Fleischmann, "The Other Awakening: The Emergence of Women's Movement in the Modern Middle East, 1900-1940," in Margaret Lee Meriwether; Judith Tucker (eds.), *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999), 97.

⁴⁵³ Wadī' al-Khūrī, "Ḥuqūq al-Nisā'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 11 (1886), 170–175. Najīb Anṭūniyūs, "Ḥuqūq al-Nisā'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 11 (1886), 232–237.

distinctions played in the social roles and behaviours of the two sexes. Many of these Western scientists were also physicians, and they asserted that the shift in women made away from reproduction and toward other undertakings, specifically those involving the intellect, would lead to deteriorating health and could potentially result in sterility.⁴⁵⁴

The trend of using scientific arguments especially biological arguments grew over time echoing the rise of social Darwinism in the West. Shiblī Shumayyil (1850–1917), a physician well-known for his progressive thinking, interpreted Darwin’s Theory of Evolution to justify sexual inequality.⁴⁵⁵ Shumayyil drew on his medical knowledge and training as well as the work of Western scientists and intellectuals in order to contend that males had superior physical and intellectual capabilities; these included the work of mathematician and sociologist Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874), anthropologist and geneticist Francis Galton (1822–1911) and psychologist and sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931). Furthermore, he utilised the work of Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) to raise discussion on the education of women and their political rights.⁴⁵⁶ In 1887 in a famous speech in Cairo published in *al-Muqtataf*, Shumayyil posited,

Some people think that women are just as smart as men. Natural science clearly demonstrates that in lower creatures, the female mind is more developed than that of the male. However, the opposite is true in higher animals. This means that females are

⁴⁵⁴ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg; Charles Rosenberg, “The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and their Role in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Journal of American History*, vol. 60 (1973), 332–356.

⁴⁵⁵ Shiblī Shumayyil was born in Kafar Shimā, Syria and was educated at the Syrian Protestant College (American University). He later moved to Paris to study medicine. He strongly supported Darwinian theories and translated some works of Herbert Spencer and Ludwig Büchner into Arabic. Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah*, 2: 75.

⁴⁵⁶ Shiblī Shumayyil, “Tarjamatuhu,” in *al-Muqtataf*, issue. 50 (1917), 105–112.

smarter at the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder but also that they are not smarter at higher levels, where humans and other primates are found.⁴⁵⁷

Shumayyil asserted that biological differences between the sexes are augmented within human species through the civilisation of nations and male superiority over females. He drew attention to the “superior” intellectual and physical traits of men over women, stating that the slower cognition of women and their weaker bodies resulted in a more cunning and devious nature, to which he referred as the “weapons of the weak.”⁴⁵⁸ He argued that where female leaders had emerged in less developed nations, they had merely inherited their thrones and not ascended by intellectual or physical merit; this leadership was not representative of the status of everyday women. Shumayyil firmly opposed calls for sexual equality suggesting proponents of equality actually denigrated women. Instead, he wrote that “she must be in her assigned place as a vital community member; one who follows after the man and assists his growth and in a partnership with him maintains the family.”⁴⁵⁹ Ironically, given his reputation for his anti-religious sentiments, Shumayyil also argued against equality on religious grounds: “All the divine laws agree that women need to be treated like children.”⁴⁶⁰ He described women as “more volatile than men—they subscribe to myths, are stubborn, and stick with old habits more than men.”⁴⁶¹

al-Muqataṭaf's female readership coordinated a response to Shumayyil in a series of letters published under the title *The Defence of Women by Women*. Several women from across the region, at times known only by their initials, launched into counter-arguments. M.A.Y. of

⁴⁵⁷ Shiblī Shumayyil, *Falsafat al-Nushū' wa-al-Irtiqā'* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Muqataṭaf, 1910), 2: 95.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 2: 95.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 2: 96.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 2: 95.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 2: 97.

Damascus, for instance, objected to Shumayyil comparing women to lower animals, arguing that an educated woman builds up both her body and mind. Although she politely acknowledged his position and influence, M.A.Y. expressed doubt about his general argument. She insisted that despite the unequal status women and men have physically, her knowledge and morals could surpass his significantly.⁴⁶² Rāḥīl Ḥajjār a resident of Cairo who responded through a letter, criticised the rationale behind Shumayyil's biological argument, criticising the "facts" he used to defend his argument, saying they were merely his own perspectives and could be understood differently. Moreover, Ḥajjār alluded to the fact that as the debate had attracted public attention, he expressed hope that Shumayyil had retracted at least some of his views.⁴⁶³

Maryam Makāryūs was a patient and friend of Shumayyil and a renowned intellectual in both Syria and Egypt. She was much more emphatic in her objections. Although she too credited Shumayyil's accomplishments, she stressed that individuals in his position should be wary of their opinions, labelling his work as discourteous and offensive to women. Makāryūs had a sound understanding of medical, biological and anthropological knowledge and questioned why the findings of male scientists were always understood in favour of men. She labelled these interpretations to be personal sentiments rather than facts.⁴⁶⁴

"I want someone to tell me what made Shiblī Shumayyil attack us?" wrote Maryam Maṭar of Cairo.⁴⁶⁵ She openly revealed her contempt for Shumayyil's opinions, including his condescending use of the term "little kingdoms" to refer to women's domestic work. Maṭar

⁴⁶² M. A. Y., "Difā' 'an al-Nisā'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 11 (1887), 685–686.

⁴⁶³ Rāḥīl Ḥajjār, "Difā' al-Nisā' 'an al-Nisā'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 11 (1887), 686–687.

⁴⁶⁴ Maryam Makāryūs, "Difa' al-Nisā' 'an al-Nisā'," in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 11 (1887), 688–689. Cannon, "Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society," 463–484.

⁴⁶⁵ Cannon, "Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society," 463–484.

refuted his argument, asserting that women were perfectly able to perform the same tasks as men, however, men were clearly incapable of stepping into a woman's role.⁴⁶⁶

Khalil Sa'ad of Cairo participated in the debate, supporting Shumayyil's claims of biological differences but later conceded that "woman is a nobler creature than man."⁴⁶⁷ Shumayyil was encouraged by the words of Sa'ad and once again felt compelled to reignite the discussion and refute the ideas of the "ladies" challenging his ideas.⁴⁶⁸ He strongly maintained that equality was unachievable as the two sexes were very different. However, he stated that the status of women was highly affected by education and that females had differing roles more befitting to them. He likened any attempts to promote equality of the sexes to equating body parts with one another, despite their innately unique functions. Juxtaposing the social with the biological, Shumayyil insisted the two genders each had a key role in the way society functioned, however, the "natural place" of females was that of a helpmate to a male.⁴⁶⁹

The debate created by Shumayyil was part of a gradual shift in the Arab world, away from outdated forms of discussion and discourse based on religious and philosophical justifications toward a more scientific approach.⁴⁷⁰ Public debates like this were catalytic in developing the discussion about the rights of women and their position within the Arab press of the nineteenth century. Articles on education and the role of women in society often appeared in *al-Muqataf* and other journals throughout the 1880s and 1890s, with Arab women taking on prominent roles as writers and correspondents. This displayed the initiation of new discussion, and a movement that was growing in confidence and that encouraged Arab

⁴⁶⁶ Makāryūs, "Difā' al-Nisā'," 745–747.

⁴⁶⁷ Khalil Sa'ad, "al-Mar'ah wa-al-Rajul, Hal Yatasāwayān," in *al-Muqataf*, issue. 11 (1887), 749–750. Cannon, "Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society," 463–484. Zachs; Halevi, "From Difā' al-Nisā'," 615–633.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Shumayyil, *Falsafat al-Nushū'*, 2: 108.

⁴⁷⁰ Cannon, "Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society," 463–484.

women to control their own press.⁴⁷¹ The first Arab journal for and by women, *al-Fatat*, appeared in Egypt in 1892 and was quickly followed by a large number of different women's journals throughout the region.

4.4 Case Study 1: Hind Nawfal's Magazine, *al-Fatāt*

Hind Nawfal, a Syrian Christian, became the first Syrian woman to establish a magazine by women in Egypt, for women. Despite her brief career as a publisher and editor, *al-Fatāt* paved the way for female Arab scholars and writers to establish numerous new publications known as “women's journals.”⁴⁷² *al-Fatāt* became the benchmark for all other women's magazines in the Arab world and encouraged Arab women to write and participate in discussions.⁴⁷³ Soon after its inaugural issue, and due to its uniqueness, *al-Fatāt* attracted attention from the mainstream Arab media. Renowned male journalists in Egypt and Syria wrote that it was the “first of its kind under the Eastern sky,”⁴⁷⁴ a distinct journal that “included the kindness of women and activity of men,”⁴⁷⁵ further describing it as a “precious pearl.”⁴⁷⁶ Nawfal explained that she had established *al-Fatāt* as a “magazine” that expressed the views of women and defended their rights and called on women to contribute articles about all aspects of Egyptian women's lives.⁴⁷⁷

Nawfal had fled Syria for Egypt as a child in 1870, avoiding the Ottoman repression of intellectuals and the restrictions on freedom of speech at the time. She came from a family of

⁴⁷¹ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*. Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women*.

⁴⁷² Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Şihāfah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 95. Fleischmann, “The Other Awakening,” 101.

⁴⁷³ “Appendix B” for a list of Arabic women's newspapers and magazines issued in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁷⁴ Niqūlā Yūsuf, *A 'lām min al-Iskandarīyah* (Alexandria: Manshā'at al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 489.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibrāhīm, *Şuḥūfīyāt Thā'irāt*, 18.

⁴⁷⁶ Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Şihāfah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 95.

⁴⁷⁷ In the nineteenth century, there is no clear difference between newspapers and magazines. Some periodicals such as *al-Fatāt* are called newspaper or magazine. The first two issues Nawfal called *al-Fatāt* “newspaper,” but later referred to it as a “magazine.” Ibrāhīm, *Şuḥūfīyāt Thā'irāt*, 19.

scholars.⁴⁷⁸ Her mother, Maryam Nahhās (1856–1888), had studied in a British missionary school for eight years and in 1873 began to write a biographical encyclopaedia of Eastern and Western women—*The Lives of Famous Women*—but died before it was finished.⁴⁷⁹ Her father and uncle were also writers and they later co-managed her publishing house in Alexandria, with help from her sister.⁴⁸⁰ Nawfal’s family encouraged her desire to publish and nurtured her literary talents, providing moral and practical support for her venture, in addition to publishing their own magazine.⁴⁸¹ She received a multifaceted education; she was schooled by Catholic nuns in both Arabic and French in Alexandria, as well as a traditional education by sheikh Aḥmad al-Iskandarānī.⁴⁸² Nawfal’s views were shaped from an early age and then refined by Eastern and Western world-views and affairs. Her father Nasim, encouraged her to take part in poetry readings and intellectual discussions with his friends, who included some of the leading literary thinkers and writers of the day.

Nawfal was aware of the conservative nature of Arab society, and the scarcity of female writers and the lack of female publishers. She aimed to reassure her readership that writing in a journal did not in any way compromise their modesty nor did it violate their purity and the bounds of good behaviour.⁴⁸³ Despite the Arab world of the nineteenth century Renaissance being rich with literary and scientific journals, none specifically promoted women’s interests, or even, according to Nawfal, satisfactorily articulated their problems.⁴⁸⁴ Nawfal saw a great gap in the publishing landscape and an opportunity to build a platform for women’s voices,

⁴⁷⁸ Jirjī Zaydān, *Tarajim Mashāhūr al-Sharq fī-al-Qarn al-Tāsi ‘Ashar* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Hilāl, 1922), 213.

⁴⁷⁹ Zaynab Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Ṭabaqāt Rabbāt al-Khudūr* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Būlāq, 1891), 515. al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 7: 210. She dedicated it to Princess Cheshmet Afet Hanim who sponsored publication of the first volume in 1879; the second volume was never published.

⁴⁸⁰ Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt*, 16. Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 88.

⁴⁸¹ Hoda El Sadda, *al-Fatāh: Jarīdah ‘Ilmīyah Tārīkhīyah Adabīyah Fukāhīyah, 1892-1893* (Cairo: Mu’assasat al-Mar’ah wa-al-Dhākīrah, 2007), Introduction.

⁴⁸² Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufīyāt Thā’irāt*, 15.

⁴⁸³ Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah*, 4: 95.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufīyāt Thā’irāt*, 22.

hence the establishment of *al-Fatāt*. On the front page of her magazine she defined its scope as purely “scientific, historical, literary and humorous”⁴⁸⁵ and declared politics and religion to be out of bounds,⁴⁸⁶

This magazine [*al-Fatāt*], will contain articles about science, history, and literature. It will have humorous stories and news about everything that women regard as important. It will not concern itself with political issues or religious debates. The main objective of this newspaper is to defend the rights of women.⁴⁸⁷

The focus, she believed, would be on the rights and responsibilities of women. *al-Fatāt* included segments on fashion, housekeeping, childcare, science, sewing, good behaviour, literature and drawing. She discussed the idea of the decline of the Arab women’s rights over time and explained that better conditions and equality for both men and women would come about through education and progress.⁴⁸⁸ She encouraged contributors to refine their writing skills, to be aware of the repressive forces around them and to voice their opinions in writing.⁴⁸⁹ The majority of the contributors to *al-Fatāt* were Syrian women, many of whom had benefited from the education they received in the missionaries’ schools at that time. It also became apparent that Egyptian women did not enjoy as the same privileges as their Syrian sisters and, consequently, many of them remained illiterate.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁵ Ijlāl Khalīfah, *al-Ḥarakah al-Nisā’iyah al-Ḥadīthah* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Arabīyah al-Ḥadīthah, 1973), 77.

⁴⁸⁶ Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah*, 4: 96.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥūfīyāt Thā’irāt*, 19.

⁴⁸⁸ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt 1805/1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 146.

Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥūfīyāt Thā’irāt*, 19.

⁴⁸⁹ Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-‘Arabīyah*, 4: 96.

⁴⁹⁰ El Sadda, *‘Ā’ishah Taymūr*, 39–40.

Nawfal's endeavours in Egypt and her support of female writers throughout the Arab world were part of a larger, global movement. She pointed to the recognition and legitimacy earned by female writers in magazines who published in Europe and the United States, stressing that they had lost none of their feminine virtues in the process. She went to great lengths to justify this claim and cited numerous examples of women in writing and other professions, including medicine and law and even a biography of Queen Victoria. However, as much as they had right to express themselves as writers and other professionals, women were also bound by duty to be good wives and mothers. *al-Fatāt* promoted a domestic ideology premised on a clear division of gender roles and an acceptance of essential differences between men and women. Nawfal stated "clearly that women would only achieve equality with men by providing a good example and doing good work."⁴⁹¹ "Women's work, at home, is what women were meant to do and *only women could do it*," including good housekeeping, maintaining cleanliness, orderliness and responsible childcare. Nawfal's ideology was framed by her cosmology and theology, in which all things, including men and women, had a special part to play in Creation, and they were complementary to one another,

The Creator and Mastermind of the world has made all objects—thousands of them that even a great scientist cannot count: suns, moons, planets and stars, each uniquely characterised. The Earth is created with similar and dissimilar plants [but all of them together complete each other].⁴⁹²

The responsibility for improving the status and situation of Arab women in society rested on their own shoulders and this required a willingness to become modern, educated managers of

⁴⁹¹ Hind Nawfal, "Fī al-Mar'ah wa-Wājibātuhā wa-Ḥuqūqihā," in *al-Fatāt*, part 1 (1892–1893), 34.

⁴⁹² Khalīfah, *al-Ḥarakah al-Nisā'iyah al-Ḥadīthah*, 36.

their homes. This domestic responsibility entailed a conscious strategy to promote greater intellectual freedom for women.

In one issue, *al-Fatāt* summarised a book on housekeeping that denounced ignorant women, saying they are unable to raise their children or manage their homes along modern lines.⁴⁹³

The book equated strong domestic authority with ruling a kingdom and noted that women's good rule over their homes would help their men in the public sphere. Household duties were to be given a position of prominence, comparable to that of political figures and important members of society. Moreover, women were required to give equal concern to educating their daughters properly: how else could women assume their duties in the public sphere?

In addition to the emphasis on the domestic sphere, *al-Fatāt* frequently published news and biographies of women who were successfully working in the public sphere in professions assumed to be exclusively male. Men represented a sizeable proportion of the magazine's readership; they were more likely to be literate and could also read articles to their wives.⁴⁹⁴

At the height of its circulation, *al-Fatāt* was a sizeable (forty-page) monthly publication with a very large following.⁴⁹⁵ Nawfal said that she could not keep up with all the letters sent to her from across the Arab world, further signifying the extensive and far-reaching distribution network.⁴⁹⁶

al-Fatāt enabled women to speak publicly and encouraged them to write and participate in debates which in turn allowed the magazine's reputation to reach across the Arab world.

⁴⁹³ Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 109.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufiyāt Thā'irāt*, 24–25.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹⁶ El Sadda, *al-Fatāh*, introduction. Ismā'īl Ibrāhīm, *al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisā'iyah fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī* (al-Dār al-Dawlīyah lil-Istithmārāt al-Thaqāfiyah, 1996), 17.

Women from across the region joined the staff of the magazine, with some becoming regional correspondents and important writers in their own right: among them were Zaynab Fawwāz (Egypt), Līzā Nawfal (Jaffa), Istar Azharī (Beirut), Maryam Khālid (Deir el Qamar and Mount Lebanon), ‘Ablah Nawfal (Tripoli), Wardah Farkūḥ (Homs) and Mārūn Shukr Allāh Thābit (Aleppo) and even a foreign correspondent in the French city of Lyon.⁴⁹⁷

Several prominent women joined *al-Fatāt*, most notably Hana Kūrānī (1870–1898), a trail-blazing advocate of women’s rights. Hana Kūrānī represented Syria at an international women’s conference in Chicago in 1892,⁴⁹⁸ where she delivered a speech on defending the rights of Eastern women.⁴⁹⁹ Since *al-Fatāt* was based in Egypt, Syrian writers who wished to avoid Ottoman censorship, used its platform to voice their opinions about the repressive conditions at home. Thus, the magazine served as a channel for more liberal Syrian thinking to flow to Egypt.

Most female journalists came from aristocratic, educated backgrounds, and many of them were aware of their privileges and of the conditions surrounding the majority of girls who were growing up deprived of any schooling at all. They used their positions as journalists to address this social inequity: writing articles protesting the injustice of the education system and demanding reform. While still editing the journal, Nawfal became engaged to Ḥabīb Dabbānah, a Syrian working in Alexandria. The engagement was announced in *al-Fatāt* and the couple married in 1893.⁵⁰⁰ After introducing the concept of women’s journalism to the

⁴⁹⁷ Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufiyāt Thā’irāt*, 23. Mervat Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of ‘Ā’ishah Taymūr* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 108. Raḍwā ‘Āshūr; Mohammed Berrada, Ferial J. Ghazoul, Amina Rachid, Mandy McClure, “Introduction,” in Raḍwā ‘Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 9–18.

⁴⁹⁸ ‘Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-Nisā’ fī ‘Ālamay al-‘Arab wa-al-Islām* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1982), 5: 213. Ḥilmī Namnam, *al-Rā’idah al-Majhūlah Zaynab Fawwāz* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahār, 1998), 79.

⁴⁹⁹ Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-Nisā’*, 2: 84. Zachs; Halevi, *Gendering Culture in Greater Syria. Baron, Egypt as a Woman*, 209.

⁵⁰⁰ Nasim Nawfal, “al-I’lan,” in *al-Fatāt*, issue. 1, no. 7 (1893), 289–290. Ibrāhīm, *al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisā’īyah*, 18.

Arab world, she withdrew to a domestic and philanthropic life: the publication of *al-Fatāt* ceased the year after her marriage. The magazine was in circulation for only two years in total, yet, in such a short time, Nawfal created a strong demand for women's writing through *al-Fatāt*. At the same time, *al-Fatāt* facilitated other women to establish magazines and newspapers. By the early twentieth century, at least 30 periodicals founded by women had emerged in Cairo, Beirut and Damascus.⁵⁰¹

4.5 Case Study 2: Alexandra Avierino's Magazine, *Anīs al-Jalīs*

Alexandra Avierino was born in Beirut in 1872 of Greek Orthodox origins. She was educated in French and Italian at an American missionary school in Lebanon, a convent school in Egypt and her private tuition was in Arabic. While still a child, she moved with her family first to Alexandria and then later Cairo. Avierino was exposed to a cosmopolitan lifestyle from an early age. At seventeen, she married a man of Spanish and Italian parentage whose family had come to Egypt under the reign of Muḥammad 'Alī.⁵⁰²

Avierino was a poet, a playwright and translated women's literature from French into Arabic. She established a salon for both female and male intellectuals, writers and poets in her home.⁵⁰³ However, it was in her role as a magazine publisher and editor that Avierino received the greatest attention. In 1900, she travelled to Paris to represent Egyptian women at a conference held by the Universal Alliance of Women for Peace during the Paris Exposition.⁵⁰⁴ There, she attracted the attention of the Alliance's founder, Princess Gabriella Wiszniewska of Italy, a renowned disarmament activist. Avierino was adopted by Princess

⁵⁰¹ Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufiyāt Thā'irāt*, 24.

⁵⁰² Alexandra Avierino, "Bayān al-Ḥaḳīqah," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 9, no. 12 (1906), 360-361. Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 325-326.

⁵⁰³ Yūsuf As'ad Dāghir, *Maṣādir al-Dirāsah al-Adabīyah* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Sharqīyah, 1983), 137-139.

⁵⁰⁴ Alexandra Avierino, "al-Nisā' wa-al-Salām," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 2, no. 10 (1899), 389-392. Princess Wiszniewska, "Jam'iyāt al-Salām," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 3, no. 4 (1900), 152-154.

Gabriella and presented herself in Europe as Princess Alexandra di Avierino Wiszniewska.⁵⁰⁵ For her services to women, (namely her many articles on women's rights, female education and the importance of scientists), she was invited to attend several conferences, such as the 'peaceful women's society' of 1900 which was held in Paris. Consequently, she became well known and was honoured by the Ottoman Sultan, the Shah of Iran and Pope Leo XIII, among others.⁵⁰⁶

Avierino founded *Anīs al-Jalīs*⁵⁰⁷ in Cairo in 1898. It was a monthly magazine with articles contributed by both men and women on a variety of topics. The magazine circulated for a decade with a female readership reaching more than 31,000, across the Arab region and into Europe.⁵⁰⁸ *Anīs al-Jalīs* endorsed education for Egyptian and Syrian women, publishing pieces on home economics, science, history, humour, literature and the latest fashions in France.⁵⁰⁹ It was the first woman's magazine in Arabic to include advertising.⁵¹⁰ From the outset, *Anīs al-Jalīs* was a global and radical magazine, with articles published on such controversial topics as divorce, veiling and polygamy.⁵¹¹ Avierino's target readers were lower class peasant women; *Anīs al-Jalīs* frequently addressed the problems facing these women, especially poverty and the denial of education rights. Furthermore, Avierino did not shy away from criticising men for their regressive attitudes towards women and children.⁵¹² In 1900,

⁵⁰⁵ Alexandra Avierino, "Bayan Amr," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 9, no. 11 (1906), 336.

⁵⁰⁶ Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Šihāfah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 326–327. Dāghir, *Mašādir al-Dirāsah al-Adabīyah*, 138. al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 237–239.

⁵⁰⁷ Martin Hartmann, *The Arabic Press of Egypt* (London: Luzac & Co, 1899), 49. Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Šihāfah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 325–326.

⁵⁰⁸ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 81. Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, 147.

⁵⁰⁹ Mona L Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863-1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.), 24–26.

⁵¹⁰ Khalīfah, *al-Harakah al-Nisā'iyah al-Ḥadīthah*, 9. The advertisements in *Anīs al-Jalīs* targeted women, schools for girls, clothes for children and adults, jewellery, home appliances and medicine. Anonymous, "advertisement," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 3, no. 8 (1900), 320. Anonymous, "advertisement," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 3, no. 11 (1900), 436–340. Anonymous, "advertisement," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 3, no. 10 (1900), 398–400. Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 94–95. Ibrāhīm, *Šuḥufīyāt Thā'irāt*, 37.

⁵¹¹ Anonymous, "al-Fatāt al-Sharqīyah," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 2, no. 1 (1899), 17–31.

⁵¹² Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, "al-Mar'ah fī al-Rīf," in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 3, no. 1 (1900), 17–22. Ibrāhīm, *Šuḥufīyāt Thā'irāt*, 36.

Anīs al-Jalīs featured an article by the American writer, Mark Twain (1835–1910), which was translated into Arabic and included a criticism of an article by Avierino. Following a visit to Egypt, Twain, an advocate of women’s rights, wrote “Four Animals in Egypt,” a sarcastic and humorous piece which listed women among other beasts of burden—cattle, camels, and donkeys.⁵¹³ In her response, Avierino acknowledged Twain’s point and understood the humour behind his writing. She was cautious, however, to highlight to the wider readership the idea that, unlike the other three beasts of burden, women were useful, they worked hard and patiently in and out of the home, yet they were often forced into marriages and polygamy.

Unfortunately, the high production costs of *Anīs al-Jalīs* meant it could not survive the economic downturn of 1907. Many writers for the magazine later went on to own and edit other twentieth-century women’s journals, including *al-‘Ā’ilah* (1899), *Shajarat al-Durr* (1901) and *Fatāt al-Sharq* (1906).⁵¹⁴ Nawfal and Avierino promoted the dialogue on the role of a woman in Arab society through their journals,⁵¹⁵ and by the beginning of the twentieth century, women throughout the Arab world had more powerful and far-reaching voices. Starting in Syria and then in Egypt, the Arab women’s movement grew rapidly from the 1890s onwards. It demanded, and at times secured, vital changes to attitudes and institutions, including changes within homes and schools. The works of Avierino, Nawfal and other female writers and publishers represented continuity and intellectualism within Syrian-Egyptian journalism and the broader movement for the modernisation of Arab society. These

⁵¹³ Alexandra Avierino, “al-Ḥayawānāt al-Arba‘ah,” in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 4, no. 1 (1900), 46–464. Cited in Sārah bint Muḥammad Khatlān, *al-Mar’ah wa-al-Siyāsah* (al-Riadh: al-‘Ubaykān, 2007), 16.

⁵¹⁴ Ibrāhīm, *Ṣuḥufīyāt Thā’irāt*, 38.

⁵¹⁵ Thomas Philipp, “Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt,” in Beck and Nikki, Keddie (eds.), *Women in the Muslim World, Louise* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 279–283.

writers and publishers became a powerful cultural force, spurring on and opening up spaces for discussion and debate on women's rights in the region.

4.6 Household Management: *Tadbīr al-Manzil*

At the time, despite the success in promoting education for women, new theories of “household management” were imported from the West. It was accepted that a woman's role in society was to care for the house, the children and their education. Journal columns on *tadbīr al-manzil*⁵¹⁶ (household management) formalised this role as a woman's responsibility in society.

The magazines of Nawfal, Avierino and other contemporary women during the period dealt with a range of topics of interest to the Arab woman but the most commonly recurring theme was the role of the women as the manager of the household. This was not, however, a reversion to, or and appeasement of, the traditional role of women; rather, it was progressive Arab thinkers arguing for a revolutionary shift in status of Arab wives and mothers—one that emphasised education, intelligence and augmented leadership, reform and the prestige of motherhood. Moreover, while male advocates for women were active, this was to be a revolution led by and for women. Columns on *tadbīr al-manzil* often appeared in late Arab Renaissance journals by and for women. “Housewifery was redefined as the art of household management and the local status and perceptions of the family were frequently depicted as being highly dependent upon the social skills of the wife and mother.”⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁶ *Tadbīr al-manzil* has its roots in the Classical period. The Greek term *oikonomia* was translated into Arabic as the science of household management (*‘ilm tadbīr al-manzil*). Abdul Azim Islahi, “The Myth of Bryson and Economic thought in Islam,” in *Islamic Economics*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2008), 73–79. Zachs; Halevi, “From Difā‘ al-Nisā’,” 615–633.

⁵¹⁷ Fruma Zachs, “Subversive Voices of Daughters of the Nahḍa: Alice al-Bustani and Riwayat Sa’iba (1891),” in *Hawwa*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2011), 332–357.

The concept of *tadbīr al-manzil* framed women as wives and mothers, as helpmates to men, and stressed the qualities of obedience and servility to the head of the household.⁵¹⁸ Articles often dealt with traditional subjects, such as childcare, interior decoration, cookery, beauty, arranging a home for the comfort and care of the family and guests,⁵¹⁹ and everything from removing stains to detailed instructions about the education of children at home. Writers often focused on pre-adolescence, contrasting the education of children at home with education at school; the latter was seen as the mere transfer of knowledge while the former included the process of imparting culture, refinement and discipline—the elements of a good upbringing. A child learned from his or her mother about being a productive member of a civilised society; this could not be taught in school.⁵²⁰

Lectures that had been presented previously by figures within the women's literary and cultural society, *Bākūrāt Sūrīyah*, led by Maryam Makāryūs, were now appearing as columns on *tadbīr al-manzil* in *al-Muqtaṭaf*.⁵²¹ *Bākūrāt Sūrīyah* worked to improve and advance the position of women in society, stating the role of a woman was not merely limited to edifying and refining her family but also to ensuring the harmony of the household.⁵²² The idea of a more dynamic female influence lent the role of women a new prestige and this thinking

⁵¹⁸ Kinda AlSamara, “Ḥurrīyat al-Mar’ah wa Kḥiṭāb al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah,” in *al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, no. 136 (2015), 151–162.

⁵¹⁹ Richard Ward Richardson, “Kayfa Nurabī al-Aṭfāl—Ghurfat al-Manāmah,” in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 5, no. 1 (1898), 389. Richard Ward Richardson, “Kayfa Nurabī al-Aṭfāl—Fiṭām al-Awlad,” in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 22, no. 6 (1898), 528. Richard Ward Richardson, “Kayfa Nurabī al-Aṭfāl—al-Nawm wa-al-Rāḥahah,” in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 22, no. 6 (1898), 528.

⁵²⁰ Miscellaneous articles in *tadbīr al-manzil* column such as: Anonymous, “Shadharāt fī al-Tarbiyah wa-al-Ta‘līm,” in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 7, no. 7 (1883), 425. Anonymous, “Laysa al-Ta‘līm huwa al-Tarbiyah,” in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 7, no. 3 (1882), 173–174.

⁵²¹ *Bākūrāt Sūrīyah* was a women's society in Beirut, founded by Makāryūs and Yāqūt Ṣarrūf in 1880. *Bākūrāt Sūrīyah* members discussed domesticity and educating females. Maryam Makāryūs, Yāqūt Ṣarrūf, “Fīrāq al-al-Rifāq,” in *al-Muqtaṭaf*, issue. 12, no. 4 (1888), 436. Nādiyā al-Jurdī Nuwayhid, *Nisā’ min Bilādī* (Beirut: al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1986), 242. Sharīfah Qayyādī, *Ishām al-Kātibah al-‘Arabīyah fī ‘Aṣr al-Nahḍah ḥattā 1914* (Malta: Manshūrāt Elga, 1999), 107.

⁵²² Hoda El Sadda, “Gendered Citizenship: Discourses on Domesticity in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Hawwa*, vol. 4 no. 1 (2006): 1–28. Hoda El Sadda, “Imagining the New Man: Gender and Nation in Arab Literary Narratives in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2007), 33–55.

began to spread throughout the Arab world via the new presses and Western missionary schools.

Writers believed that women's obligations should be met inside the house and the men's outside. This represented an important shift in gender relations, with women assuming significantly greater control at home and a higher respect for their role. During the same period, the journal *Lisān al-Ḥāl* published articles, signed by a woman named Salwá, dealing with marriage. Salwá, a middle-class woman, wrote to support women by giving them the benefit of her own experiences in marriage.⁵²³ In her articles, she explored the importance of educating parents and explored what good household management entailed: paying the servants, cooking, cleaning, and managing the household accounts. Through her own experience of marriage, she described her life with her husband as being good, due to her knowing how to manage their house.⁵²⁴ In many articles in *Lisān al-Ḥāl*, women were implored not to forego their important domestic duties. Simultaneously, they were also encouraged to gain a basic education, especially in the art of *tadbīr al-manzil*. Women should look after their house and family and be advisors to their husbands, rather than dwelling on their appearance and other superficial wants.⁵²⁵ Women were often described as the “ruler of the house,” “spirit of the house” and “the foundation of society.”⁵²⁶

Over a relatively short period of time, the significance of the term *tadbīr al-manzil* shifted toward a meaning which highlighted a woman's role and responsibilities within the home—a role that gained a renewed, higher standing. Arab women's magazines including *al-Fatāt* and

⁵²³ Salwá, “Tahdhīb al-Banāt,” in *Lisān al-Ḥāl*, issue. 21 (1894), 3. Cited in Fruma Zachs, “Debates on Re-forming the Family: A Private History of the Nahda?,” in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 102 (2012), 285–301.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵²⁵ Anonymous, “al-Mar‘ah fī Manzilhā,” in *Lisān al-Ḥāl*, issue. 23 (1894), 4.

⁵²⁶ Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women*, 9–125.

later *Anīs al-Jalīs*, adopted this view, with female writers broadening the meaning of *tadbīr al-manzil* and taking it in more radical directions. In editorials included in *al-Fatāt* and an article published in 1893, Nawfal summarised a book on *tadbīr al-manzil* and emphasised its importance. The piece examined the role of women “as wives and mothers in the stewardship of the family” and suggested that the happiness of society was directly linked to this role.⁵²⁷

Nawfal, however, adopted a more radical line, arguing that, through education, women would eventually be able to be active in society, despite the traditional view of it being the domain of men.⁵²⁸ Nawfal’s target reader was the middle class, while Avierino “covered subjects concerning women from lower socio-economic areas.”⁵²⁹ She aimed to expand and embolden the meaning of *tadbīr al-manzil* in order for it “to encompass a stronger, broader role for women, although, in essence, it dealt with similar matters.”⁵³⁰ In 1899, an anonymous piece in *Anīs al-Jalīs* argued that the phrase *tadbīr al-manzil* spread into society without having a big influence. The author suggested renaming it “world management” or “life management” arguing that there was no reflection of all the efforts carried out by women and that the term did not convey its actual meaning. Despite this critical outlook, the article ended with a discussion about women’s domestic work and the need for a woman to govern her emotions—perhaps anticipating a negative public reaction.⁵³¹ Addressing her predominantly working-class readers, Avierino argued that the household was the woman’s “realm” and its management must be her primary concern, even if her role expanded to the public sphere.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ It is difficult to identify the book Nawfal translated. Jurjis Qūṣah, *Kitāb Tadbīr al-Manzil* (Cairo: Matba’at al-Adāb, 1889).

⁵²⁸ Anonymous, “Fī Tadbīr al-Manzil fī-al-Mar’ah wa Wājibātuhā wa Ḥuqūquhā,” in *al-Fatāt*, issue. 1, no. 5 (1893), 212–215. Anonymous, “Fī Tadbīr al-Manzil fī-al-Mar’ah wa Wājibātuhā wa Ḥuqūquhā,” in *al-Fatāt*, issue. 1, no. 6 (1893), 28–285.

⁵²⁹ Fruma Zachs, “Cross-Glocalization: Syrian Women Immigrants and the Founding of Women’s Magazines in Egypt,” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 50, no. 3 (2014): 353–369.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵³¹ Anonymous, “Tadbīr al-Manzil,” in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 2, no. 4 (1899), 155–157.

⁵³² Anonymous, “Dawlat al-Mar’ah,” in *Anīs al-Jalīs*, issue. 1, no. 6 (1898), 179–182.

4.7 Conclusion

The advent of a free press in the second half of the nineteenth century in Egypt and Syria accelerated the pace of change in Arab society. In particular, it gave women a much stronger voice and generated a profound shift in thought on their role within the home and beyond. There was a renewed emphasis on the significance of women's learning and their role as crucial agents within society, by virtue of their power in the home and their influence over the family. Moreover, once women assumed leadership of these journals, their reach and the development of these new ideas expanded more rapidly. Syrian women emerged with new power and prestige at home and attempted to take it even further into the public arena, with varying degrees of success. Nevertheless, women were both products and drivers of a powerful new discussion of gender in the Arab society. The social fabric within these societies were directly influenced by ideas from Europe through the medium of the press.

Women's participation in the journalism had longterm effects not only on their domestic roles and on the development of their rights but it was also a significant factor in their participation in other spheres. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, women from both Egypt and Syria participated actively in global conferences and began to establish literary salons and societies as well as becoming more active in the political sphere.

Chapter 5

Women's Arenas of Discussion and Self-Reflection

Chapter 5 Women's Arenas of Discussion and Self-Reflection

5.1 Introduction

From the late nineteenth century, women's literary salons became more than simply social meeting places. They became centres for feminine activism and social change in the Arab world. The salons were places where women discussed and questioned their role in society, learning from, being inspired by, and joining a growing international women's movement. Seeds were sown for a more formal organisation of women's advocacy with a broader agenda than education. Both the literary salons and the women's societies that emerged from them sought social transformation. Mariyānā Marrāsh, Princess Nāzī, and Maryam Makāriyūs founded literary salons and women's societies in Egypt and Syria. Hanna Kasbānī Kouranī was also very vocal in the articulation of women's issues through her literary works. Together with others such as Zaynab Fawwāz, she paved the trajectory for the next generation of female writers. Through publishing newspaper articles and participation in literary salons, societies and conferences, they created opportunity for their successors to participate in a changing Arab society. Hudā Sha'rawī was important in Egypt's independence and modernisation and established a platform on which Arab women organised and advocated for their political and social rights. This chapter discusses the leading roles Arab women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played, the literary salons and organisations they led, and their legacies.

5.2 Women's Literary Salons

Mariyānā Marrāsh's Salon (Aleppo)

Mariyānā Marrāsh (1848–1919), was arguably one of the most remarkable female Arab intellectuals in the nineteenth century and widely considered to be the first woman to establish formal literary salons in Syria. She was an Arab Renaissance writer and poetess

whose contributions towards the establishment of the literary salons in the Arab world are well documented.⁵³³

According to historian Fīlīb Tarrāzī, Mariyānā Marrāsh was the first Syrian woman to write in a daily newspaper and to have her poetry published under her own name.⁵³⁴ The nineteenth century writer and author Qusṭākī al-Ḥimṣī (1858–1941), greatly admired her intellect and artistic talents, stating,

[Marrāsh] is well spoken, speaks light-heartedly and in humorous manner with melody. She plays music as adeptly as she writes Arabic.⁵³⁵

Marrāsh was born in Aleppo to a noble family. Her father, Faḥ Allāh, encouraged her inquisitiveness and education as much as he encouraged his sons', Fransīs (1836–1873) (who became a physician and poet) and 'Abd Allāh (1839–1900) (a merchant and a writer).⁵³⁶

Marrāsh was introduced to grammar and poetry by her father and brothers and they nurtured her early love of literature.⁵³⁷ She attended French seminary schools, learning Arabic, French,

⁵³³ Stephen Sheehi, *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860-1910* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 42. 'Umar Riḍā Kahḥālāh, *A'lām al-Nisā' fī 'Ālamay al-'Arab wa-al-Islām* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1982), 44. Subhi Hadidi; Iman al-Qadi, "Syria," in Raḍwā 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 60–97. Pauline Homsy Vinson; Nawar al-Hassan Golley, "Challenges and Opportunities: The Women's Movement in Syria," in *Mapping Arab Women's Movements* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 67. Rashid Khalidi, "The Legacies of Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age," in Jens Hanssen; Max Weiss (eds.), *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 375.

⁵³⁴ Fīlīb Dī Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-'Arabīyah* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'at al-Adabyāh, 1913), 1: 241–243. Luwīs Shīkhū, *al-Ādāb al-'Arabīyah fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkiyah lil-Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyīn, 1908), 170–174. Marilyn Booth, *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, Chesham: Combined Academic, 2011), 214, 228. Fruma Zachs; Sharon Halevi, "From Difā' al-Nisā' to Mas'alat al-Nisā' in Greater Syria: Readers and Writers Debate Women and their Rights, 1858-1900," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4 (2009), 615–633.

⁵³⁵ Qusṭākī al-Ḥimṣī, *Udabā' Ḥalab Dhawū al-Athar fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar* (Aleppo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Mārūniyah, 1925), 42–44.

⁵³⁶ Jirjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Hilāl, 1911), 4: 215.

⁵³⁷ Sāmī Kayyālī, "Arabīyāt fī Sūriyah Adībāt," in *Majallat al-'Arabī*, no. 38 (1962), 61–66.

and English, all of which contributed to her cross-cultural curiosity and interest in social issues.⁵³⁸

Reflecting on her beginnings as well as her end (she suffered from chronic illness in her final years), the renowned intellectual Sāmī al-Kayyālī (1898–1972) described Marrāsh’s life and environment,

[She] lived her life between an atmosphere of blessings and pain: growing up with writers, poets and other artists; reading French and Arab writers; in a culture combining old and new.⁵³⁹

Given that Syrian women were traditionally marginalised in education and public affairs, Marrāsh stood out and was highly lauded for her intellect and cosmopolitan outlook. She wielded significant influence in Aleppo’s society and in Syria more broadly.⁵⁴⁰ In intellectual circles, at least, Marrāsh was widely regarded as a national asset.⁵⁴¹

In 1870, Salīm al-Bustānī, the editor of the magazine *al-Jinān*, announced what might be described as a positive discrimination campaign, specifically encouraging women writers to submit articles—on any subject. He accepted a piece by Marrāsh entitled *Shāmat al-Jinān*, as

⁵³⁸ Kaḥḥālah, *A ‘lām al-Nisā’*, 44. Zachs; Halevi, “From Difā‘ al-Nisā’,” 615–633. Valerie Anishchenkova, “Feminist Voices of the 1990s Generation a Quest for Identity in Miral al-Tahawy’s Blue Aubergine,” in *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2017), 87–106. Muḥammad Tūnjī, *Mu‘jam A ‘lām al-Nisā’* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2001), 165.

⁵³⁹ Sāmī Kayyālī, *Muḥāḍarāt ‘an al-Ḥarakah al-Adabīyah fī Ḥalab: 1800-1950* (Cairo: Jāmi‘at al-Duwal al-‘Arabīyah, Ma‘had al-Buḥūth wa-al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabīyah, 1957), 138–139. Sāmī Kayyālī, “Mariyānā Marrāsh,” in *Majallat al-Ḥadīth*, no. 9 (1957), 569. Sāmī Kayyālī, “Mariyānā Marrāsh,” in *Majallat al-‘Arabī*, no. 45 (1962), 115–118.

⁵⁴⁰ Youssef Courbage; Emmanuel Todd; George Holoch, *A Convergence of Civilizations: The Transformation of Muslim Societies around the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁵⁴¹ Yiğit Akın, “War, Women, and the State: The Politics of Sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire During the First World War,” in *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2014), 12–35.

a way to encourage her and other women to write for publication.⁵⁴² She put this media platform to a wide range of uses, including criticising Syrian women for their lack of education and poor command of language, and their reticence to engage in public debate.⁵⁴³ Marrāsh was also the first woman to publicly praise sultans, the judiciary, governors, consuls, and other public officials. She offered commentary on their decisions, particularly where these advanced or hindered women's education, for example, (Marrāsh) publicly praising the Ottoman Governor of Aleppo, Jamil Bāshā, when he established the first public elementary schools in Syria.⁵⁴⁴

Marrāsh received considerable praise for her poems and other writings which covered issues of social conscience, governance, and lamentations, as well as her music. Her fame, charisma and intellect attracted many visitors to her home, where she established what was Syria's first literary salon. The salon welcomed both women and men, and was frequented by Western scholars as well as many prominent Arab intellectuals (of both sexes), politicians and members of Aleppo's diplomatic corps.⁵⁴⁵

Celebrated writers gathered in her home and discussed various political issues, developing a strong sense of national consciousness that went on to shape opinions in Syrian society at large.⁵⁴⁶ She earned the respect of contemporary Arab intellectuals, such as the historian and

⁵⁴² Wiebke Walther, "The Situation of Women in Islamic Countries," in *Islam in the World Today* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 623. Shaden M. Tageldin, "Proxidistant Reading: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of the Nahḍah in U.S. Comparative Literary Studies," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 43, no. 2–3, Arabic Literature, Criticism and Intellectual Thought from the Nahḍah to the Present (2012), 227–268.

⁵⁴³ Kayyālī, "Arabīyāt fī Sūriyah Adībāt," 34–35.

⁵⁴⁴ Kayyālī, *al-Ḥarakah al-Adabī*, 138–139.

⁵⁴⁵ Jūrj Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah fī 'Aṣr al-Nahḍah, 1849-1928* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), 234–235. Zachs; Halevi, "From Difā' al-Nisā'," 615–633. Vinson; Golley, "Challenges and Opportunities," 66. Marilyn Booth, "Locating Women's Autobiographical Writing in Colonial Egypt," in *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2013), 36–60.

⁵⁴⁶ Muḥammad Rāghib Ṭabbākh, *I'lām al-Nubalā' bi-Tārīkh Ḥalab al-Shahbā'* (Aleppo: al-Maṭab'ah al-'Ilmīyah, 1923), 567–568.

sheikh, Muḥammad Rāghib Ṭabbākh (1877–1951), who described the elegance and courage of Marrāsh’s writing and her plea to women that they should not simply copy men, but cultivate noble attributes of their own. Ṭabbākh noted how she defended women from misogynistic attacks, characterising these attacks as cowardly and greedy.⁵⁴⁷

The salons offered more than mere socialising and meetings. One scholar argued,⁵⁴⁸ that while the salons were informal, they offered an opportunity for women and men to discuss the trajectory of Arab society, its literature, politics and economics.⁵⁴⁹ At first, attendees were intellectuals who were enthusiastic about literature, many of whom were poets and writers themselves. They were interested in bringing home ideas formed while studying abroad. However, their discussions shifted to emphasise social issues and the development of Egypt and Syria as nations free of foreign domination.⁵⁵⁰ While men traditionally had their own learned societies where they would discuss and debate social issues, there were few places, if any, where educated women might gather to engage in intellectual conversation before Marrāsh’s literary salon. The Arab Renaissance stimulated the establishment of women’s literary salons and the ideas which fuelled them.

Even as the salon nurtured nationalism, Marrāsh brought together thinkers and writers with experience and/or education in Europe and elsewhere from the Arab world. Attendees were

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 567–568.

⁵⁴⁸ Heghnar Watenpaugh has argued that Maraash’s salon should not be considered a formal salon because it was more a social activity of an extended family. Some such social gatherings also served the functions of a formal salon and should be included in this category. Heghnar Watenpaugh, “The Harem as Biography: Domestic Architecture, Gender and Nostalgia in Modern Syria,” in Marilyn Booth et. al. (eds.), *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, Chesham: Combined Academic, 2011), 211–236.

⁵⁴⁹ Akin, “War, Women, and the State,” 12–35. Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 52–54.

⁵⁵⁰ Sara al-Qaiwani, *Nationalism, Revolution and Feminism: Women in Egypt and Iran from 1880-1980* (Doctoral dissertation: The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015).

usually from the upper class and intellectual circles who hoped to put progressive ideas into practice in the Arab society.⁵⁵¹ Socialising, entertainment, intellectual and political discussion were mixed together, with Marrāsh introducing chess, poetry recitals, music, and other forms of entertainment to her literary salon; these entertainments often had an exotic flavour, reflecting her salon's international attendance. Here, the details of Arab society could be explored, compared and contrasted with other cultures—often with the aim of sorting out the regressive elements from the rest.⁵⁵² The hosts saw it as their prerogative, as the liberal intelligentsia, to spearhead agendas of social transformation, and many members of Marrāsh's salon became influential figures of social change.⁵⁵³

Princess Nāzli Fāḍil's Salon (Cairo)

Born in Istanbul, Princess Nāzli Fāḍil (1853–1914) belonged to the dynasty of Muḥammad 'Ali of Egypt. Many scholars consider her to be one of the first female intellectuals to establish female literary salons in Egypt.⁵⁵⁴ Educated in Turkey, Nāzli is considered (alongside Marrāsh), to be a pioneer of the Arab literary salon and a prominent figure in the development of Arab intellectualism. She was married at thirteen and lived in Paris where her husband became the Turkish Ambassador to France. After several years moving between Paris and Istanbul, Nāzli moved to Egypt in the early 1880s, where she settled permanently.⁵⁵⁵ Her exposure to French culture and society, including France's literary salons, profoundly influenced the intellectual role she assumed in Egypt.

⁵⁵¹ Heghnar Watenpaugh, "The Utopia of Home: Domestic Architecture, Gender, and Nostalgia in Syria," in *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2010), 73–74.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Sara al-Qaiwani, *Nationalism, Revolution and Feminism: Women in Egypt and Iran from 1880–1980* (Doctoral dissertation: The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015). Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013).

⁵⁵⁴ Al-Qaiwani, *Nationalism, Revolution and Feminism*.

⁵⁵⁵ Raḍwā 'Āshūr; Mohammed Berrada; Ferial J. Ghazoul; Amina Rachid; Mandy McClure, "Introduction," in Raḍwā 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 9–18. Ellen Anne McLarney, *Soft Force: Women in Egypt's Islamic Awakening* (Princeton, New Jersey; Oxford:

Scholars who studied the life of Princess Nāzli describe her as an intelligent, well-informed woman, who possessed quite revolutionary ideas.⁵⁵⁶ According to Wilfred Blunt, Nāzli was “at least as clever as she is pretty, her conversation would be brilliant in any society in the world.”⁵⁵⁷

Statesmen, journalists, diplomats, and literary figures frequented Nāzli’s home, which was the first salon in Egypt.⁵⁵⁸ They included the reformists Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905), Buṭrus Bāshā Ghālī (1846–1910), Sa‘d Zaghlūl (1859–1927), Qāsim Amīn (1865–1908), and others, who were often attired in European style dress.⁵⁵⁹ Nāzli was cosmopolitan by experience and apparently also by choice; she was also fluent in six European languages and maintained amicable relations with many leading European intellectuals and politicians. They included Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General in Egypt from 1883 to 1907, whose policies and arguments, ironically, reduced educational and professional opportunities for Egyptian women.⁵⁶⁰ Originally, Nāzli’s salon included only a few female attendees; this was partly because women were not yet aware of the significance of the salons.⁵⁶¹

Princeton University Press, 2015). Roger Allen, “Writings of Members of the Nāzli Circle,” in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 8 (1969), 79–84. Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2011), 24–25. Akin, “War, Women, and the State,” 12–35.

⁵⁵⁶ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 142. Roger Allen, “Writings of Members of the Nāzli Circle,” in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. 8 (1969), 79–84.

⁵⁵⁷ Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 89. Ehud R. Toledano, *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 90.

⁵⁵⁸ Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 135.

⁵⁵⁹ Mary Roberts, “Harem Portraiture: Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann and the Egyptian Princess Nazli Hanım,” in Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland Local/global (eds.), *Local/global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century* (2006), 77–98. Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1966), 262. Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 81.

⁵⁶⁰ Hoda El Sadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 23. Anishchenkova, “Feminist Voices of the 1990s Generation,” 87–106.

⁵⁶¹ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

During the late nineteenth century, Nāzli's salon played a significant role in educating the wider population, not formally, but through the exchange of ideas of social change. The members of the salons were offered an opportunity to share their experiences of Western and Arabic cultures. The attendees then went on to write about the role of women in Egypt and Syria, spreading their ideas among the general public. Sheikh Muḥammad 'Abduh and Qāsim Amīn, for example, wrote books defending women's rights in education, work and society.⁵⁶² Simultaneously, the salon nurtured Arab intellectuals' yearning for self-determination.⁵⁶³

5.3 Women's Literary Societies: Maryam Nimr Makāriyūs

Maryam Makāriyūs (1860–1888) was widely considered to be one of the first women to establish a literary society for women. She received her education in Beirut, where she studied various subjects, including Arabic, English, history, geography, philosophy, mathematics, and human biology. She graduated in 1877.⁵⁶⁴

In 1878, Makāriyūs and her friends established the first women's literary society, *Bākūrāt Sūrīyah*.⁵⁶⁵ Makāriyūs encouraged women to study and enhance their intellect, and especially to familiarise themselves with the works of famous female writers and poetesses such as al-Khansā' (d. 644) and Zanūbiyā, Queen of Palmira (d. 274). Makāriyūs and other writers published biographies of al-Khansā'⁵⁶⁶ and Zanūbiyā's lives demonstrating their important

⁵⁶² Refer to chapter 6.

⁵⁶³ Billie Melman, *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work*. Springer (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995).

⁵⁶⁴ Zaynab Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Ṭabaqāt Rabbāt al-Khudūr* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Būlāq, 1891), 498. Valerie Anishchenkova, "Feminist Voices of the 1990s Generation a Quest for Identity in Miral al-Tahawy's Blue Aubergine," in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2017), 87–106. Marilyn Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), xiii–xiv.

⁵⁶⁵ Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 498. Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-Nisā'*, 44. Vinson; Golley, "Challenges and Opportunities," 66. 'Āshūr, "Introduction," 9–18. Marilyn Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 40. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sāmī, *al-Qawl al-Ḥaqq fī Bayrūt wa-Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Rā'id al-'Arabī, 1981), 14.

⁵⁶⁶ Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 498.

role in leading society during their respective eras.⁵⁶⁷ Makāriyūs complained that these iconic women received little attention in the Arab world but despite being well known in Western literature.⁵⁶⁸ She emphasised the value of reading widely as a means of building moral character, particularly for women.⁵⁶⁹

Makāriyūs scoured Arab women's literature, critically analysing and synthesising the best works to put forward as inspiring examples for women to follow.⁵⁷⁰ In one of her articles, she described the vital role of Zanūbiyā Queen of Palmira, citing her as the kind of writer to whom Arab women should look for inspiration and learning, and not just entertainment,⁵⁷¹

Women are inclined to read stories and biographies of people... gleaning the greatest portion of their knowledge and benefits from reading books of this sort... [Some] rise higher: to read books that are superior in their research, more precise in their outlook, and more difficult to absorb. You know well that in reading novels and life histories the intelligent woman does not aim for mere entertainment or simply to spark her imagination.⁵⁷²

Makāriyūs' early education had exposed her to Western as well as Arab thought, and she understood the role women and men played in the development of society. Makāriyūs believed strongly in literature as a means of advancing progressive ideas, including what

⁵⁶⁷ Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*, xv.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015). Byron D. Cannon, "Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society: The Interim Role of the Masonic Press in Cairo (al-Lataif, 1885-1895)," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1985), 463–484.

⁵⁷⁰ Marilyn Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 40.

⁵⁷¹ Zaynab Fawwāz; Aḥmad Muḥammad Sālim, *al-Rasā'il al-Zaynabīyah* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2007), 498. Marilyn Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 41.

⁵⁷² Maryam Makariyus, "al-Khansa'," in *al-Muqtataf*, issue. 9, no. 10 (1885), 622. Booth, *Classes of Ladies*, 41.

today would be called “gender mainstreaming.” This is the process whereby the effect of public policies and social programs for both women and men is taken into account at all levels and in all domains.⁵⁷³ In 1881, Makāriyūs joined American missionary women to establish another literary society (*Zahrat al-Ihsān*), which was dedicated to helping poor and destitute women. Her home was the society’s headquarters, where the group met weekly to provide impoverished women with material help (food, clothing, etc.), and also to raise their literacy levels. It offered a stimulating environment for the educated women writers of the society in which to exchange and promote ideas, including ideas for social reform.⁵⁷⁴

Makāriyūs and her associates established a school for women and girls, also named *Zahrat al-Ihsān*, to further the advancement of women in their society. Following the path of al-Bustanī, *Zahrat al-Ihsān*, was one of the first all-female schools founded as a national school: an uncommon development underneath the Ottoman empire. At its opening, the school had approximately 80 students, who were taught Arabic, French, household management, music, illustration, and handmade crafts by the eight female teachers.⁵⁷⁵

In the wake of the Ottoman restrictions on intellectual activity in 1885, Makāriyūs and her husband Shāhīn Makāryūs (1853–1910), left Syria for Egypt.⁵⁷⁶ There they edited and published many articles in the journal *al-Muqatafa*. They advocated for women’s inclusion in education,⁵⁷⁷ and highlighted the important role men and women play in raising their

⁵⁷³ United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, *Gender Mainstreaming an Overview* (New York: Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, 2002).

⁵⁷⁴ Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 498. Booth, *Classes of Ladies*, 41.

⁵⁷⁵ Anonymous, “Madāris Bayrūt wa-Lubnān,” in *al-Ṭabīb*, part 12, 31 (1884), 334.

⁵⁷⁶ Shāhīn Makāryūs was one of the nineteenth-century Arab intellectuals. Makāryūs published many books and established many newspapers, including *al-Muqaṭṭam*, *al-Muqatafa*, and published many articles. Khayr al-Dīn Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām: Qāmūs Tarājīm li-Ashhar al-Rijāl wa-al-Nisā’ min al-‘Arab wa-al-Musta‘ribīn wa-al-Mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1995), 3: 153.

⁵⁷⁷ Byron D. Cannon, “Nineteenth-Century Arabic Writings on Women and Society: The Interim Role of the Masonic Press in Cairo - (al-Lataif, 1885-1895),” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1985), 463–484.

children. When Shiblī Shumayyil argued that women were inherently inferior to men, using religious and social Darwinism arguments, Makāriyūs and other female readers organised a response in a number of articles published in *al-Muqtaṭaf*. Makāriyūs longed to change social norms that traditionally pushed the women to the back corner while men made policy decisions.⁵⁷⁸ She often noted that a lot of Arab women stood in contrast to their European scholarly sisters, who were more likely to receive wider attention.⁵⁷⁹ Her constant calls to action encouraged and motivated Arab women to rise above conventionalism and to excel in their intellectual abilities so that they might compete favourably with men in nation-building and social transformation.

In 1887 *Zahrat al-Ihsān* invited Makāriyūs back to Beirut to attend the school's first graduation ceremony. While she could not attend, Makāriyūs sent a long letter that apologised for her absence and detailed her journey to Cairo and her time there. In her letter Makāriyūs was impressed by the speed of the train and she marvelled at how quickly she was able to traverse a great distance between cities in Egypt. She also wrote a detailed report of the technological, cultural and educational advancements within the city, but lamented the lack of historical Egyptian buildings which had been demolished and rebuilt in Western designs.⁵⁸⁰ Makāriyūs also paid close attention to the progress of women's education in Cairo, noting that women were able to study medicine and midwifery and undertake exams like their male counterparts. However, in her letter, Makāriyūs described Cairo's lack of established scientific and literary societies for women, which were by then a common occurrence in Syria. She did, however, mention that the only society for women *Zahrat al-Ihsān* that she had seen which was started by American missionaries. Makāriyūs expressed

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Susanna Elizabeth Ferguson, "Egypt Awakening in the Early 20th Century: Mayy Ziyādah's Intellectual Circles, written by Bouthaina Khaldi," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 45, no. 2–3 (2014), 272–276.

⁵⁸⁰ Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 498.

her support for this society, noting that it provided an important avenue for women to share knowledge and improve their societal status.⁵⁸¹

Makāriyūs's substantial contribution to Arab women's literature and empowerment was disproportionately greater than her short life which ended at 28.⁵⁸² Equipped with a multicultural training and liberal education, Makāriyūs was a brilliant voice that inspired many other women to play stronger roles in public affairs.⁵⁸³

5.4 The Aftermath of The World's Columbian Exhibition and the Debate

Very little is known about the life of prominent Syrian intellectual Zaynab Fawwāz before her time in Egypt. It is believed that Fawwāz was born in south Lebanon (most likely into a poor family) sometime between 1846 and 1860 and that she may have moved to Egypt with her family to join her brother who practised law there.⁵⁸⁴ What is certain is that she showed great talent as a poet and writer.⁵⁸⁵ One contemporary, Labībah Hāshim, remarked of Fawwāz that she was,

Born in 1860 and moved aged ten to Alexandria, where she studied Arabic, rhetoric, prosody, and history. She excelled at all of these. She had an inclination for writing poetry and was skilled at it. She produced an anthology of short poems, as yet unpublished.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 498.

⁵⁸² Akın, "War, Women, and the State," 12–35. McLarney, *Soft Force*.

⁵⁸³ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

⁵⁸⁴ Walther, "The Situation of Women in Islamic Countries," 624.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Āshūr, *Arab Women Writers*, 9–18. Hoda El Sadda, "Egypt," in Raḍwā 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 105. Kenneth M. Cuno, *Modernizing Marriage: Family, Ideology, and Law in Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 85.

⁵⁸⁶ Booth, *Classes of Ladies*, 8–9.

Fawwāz earned a reputation across Egypt and Syria as an exceptional thinker and writer on general political matters and on the status of women in Arab society. She became a distinguished writer on the topics of gender issues and female education in Egyptian and Syrian media and journals, such as *al-Nīl*, *al-Fatāt*, and *Anīs al-Jalīs*. Fawwāz was active in a range of public matters, leading calls for aid to Algeria when famine and economic crisis struck. Her works extended to other genres and forms, such as her play, *al-Hawā wa-al-wafā* (1893).⁵⁸⁷ Fawwāz also engaged in matters such as gender inequities and the rights of women, including education, marriage, employment, and participation in the public arena.⁵⁸⁸ These themes come out strongly in her novels and an anthology of articles entitled *al-Rasā'il al-Zaynabīyah*,⁵⁸⁹ published in 1897, two years ahead of Qāsim Amīn's *The Liberation of Women*.⁵⁹⁰ Her influence reached to the very top of politics: after she began attending the speeches of nationalist leader Muṣṭafā Kāmil (1874–1908),⁵⁹¹ he changed his opening address from “gentlemen” to “ladies and gentlemen” in respect for her presence.⁵⁹² Among other honoured women, she was known affectionately as *Za'imat al-Mar'ah* (Leader of Women) and *Jawharat al-Sharq* (The Jewel of the East).⁵⁹³ Fawwāz's legacy is evidence that early Arab activism was not bound to the middle and upper classes.

⁵⁸⁷ Booth, “May Her Likes Be Multiplied,” 827–890.

⁵⁸⁸ Yumna al-'Id, “Lebanon,” in Raḍwā 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 16.

⁵⁸⁹ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 516.

⁵⁹⁰ Marilyn Booth, *The Long 1890s in Egypt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 370. El Sadda, “Egypt,” 105. Hoda El Sadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 34. Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 66. Beth Baron, “Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations,” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1989), 370–386.

⁵⁹¹ Muṣṭafā Kāmil was a politician and reformer who was fundamentally opposed to the British occupation of Egypt and the Soudan. Zaydān, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 282.

⁵⁹² Ghada Hashem Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt* (Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 1996).

⁵⁹³ Yūsuf As'ad Dāghir, *Mu'jam al-Asmā' al-Musta'arah wa-Aṣḥābihā Lā Siyyama fī al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1982), 133. Fawwāz, *al-Rasā'il al-Zaynabīyah*.

In 1892, Fawwāz published a biographical encyclopaedia of several hundred notable women from all over the world, titled *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Ṭabaqāt Rabbāt al-Khudūr*.⁵⁹⁴ She saw a gap in the historical literature and sought to fill it by with examples of women for women. Fawwāz deplored the fact that Arab (male) scholars equated historical study with significant renowned men of the past,

Amidst all this activity, I have not seen anyone who has thought radically and set aside a single chapter in Arabic for half the human world; a chapter in which brings together those women famed for their merits and who shunned bad qualities; even though a group of these women has excelled, having writings to their names which rival those of the greatest learned men and compete with the master poets.⁵⁹⁵

Fawwāz's work was generally well received by scholars, including many men. Reviewing her work, the editor and journalist of the *al-Nīl* newspaper, Ḥasan Ḥusnī al-Ṭuwayrānī (1850–1897), wrote in 1892,

This most excellent lady... has occupied herself in composing *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Ṭabaqāt Rabbāt al-Khudūr*, which includes the life histories of a great number of women. With it she has performed a service to the daughters of her kind, undertaking

⁵⁹⁴ In 1879, Maryam Nahhās (1856–1888) began writing a biographical encyclopaedia of women, *The Lives of Famous Women*, but died before she could complete it. Fawwāz, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 515. Al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 7: 210. Marilyn Booth, "May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Famous Women, Biography and Gendered Prescription in Egypt, 1892-1935," in *Signs*, vol. 22, no. 4 (1997), 827–890. Baron, "Pioneers of The Women's Press," 16. Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 65. Marilyn Booth, "Woman in Islam: Men and the Women's Press in Turn-of-the-20th-Century Egypt," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2001), 171–201.

⁵⁹⁵ Marilyn Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 251.

the duty incumbent on this society of seclusion. We ask God most High to shield her and give her success.⁵⁹⁶

Fawwāz advocated for women's emancipation by encouraging women, through historical examples, to participate in society at large and to escape the confinement of their homes and their historical oppression.⁵⁹⁷ She called on them to become conscious of their low status, arguing that there was nothing natural about it, and that it was the construct of a society dominated by men.

Ages ago the Eastern woman closed the door to her happiness and became a machine in the hands of men. Men moved her in any way they wanted. They restricted her education and forbade her from leaving the house or from attending any women's congregations. The woman began to believe that her oppression was a natural law and forgot that men imposed it on her.⁵⁹⁸

In the 1893 "World's Columbian Exposition (also called the Chicago World's Fair)" Fawwāz saw an opportunity to advance the status of Arab women and apparently thought about sending her book *al-Durr al-Manthūr* to the organisers.⁵⁹⁹ She encouraged Egyptian and Syrian women to participate in the Fair. Ironically, she herself did not attend, citing Muslim

⁵⁹⁶ Zaynab Fawwāz, [untitled article], in *al-Nīl* 1: 146 (1892/6 Dhu al-Hijja 1310), 2; reproduced in Fawwāz; Sālim, *al-Rasā'il al-Zaynabīyah*, 17–19. Baron, "Creating Literary Texts," 54. Booth, *Classes of Ladies*, 32.

⁵⁹⁷ Marilyn Booth, "Exemplary Lives, Feminist Aspirations: Zaynab Fawwāz and the Arabic Biographical Tradition," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 26, no. 1–2 (1995), 120–146.

⁵⁹⁸ Fawwāz, *al-Rasā'il al-Zaynabīyah*, 24.

⁵⁹⁹ Baron, "Pioneers of The Women's Press," 21.

scriptures regarding the mixing of women and men that prevented her from attending.⁶⁰⁰

However, a Syrian writer of the nineteenth century, Hanna Kasbanī Kouranī, participated.⁶⁰¹

Kasbanī Kouranī received her education at various American and English missionary schools and later worked in Lebanon as a teacher at the American Girls School. There she studied science, art, and languages, before graduating in 1885.⁶⁰² In 1891, she published her work on etiquette, *al-Akhlāq wa-al-‘Ādāt*, and produced many articles for various magazines and newspapers. Kasbanī Kouranī represented Syria at the International Women’s Conference at the Chicago World’s Fair, displaying Syrian women’s crafts and becoming known as the “Syrian Delegate” and, according to one American newspaper, the “George Eliot of Syria.”⁶⁰³ In the closing session, Kasbanī Kouranī publicly and surprisingly extolled the virtues of traditional Eastern society and its women. In her speech, she asked why women would presume to want to intrude in men’s affairs, arguing that the Eastern woman ought to be “thankful and happy in her place in Creation.”⁶⁰⁴ She quickly gained a reputation as a powerful speaker and stayed in the United States for three years, touring and giving lectures on “The Eastern Woman.”⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁰ Zaynab Fawwāz, 31, 59–60, 64, 71–74. Baron, “Pioneers of The Women’s Press,” 21. Booth, *Classes of Ladies*, 34.

⁶⁰¹ Shereen Khairallah, *The Sisters of Men: Lebanese Women in History* (Beirut: The Institute for Women Studies in the Arab World, 1996), 206–209. Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Home, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 156.

⁶⁰² Editions Belin, “The Reconfiguration of Gender Relations in Syrian-American Feminist Discourse in the Diasporic Conditions of the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *Clio*, no. 37, When Medicine Meets Gender (2013), 170–187.

⁶⁰³ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

⁶⁰⁴ Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah*, 255; Maryam Makāriyūs, “Ba‘d Kharāfāt al-Ifranj,” in *al-Muqataṭaf*, vol. 5 (1880), 169–171.

⁶⁰⁵ Booth, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*, 69. Zaynab Fawwāz, “Fair and Equal Treatment” (1891/92), trans. Marilyn Booth, in Badran and Cooke (eds.), *Opening the Gates* (1990), 220–226.

Her Chicago speech was widely publicised,⁶⁰⁶ including in Egypt where it was criticised. It clearly outraged Fawwāz who entered into a passionate public debate with Kasbānī Kouranī condemning her speech as undervaluing women’s contributions to Arab society and undercutting the emancipation cause. Kasbānī Kouranī insisted that “a domestic lifestyle is natural for women and they must not break this natural law decreed by God.” If women were to assume equal rights as men, she argued that it would, “change the order of the universe and the laws of nature,” stressing that it would be unacceptable “to have the different genders labour in the same field of action.”⁶⁰⁷ Moreover, Kasbānī Kouranī said women could not simultaneously take part in public affairs and be good mothers.⁶⁰⁸

Fawwāz challenged Kasbānī Kouranī on this and many other points, arguing that historically many Arab women had served as leaders. Fawwāz’s arguments met with considerable religious and political opposition, including from Sheik Aḥmad ‘Ārif al-Zayn (1884–1960), the creator of the Beirut journal, *al-‘Irfan*. Al-Zayn disagreed with her ideas, asserting that women could not act as men, and he condemned Fawwāz’s rebuttal of Kasbānī Kouranī. In response, Fawwāz again cited numerous examples of women, Arab and Western, who had done just that. While Kasbānī Kouranī’s arguments ran counter to the emerging Arab activist narrative by arguing with Fawwāz, she also elevated the gender debate in Arab society and may have even energised her opponents.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁶ Kaḥḥālah, *A‘lām al-Nisā’*, 2: 84. Zakiya Belhachmi, *Women, Education, and Science within the Arab-Islamic Socio-Cultural History* (Canada: University of Montreal, 2013), 25.

⁶⁰⁷ Imīlī Fāris Ibrāhīm, *Adībāt Lubnānīyāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Rayḥānī, 1961), 51. Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Home, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 156.

⁶⁰⁸ Jenny Tellström, *The Promotion of Girls’ Education in a late 19th Century Egyptian Women’s Magazine-A Study of Western Feminist Influences* (Lund University: Centre for Languages and Literature, 2014).

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

5.5 Hudá Sha‘rāwī and Development of Women’s Political Consciousness

By the early twentieth century, women’s movements in the West were gaining political ground, achieving suffrage and other legal rights for women. While Egypt’s independence from Britain came in 1922, it did not accord full voting rights to women until 1956 (and Syria in 1949), yet Egyptian female activism was intimately bound to the new context of nationhood. Inspired by the successes of women elsewhere, this context gave rise to Hudá Sha‘rāwī (1879–1947), who became a prominent leader of the Arab women’s movement, inspiring Egyptian females to activism.⁶¹⁰ Sha‘rāwī’s career marks a milestone in the trajectory of Arab society, especially in Egypt and Syria.⁶¹¹ Her leadership position in the nationalist movement contributed to the departure of the British from Egypt. Her decision to remove the veil fuelled a sense of inseparable national and gender pride⁶¹² in Egyptian women.

Sha‘rāwī was born in Minya to a political family. Her father, Muḥammad Sulṭān Bāshā, was the first Speaker of the Egyptian parliament, and her husband, ‘Ali Bāshā, was a senator.⁶¹³ She married young, at thirteen, however, the “subsequent separation from her husband gave her time for an extended formal education, as well as an unexpected taste of independence.”⁶¹⁴ Upon her father’s death ‘Ali assumed her guardianship to maintain the integrity of her family’s estate. Like many nineteenth century Arab women intellectuals, her

⁶¹⁰ Mohja Kahf, “Hudá Sha‘rāwī’s, Mudhakkirati: The Memoirs of The First Lady of Arab Modernity,” in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1998), 53–82. Nikki R. Keddie; Beth Baron, *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 312.

⁶¹¹ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

⁶¹² McLarney, *Soft Force*.

⁶¹³ Muḥammad Tūnjī, *Mu‘jam A‘lām al-Nisā’* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2001), 179. Khalidi, “The Legacies of Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,” 375.

⁶¹⁴ Hudá Sha‘rāwī, Margot Badran, *Harem Years the Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)* (New York: NY Feminist Press, 2003).

early schooling began at home, but it was unusually broad. She was taught in French as well as Arabic, and studied science, literature and poetry.

It was this education that awakened her curiosity and allowed her to develop connections with female intellectuals and leaders across Europe and the Arab world. Sha‘rāwī was also passionate about learning Arabic language and expressed her desire to read books beyond the *Qur’ān*.⁶¹⁵ However, she was criticised by her family when she decided to learn more about Arabic grammar, “The young lady was in no need of grammar as she will not become a judge!”⁶¹⁶ She struggled against the tight restraints on her education, making clandestine purchases of books from door-to-door pedlars, even though she “was strictly forbidden to do so.”⁶¹⁷

Sha‘rāwī frequently rebelled against the social structures imposed on Arab girls and young women, and a gender awareness started to emerge in the early stages of her writing. In her memoirs she recalls feeling aggrieved that her brother “received the lion’s share of her family’s attention” and favours because he was a boy and would carry the name of the family.⁶¹⁸ She stated that “later, being a female became a barrier between me and the freedom for which I yearned.”⁶¹⁹

Sha‘rāwī cites her tearaway personality and stubbornness as contributing to her passion for ensuring that Egyptian girls and women were granted equal educational opportunities to boys

⁶¹⁵ Mervat Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation-building in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: The Life and Works of ‘Ā’ishah Taymūr* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 39–42.

⁶¹⁶ Hatem, *Literature, Gender, and Nation*, 40.

⁶¹⁷ Sha‘rāwī, *Mudakkirāt*, 31–32.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

and men.⁶²⁰ In 1919, Sha‘rāwī organised “public” lectures to female-only audiences on topics that interested mostly upper-class women of the *harem*.⁶²¹ Sha‘rāwī was, moreover, a long-time opponent of the veil,⁶²² decrying it as an unfair restriction on women’s activities in the public sphere. Along with Istir Fahmī Wīṣā and Regina Khayyat,⁶²³ she attended the 9th conference of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in Rome in 1923.⁶²⁴ In Sha‘rāwī’s memoirs, she notes that Western delegates were surprised to see an Egyptian woman in attendance, “as if the veiled Egyptian woman was stamped in their imagination with the characteristics of ignorance and barbarism.”⁶²⁵ Returning to Cairo, the three women removed their veils in a public display of protest—a bold gesture that stirred many other (mostly noble) women to do the same and energised the wider women’s liberation movement in Egypt.⁶²⁶

Sha‘rāwī’s name began to appear in media discussions about women’s rights in society and she became conscious of the symbolic role she was playing,

⁶²⁰ Fakhri Haghani, “Egyptian Women, Revolution and the Making of a Visual Public Sphere,” in *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2015), 162–175.

⁶²¹ Margot Badran, “The Feminist Vision in the Writings of Three Turn-of-the-Century Egyptian Women,” in *Bulletin* (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies), vol. 15, no. 1–2 (1988), 11–20. Kahf, “Hudá Sha‘rāwī’s,” 53–82.

⁶²² To be clear, she did not suggest that the *hijab* impeded the advancement of women, only the face-covering—the *niqāb*. Beth Baron, “Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations,” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1989), 370–386.

⁶²³ Inger Marie Okkenhaug; Ingvild Flaskerud, *Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East Two Hundred Years of History* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), 95. Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 114.

⁶²⁴ Beth Baron, “Readers and the Women’s Press in Egypt,” in *Poetics Today*, vol. 15, no. 2, Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies: Modern Period II (1994), 217–240. Lucia Sorbera, “Challenges of Thinking Feminism and Revolution in Egypt between 2011 and 2014,” in *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014), 63–75. Soha Abdel Kader; Margot Badran, “Egyptian Women in a Changing Society,” in *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1988), 307–309. Charlotte Weber, “Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950,” in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2001), 125–157.

⁶²⁵ Sha‘rāwī, *Mudakkirāt*, 251.

⁶²⁶ Ṣāfīnāz Kāzim, *Fī Mas‘alat al-Sufūr wa-al-Hijāb* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1982), 11–12, 14. Mervat Hatem, “Egyptian Discourses on Gender and Political Liberalization: Do Secularist and Islamist Views Really Differ,” in *Middle East Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4 (1994), 661–676. Mervat Hatem, “Secularist and Islamist discourses on modernity in Egypt and the evolution of the postcolonial nation-state,” in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad; John L Esposito (eds.), *Islam, Gender and Social Change* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85–99.

Much has been said regarding the participation of Egyptian woman in the international feminist conferences and I want to record here some of what women as well as men have said. This discussion does not concern me as Hudá Sha‘rāwī the person, but rather it is about me as a symbol... The voice of the Egyptian woman has indeed burst out in the international assemblies, and she has been able to serve the Egyptian cause in addition to the causes of women and society. The newspapers wrote saying “Mrs. Hudá Sha‘rāwī spoke dressed in the garment of the nation on behalf of Egyptian women, and the great approbation with which her lectures have been received is the greatest ‘propaganda’ for Egypt in many newspapers and many contexts, and her lecture was broadcast on the wireless.” What is salient from these lines is that we have carried the message of Egypt to every location, expressing the countenance of Egypt in every conference, and speaking everywhere in the name of Egypt.⁶²⁷

Sha‘rāwī worked within and without the new nationalist establishment: as a leader of the ruling *Wafd* Party’s women’s committee, as founding president of the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) (1923), and as chief organiser of pickets demanding reforms of the new government.⁶²⁸ Prior to the formation of the EFU, some considerable progress had been made in the advancement of women’s rights, particularly in the work and education sectors. Yet, family law, in particular, remained very restrictive. Chief amongst the EFU’s goals were universal suffrage, establishing a minimum age for marriage, according mothers’ legal

⁶²⁷ Sha‘rāwī, *Mudakkirāt*, 358. Kahf, “Hudá Sha‘rāwī’s,” 53–82.

⁶²⁸ Beth Baron, “The Advent of Association,” 172. Keddie; Baron, *Women in Middle Eastern History*, 313. Khalidi, “The Legacies of Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,” 375. Ragai N. Makar, “New Voices for Women in The Middle East,” in *Mela Notes*, no. 65–66 (1998), 14–60. Rebecca Joubin, “Creating the Modern Professional Housewife: Scientifically Based Advice Extended to Middle- and Upper-Class Egyptian Women, 1920s–1930s,” in *The Arab Studies Journal*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1996), 19–45.

custody of their children, ending polygamy, and removing the right of men to divorce on demand. Importantly, under Sha‘rāwī’s leadership, the EFU and other organisations, such as the New Women Society, took to the streets.⁶²⁹ Until the 1920s, Egyptian women, especially upper-class women, had rarely protested publicly. Under Sha‘rāwī’s influence, however, public rallies became a mainstay of women’s advocacy, including rallying at the parliament for the right to vote.

Sha‘rāwī zealously took up the ideological thread of education that runs right through the Arab Renaissance and the women’s movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the emancipation of Arab women is possible only where they are provided education opportunities equal to those of men. She and her colleagues were successful in both acting as a defence against any reversal of the gains in women rights made thus far and in advancing the cause of gender equality.⁶³⁰ Although an ardent nationalist, Sha‘rāwī’s vision was for women to assume leadership roles on the world stage.⁶³¹ Sha‘rāwī was widely travelled and her contact with women’s movements elsewhere inspired and equipped her for activism in Egypt.⁶³² She argued against the objectification of women by men and laid much of the responsibility for women’s liberation and advancement on the shoulders of women. Sha‘rāwī fought the popular belief, held by a majority of both sexes, that the women were not up to the task of contributing equally to nation-building.⁶³³ In all of her philanthropic enterprises, she placed women in charge; demanding them to demonstrate leadership and to prove that women were perfectly capable of high-level management. In these practical ways,

⁶²⁹ Keddie; Baron, *Women in Middle Eastern History*, 313.

⁶³⁰ Badran, *Feminism in Islam*.

⁶³¹ Valerie Anishchenkova, “Feminist Voices of the 1990s Generation a Quest for Identity in Miral al-Tahawy’s *Blue Aubergine*,” in *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2017), 87–106.

⁶³² Fakhri Haghani, “Egyptian women, Revolution and the Making of a Visual Public Sphere,” in *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2015), 162–175.

⁶³³ Suad Joseph; Marilyn Booth; Bahar Davary; Hoda El Sadda; Sarah Gualtieri; Virginia Hooker, Therese Saliba; Elora Shehabuddin, *Women and Islamic Cultures: Disciplinary Paradigms and Approaches: 2003-2013* ed. Suad Joseph (Brill: Leiden, 2013).

as well as by force of argument, Sha‘rāwī redefined the role of women in Egyptian and wider Arab society.⁶³⁴

5.6 Conclusion

Literary salons were critical to the establishment of a new consciousness and in setting the Arab female activists’ agenda for social transformation.⁶³⁵ Serving as informal meeting places, they brought together intellectual heavyweights who helped to define the identities of modern Egypt and Syria, in which women played a strong role in nation-building. The salons gave women a rare opportunity to meet, network, and develop a progressive national dialogue, often side-by-side with men.⁶³⁶ They also assisted in driving educational reforms that included more women. Indeed, salon organisers often placed great emphasis on women’s education as the driver of social transformation. Salons provided more than mere opportunities to socialise, they served to build networks of women that later coalesced into more formal social change organisations. Moreover, the women intellectuals of the Arab world joined the international women’s movement, which both inspired them and allowed them to learn from the efforts of women elsewhere to liberate themselves. As a result, they secured key legal, educational, and marital reforms. Importantly, they also demonstrated that Arab women could play an equal role to Arab men in society, effectively shifting the national consciousness from being Ottoman to being Arab.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ McLarney, *Soft Force*.

⁶³⁶ Hoda Thabet, *Pioneering Female Authors in Egypt and the Levant* (Reijjjavik: National and University Library of Iceland, 2013). Hülya Yıldız, “Rethinking the Political: Ottoman Women as Feminist Subjects,” in *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2018), 177–191.

Chapter 6

Women's Liberation:

Between Religious Thought and Secularism

Chapter 6 Women's Liberation: Between Religious Thought and Secularism

6.1 Introduction

The Western Enlightenment was viewed as an ideal of modernity and a model for advancement that could be adopted in Egypt and Syria. The ideas which were developed, served to advance secular, rather than religious ideas, specifically in relation to the rights of women and their education.⁶³⁷ This chapter explores nineteenth and early twentieth-century Egyptian and Syrian activism and reforms in the education of females, focusing on key women and men reformers and intellectuals.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the roles and contributions of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) and Qāsim Amīn (1865–1908). They were renowned advocates of Arab women's liberation, via education and legal reforms.⁶³⁸ Muḥammad ‘Abduh sought to convince his generation of the need for women to be like men and allow them to have the same opportunities in life as men, for them to have access to education, and to eliminate mistreatment in the home.⁶³⁹ His actions served as the foundation for Qāsim Amīn and greatly influenced Arab women.⁶⁴⁰

The reaction to the work of Qāsim Amīn was divided into two groups: those who joined the movement to improve the situation of women; the other comprising traditionalists and

⁶³⁷ Shāhīn Makāryūs, *Ḥasr al-Lithām ‘an Nakabāt al-Shām* (Cairo: [publisher not identified], 1895), 45–46. Jirjī Zaydān, *Tārīkh Adāb al-Lughah al-‘Arabīyah* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Hilāl, 1911), 4: 180.

⁶³⁸ Hudā Sha‘rāwī, Badran, Margot. *Harem Years the Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)* (New York: NY Feminist Press, 2003).

⁶³⁹ Ghada Osman, “Back to Basics: The Discourse of Muslim Feminism in Contemporary Egypt,” in *Women and Language* 26, no. 1 (2003), 73.

⁶⁴⁰ Mansoor Moaddel, “Discursive Pluralism and Islamic Modernism in Egypt,” in *Arab Studies Quarterly* (2002), 1–29.

conservatives.⁶⁴¹ The religious and secular discourses, represented by ‘Abduh and Amīn respectively, regarding women’s education and liberation are presented and discussed.

Progressive male Arab intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contested the entrenched traditional roles of women and endorsed female education. Despite this support, however, any reforms that were made were largely focused on men. Ultimately, the vision of a “liberated woman” was reduced to access to education for women in order to improve their ability to carry out their household duties, as opposed to creating more empowered, equal women who would be key players in society and politics.

By the early twentieth century, significant progress had resulted from this debate, including the establishment of Egypt’s first Western-style University in Cairo in 1908, and the employment of influential female lecturers.⁶⁴² This progress, however, was not entirely the result of male advocacy, but also of female intellectuals, themselves, who successfully championed reforms. This chapter concludes with an exploration of the contribution to the education and liberation of women of three leading Arab activists of the time: Labībah Hāshim, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, and Nabawīyah Mūsá.

6.2 Muḥammad ‘Abduh: Religious Reformers and the Position Regarding Women

In 1849, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, jurist and liberal reformer, was born in a small village and lived until 1905 in Alexandria, not far from his birthplace.⁶⁴³ When ‘Abduh turned ten, he joined religious classes in a local mosque and within two years had memorised the entire

⁶⁴¹ Kenneth Cuno, *Modernizing Marriage: Family, Ideology, and Law in Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015).

⁶⁴² Leila Ahmed, “Veil of Ignorance,” in *Foreign Policy*, no. 186 (2011), 40.

⁶⁴³ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 380. Itzhak Weismann, “A Perverted Balance: Modern Salafism Between Reform and Jihād,” in *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 57, no. 1 (2017), 33–66.

Qur'ān.⁶⁴⁴ Clearly talented, the twelve-year-old ‘Abduh started to study grammar at the Aḥmadī mosque in Ṭanṭā⁶⁴⁵ but he became deeply frustrated by his teachers’ jargon. The clash between ‘Abduh’s temperament and the mosque’s traditional approach to education saw him run away from his teachers more than once and to give up his schooling for farming and marriage in 1865.⁶⁴⁶ He rejected his father’s attempts to force him back into the mosque and only returned to studies with the help of a local sheikh whose patience revived ‘Abduh’s enthusiasm to learn and write.⁶⁴⁷ He later returned to the Aḥmadī mosque in Ṭanṭā, even earning a reputation as a hardworking student to whom his classmates would turn to for help. In 1866, ‘Abduh became one of the religious scholars at al-Azhar, “the great centre of Islamic learning.”⁶⁴⁸ He spent four years studying there but again became disillusioned by his teachers’ technical style and the narrow choice of subjects. He looked beyond the curriculum, learning logic, mathematics and geometry, and “became the student of prominent scholars, philosophers and mathematicians, such as sheikh Muḥammad al-Basyūnī and Sheikh Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl, and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.”⁶⁴⁹ ‘Abduh was encouraged to embark on a career combining politics, journalism, and social commentary. al-Afghānī taught him about the challenges facing Egypt and exposed him to the achievements of the West.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁴ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 382. Charles Adams, *Islam and Modernism: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muhammad ‘Abduh* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2010), 20.

⁶⁴⁵ Yvonne Haddad, “Muḥammad ‘Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform,” in ‘Alī Rahnama (ed.), *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (London: Zed, 1994), 30–63.

⁶⁴⁶ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 381.

⁶⁴⁷ Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 23.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23–24. Weismann, “A Perverted Balance,” 75.

⁶⁴⁹ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 387.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

al-Afghānī's approach was to apply the teachings of the *Qur'ān* to contemporary issues, rejecting blind tradition (*taqlīd*)⁶⁵¹ in favour of reviving reason (*ijtihād*).⁶⁵² He argued that new interpretations of the *Qur'ān* must be reached if current ones were irrational and did not align with reason. This critical thinking—thoroughly examining and testing each point before accepting it—strongly influenced 'Abduh and later put him at the centre of considerable controversy. "His modernising position, focussed on independent thought and selective revisionism, was viewed with deep suspicion."⁶⁵³ 'Abduh was accused of being al-Mu'tazilah,⁶⁵⁴ by the head of a conservative circle in al-Azhar, al-Sheikh 'Ulaish.⁶⁵⁵ 'Abduh answered,

If I give up the blind acceptance of the Ash'arīyah doctrine, why would I take up blind acceptance of al-Mu'tazilah doctrine? Therefore, I am giving up blind acceptance of both and will judge matters according to the proof presented.⁶⁵⁶

Perhaps unsurprisingly, his response did little to quell the controversy or satisfy his detractors. Indeed, during his final examination in 1877, many of 'Abduh's examiners were against granting him recognition as a graduate scholar. He only succeeded with the

⁶⁵¹ *Taqlīd*: The Arabic term referring to the imitation of Islamic laws with no prior investigation, without understanding and without forming a critical basis in their application. Muḥammad Kamāl; Abdullah Saeed; Christina Mayer, *Essential dictionary of Islamic Thought* (Henley Beach, S. Aust.: Seaview Press, 2001), 196.

⁶⁵² Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 399–400. *Ijtihād*: This refers to the Arabic word for exertion and has several definitions. One of which is maximum exertion in order to comprehend the interpretation of *sharī'ah* through disciplined judgement. Kamāl; Saeed; Mayer, *Essential dictionary of Islamic Thought*, 96.

⁶⁵³ Kinda AlSamara, "Muḥammad 'Abduh Islam and New Urbanity in the Nineteenth Century Arab World," in *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 3, issue. 1 (2018), 63–79.

⁶⁵⁴ al-Mu'tazilah is a rationalist school of Islamic theology which was accused of digressing from traditional Islamic theology due to polemical differences. They believed religion was intended to be interpreted "in the light of human reason." The school stresses the "concept of the Unity of God" (*al-tawḥīd*) and denied the eternal nature of Divine attributes. Kamāl; Saeed; Mayer, *Essential dictionary of Islamic Thought*, 143. Ibrāhīm Madkūr, *Fī al-Falsafah al-Islāmīyah* (Alexandria: Maktabat al-Iskandarīyah, 2015), 2: 37. Ignác Goldziher, *al-'Aqīdah wa-al-Sharī'ah fī al-Islām* (Baghdād: Manshūrāt al-Jamal, 2009), 112.

⁶⁵⁵ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 61–62. Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 42.

⁶⁵⁶ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 390–391.

intervention of the high-ranking bureaucrat Muḥammad al-‘Abbāsī (who held office 1870–1882).⁶⁵⁷

Later in 1878, ‘Abduh was promoted to the position of history professor at “Cairo’s Teacher Training College,” *Dar al-‘Ulum*, which eventually became Cairo University.⁶⁵⁸ At the same time, he was employed at the Khedival School of Languages, teaching Arabic and becoming the editor of the official state journal, *al-Waqā’i‘ al-Miṣrīyah*. By 1882, his radical style, his calls for self-determination, and his support for an Egyptian nationalist revolt against the British a few years earlier, put him under the suspicion of the British occupiers and he was exiled for six years.⁶⁵⁹ It is also notable that ‘Abduh spent most of these years in Syria where he helped to establish a new education system.

‘Abduh’s goal was to bring about reform in every aspect of society, in all parts and classes of the country, and drawing on Egyptians from all quarters.⁶⁶⁰ His program of reform included the advancement of women’s education which built on earlier reforms in education. He believed that education led to a healthy society and better family,

A nation is founded in the family. Good families make good nations. Good families are united by love and cooperation between parents, children and other relatives. If someone is not a good family member then neither will that person be a good member of the society or nation.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 390–391.

Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 30.

⁶⁵⁸ Leyla Amzi-Erdogdular, “Alternative Muslim Modernities: Bosnian Intellectuals in The Ottoman and Habsburg Empires,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2017), 912–943.

⁶⁵⁹ Safet Bektovic, “Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Islamic Philosophy,” in *Journal of Islamic Research*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2015), 16–33.

⁶⁶⁰ Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 206.

⁶⁶¹ ‘Abduh, *al-A‘māl al-Kāmilah*, 172.

Abduh's sought to redefine the teachings of Islam through modern understanding, while traditionalists believed that his ideas were influenced by Western ideology. As a reformer, 'Abduh believed that social change should begin with the woman at the core of the family unit.⁶⁶² This perspective may have stemmed from his upbringing in a village life, where big families and maintaining ties with relatives are sacred.⁶⁶³ Much of his advocacy and criticism was directed at Egypt's elite, including its aristocratic women,

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's political efforts are about as effective as Princess Nāzīlī. Jamāl al-Dīn is a scholarly man, he knows the situation of the people, Muslims, and Islam. He has the ability to enable them to achieve great things through Education, but he focusses just on politics. Now he has lost that ability... The Princess could do great things if she applied herself to the issue of raising girls. She is surrounded by plenty of other princesses who just spend their money frivolously on themselves. If she advised these princesses (and other wealthy women) to establish schools for girls, and invited teachers from Istanbul and Syria, the princesses would listen and together, they would achieve something worthwhile. If they do not see immediately see results, they can rest assured that they have sowed viable seeds for future generations.⁶⁶⁴

'Abduh sought to create a stronger family system by increasing access to female education, restricting divorce and removing polygamy. He was made *Mufī* in 1899, reinstating the

⁶⁶² Ellen Anne McLarney, *Soft Force: Women in Egypt's Islamic Awakening* (Princeton, New Jersey; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), 78. Roxanne D. Marcotte, "The Status of Women and of Polygamy in Islam," in *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie, Anno, vol. 20 (81), no. 2/3 (2001), 313–328.

⁶⁶³ 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, *Abqarī al-Iṣlāḥ wa-al-Ta'īm, al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh* (Cairo: Dār Miṣr lil-Ṭibā'ah, 1960), 107–108. 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shihātah, *al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh bayna al-Manhaj al-dīnī wa-al-Manhaj al-Ijtimā'ī* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2000), 41.

⁶⁶⁴ 'Abduh, *al-A'māl al-Kāmilah*, 264.

concept of *ijtihād*, which allowed him to pass a religious ruling (*fatwá*) stating that a man may not marry more than once unless his wife is barren.⁶⁶⁵ In another ruling, he prohibited male-initiated divorce unless there was a significant reason for the divorce that was accepted by a judge.⁶⁶⁶ This renewal of the idea of *ijtihād* paved the way for scholars to create modern interpretations of the *Qur'ān* based on contemporary society and contemporary problems. He argued that religious texts should hold solutions for problems in every time, explicated by “logic and reason.”⁶⁶⁷ If Muslims did not engage in critical thinking, they would surely be “mislead by irrational ideas,”

If by chance, we discover new ideas which go against long-held traditions, we can do one of two things. We can accept that a tradition is right and admit that we are incapable of understanding God’s will. Or we can use logic and reason to understand the essence of a tradition and reinterpret and re-conceptualise it for a modern world.⁶⁶⁸

According to his beliefs and thoughts, Islam was the most rational of religions. ‘Abduh stated that statues were forbidden within the Islamic tradition. This law emanated from a time when pagan idolatry was widespread in the region. Gods and goddesses, as well as animals, were worshipped as statues, distancing people from the monotheistic religion and one God revealed to the Prophet. Paganism declined as Muslims dedicated themselves to God. ‘Abduh claimed that statues were an expression of a form of art and that there was no longer a link to pagan idols. Artists, therefore, could express themselves freely and making statues was no

⁶⁶⁵ Cited in *Majallat al-Manār*, vol. 8 (1905), 487. Ibid., 176.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁶⁷ Muḥammad ‘Abduh, “Ikhtilāf al-Qawānīn bi-Ikhtilāf Aḥwāl al-Umam,” in *al-Waqā’i’ al-Miṣrīyah*, issue. 1142 (1881).

⁶⁶⁸ Muḥammad ‘Abduh, *al-Manhaj al-Iṣlāḥī lil-Imām Muḥammad ‘Abduh* (Alexandria: Alexandria Library, 2005), 72.

longer forbidden.⁶⁶⁹ The example of the abolishment of slavery was used by ‘Abduh to highlight how circumstance led to changes in tradition, as many people owned slaves during the time of the Prophet. Later, new norms were established as many governments banned slavery, and societies adapted to the changes.⁶⁷⁰ This, ‘Abduh argued, demonstrated the flexibility in tradition. Customs and regulations were not absolute and could be changed depending on the time and needs. He maintained, however, the idea that devotional, religious laws regarding worship transcended social change and were in place for specific reasons. “His ideology was a synthesis of rationalism, liberalism, nationalism, and, most importantly, the universalism of Islam.”⁶⁷¹ Abduh argued that the traditional views which were rigid prevented the existence of a rational religion. Through reason, ‘Abduh’s sought to reconcile Islamic teachings with European ideas and he championed welfare and justice, which he stated had a strong foundation within religion. Embedded in this philosophy was the emancipation of women. Unlike other male intellectuals of the time, however, who also advocated education for women, ‘Abduh did not rationalise his calls by appealing to the patriarchy but sought a genuinely more equal relationship between men and women.

6.3 Qāsim Amīn: *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman*

Qāsim Amīn was a fervent supporter of a modern model of Arab women’s education.⁶⁷²

Hudá Sha‘rāwī mentioned him in her memoir as “The Advocate of Women.” Amin’s two

books *Tahrīr al-Mar’ah* (1899) and *al-Mar’ah al-Jadīdah* (1900) gave rise to his title as the

⁶⁶⁹ ‘Imārah, *al-Imām Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, 273–274.

⁶⁷⁰ ‘Abduh, *al-A‘māl al-Kāmilah*, 2: 91–92.

⁶⁷¹ alSamara, “Muḥammad ‘Abduh Islam and New,” 63–79.

⁶⁷² Marilyn Booth, “Women in Islam: Men and the ‘Women’s Press’” in *Turn-of-the-20th-Century Egypt*, *IJMES*, 33 (2001), 171–201. Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 153. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 145.

“father of Arab feminism.”⁶⁷³ Born in Egypt to a Kurdish family, at age 18 Qāsim Amīn graduated from the Khedival School with a degree in law before being enlisting as an officer in Khedive Isma’il’s army.⁶⁷⁴

Amīn was raised when Egypt was self-ruling province in the Ottoman Empire. The country was ruled by the Khedive Muḥammad Tawfīq (1879–1892) and the Khedive ‘Abbās II Ḥilmī (1892–1914), who were both descendants of Muḥammad ‘Alī. The Anglo-Egyptian war of 1882 led to the British occupation of Egypt and to the significant impact of British influence on both the political and domestic affairs of Egypt. The upper classes, to which Amīn belonged, saw a greater seclusion of women towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷⁵ Women were required to cover their faces in public and rarely left home, in contrast to lower class urban and rural women who worked in farms and houses and did not cover their faces.⁶⁷⁶ The legal system was also transformed, with European-style regulations replacing religious laws. Secular judges, who like Amīn were Western educated, began replacing traditional judges who were trained at al-Azhar University.⁶⁷⁷ The Egyptian government funded Amīn’s studies in France, where he became conversant with Western legal and political thought. French culture and society profoundly shaped his views, including

⁶⁷³ Booth, “Women in Islam,” 171–201. Ellen Fleischmann, “The Other Awakening: The Emergence of Women’s Movement in the Modern Middle East, 1900-1940,” in Margaret Lee Meriwether; Judith Tucker (eds.), *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999), 98. Scholars such as Albert Hourani and Leila Ahmed did not label Amīn as a feminist. Hourani wrote: “He is scarcely what a later generation would call a feminist. He does not, for example, suggest that women should have political rights.” Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 166. Ahmed, *Women and Gender*, 163.

⁶⁷⁴ Haggai Erlich, *Students and University in 20th Century Egyptian Politics* (London: Cass, 1989), 16. Renata Pepicelli, “Rethinking Gender in Arab Nationalism: Women and The Politics of Modernity in The Making of Nation-States. Cases from Egypt, Tunisia And Algeria,” in *Oriente Moderno*, vol. 97, no. 1 (2017), 201–219.

⁶⁷⁵ Jean Lacouture; Simone Lacouture, *Egypt in Transition* (London: Methuen, 1958), 78.

⁶⁷⁶ Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 65. Judith E Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, Cambridge (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 37.

⁶⁷⁷ Robert L. Tignor, *Modernisation and British Colonial Rule in E t 1882-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1966), 3.

the approach of the French to women's education and rights.⁶⁷⁸ Yet, conversely, within the religious realm, authorities including Muḥammad 'Abduh, and many of the educated class advocated for the modernisation of Islam in order to gain freedom from colonisation and western domination.

During his time abroad and even before returning to Egypt, Amīn found opportunities to test his views on Arab readers, including writing for the French-based Arabic magazine *al-Urwah al-Wuthqá*.⁶⁷⁹ Amīn returned to Egypt in 1885, ambitious to help women push for their rights and educational opportunities, such as those available to Frenchwomen,

Look at the European countries; the governments are based on freedom and respect for personal rights, and the status of women has been raised to a high degree of respect and freedom of thought and action.⁶⁸⁰

In 1894, Amīn married Zaynab a daughter of Admiral Amīn Tawfīq, joining one of Egypt's powerful aristocratic families, and was later elected a judge.⁶⁸¹ In 1899 he published *Tahrīr al-Mar'ah* (*The Liberation of Women*), which received considerable, even heated, criticism which was spearheaded by leading newspapers. Despite criticism of Amīn by contemporary female historians,⁶⁸² his books presented the bold ideas of nineteenth century Arab thinkers who were willing to criticise society from within and to advocate for the liberation of Egyptian women in particular. Prominent female figures including Hudá Sha'rāwī, Bāḥithat

⁶⁷⁸ Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 161.

⁶⁷⁹ Ṣalāḥ Zakī, *A'lām al-Naḥḍah al-'Arabīyah al-Islāmīyah fī al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥaḍārah al-'Arabīyah, 2002), 84. Baron, "The Community of Readers," 91.

⁶⁸⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 168.

⁶⁸¹ Muḥammad 'Imārah, *al-A'māl al-Kāmilah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006), 4, 26.

⁶⁸² Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 151, 163.

al-Bādiyah and many others advocated for women's liberation as a consequence of Amīn's work.

Amīn's book *Tahrīr al-Mar'ah*, protested the "restrictions on women's work and education and argued for a more radical social orientation"⁶⁸³ He created an image of European women as role models of Western societal progress and praised the equality that existed between the genders in the West,⁶⁸⁴

When an Eastern visitor goes to any city in Europe, the first thing he notices is the important role of women in Western society. Women in the West work alongside men in every occupation. Men can do women's work and women can do men's work, without any prejudice. The Eastern community, on the other hand, divides the roles of women and men: women work inside their family homes and men work away from home. This division prevents women from reaching their full potential.⁶⁸⁵

Central to his thesis was the role he saw for educated women in raising good Egyptian families, especially raising competent boys, given their leadership role in the patriarchal society. Secluding women from public life and denying them education, he argued, was frustrating national progress.⁶⁸⁶ Amīn believed that the decadence of Egyptian aristocratic women and their attachment to traditional values could only be resolved by formal education. With their heads covered Egyptian girls could not practically participate in classes, so Amīn called for the removal of unnecessary obstructions and coverings, which, he said, had no

⁶⁸³ Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919-1952* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 115.

⁶⁸⁴ Qāsim Amīn, *Tahrīr al-Mar'ah* (Cairo: Dāral-Ma'ārif, 1899), 12–13.

⁶⁸⁵ Qāsim Amīn, *al-Mar'ah al-Jadīdah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sha'b, 1911), 79.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

Qur'ānic basis in any case.⁶⁸⁷ Despite, or even partly because of the controversy it stirred, *Tahrīr* became a milestone on the path to greater freedom for Arab women.⁶⁸⁸ This is notwithstanding that Amin's focus was on the upper class and the importance of the emancipation of females was only in so far as it served the patriarchy. Indeed, his own wife remained fully covered.⁶⁸⁹

Amīn's second book *al-Mar'ah al-Jadīdah* (*The New Woman*), was more radical than his first. In it he criticised traditional ideas which undermined women in backward Arab countries.⁶⁹⁰ His agenda for women's progress was directly linked to material and scientific advancement,

The New Woman is one of the fruits of modern civilisation. She appeared in the West after scientific discoveries freed the human mind from the grip of illusions, doubts, and superstitions. These discoveries handed people the reins to lead their lives and paved the roads for them. Science initiated an exploration into all aspects of life. It scrutinised all opinions and accepted only those that proved useful to the common good. This led to the abolition of the authority of the clergy and the privileges of the aristocracy.⁶⁹¹

Inspired by his time in France, Amīn envisaged a force that would change the relationship between the male elite and their predominantly illiterate women. He was more strident in

⁶⁸⁷ Sara Salem, "On Transnational Feminist Solidarity: The Case of Angela Davis In Egypt." in *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2018), 245–267.

⁶⁸⁸ Zaydān, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah*, 4: 281.

⁶⁸⁹ Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity: A Critical Reading of The Works of Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā and His Associates (1898-1935)* (Leiden Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2009), 39.

⁶⁹⁰ Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*. Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁶⁹¹ Amīn, *al-Mar'ah al-Jadīdah*, 420.

calling for reforms in *al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah* than in its predecessor *Tahrir al-Mar'ah*. These reforms, however, were primarily for the good of the male-dominated nation and limited to a very small part of society: the upper class. He believed, for instance, that European perceptions of Egypt's backwardness were fuelled in part by the country's clinging to certain traditions, notably the *harem*, the practice of which was largely confined to the small elite.⁶⁹² Thus, *al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah* called for an end to polygamy, the choice of wearing of veil and the right to work. This new gender discourse, from women's perspective of women, would advance the status of women economically and socially.⁶⁹³

While some earlier Arab male scholars had already spoken on the need for reform, Amīn's voice was nevertheless extraordinary. In both works, Amīn raised several sensitive topics aside from polygamy, including calling into question the veil and a man's absolute right to divorce.⁶⁹⁴ It is no surprise, then, that his books received widespread criticism, triggering a flurry of debate among his fellow Arabs, women and men.

It is principally because of this outspokenness and the subsequent public reaction that many historians consider Amīn to be the most influential Arab male advocate of women's rights of the time.⁶⁹⁵ A thorough reading of his works, however, reveals a deep utilitarianism; even a blame of women for the relative "backwardness" of the Arab world.⁶⁹⁶ He believed what he saw as women's bad habits, including their superstitious beliefs, as detrimental to all members of the family. In Amīn's view, a woman's education was important because it

⁶⁹² Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity*, 44.

⁶⁹³ Juan Ricardo Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Cambridge University Press) vol. 13, no. 4 (1981), 387–407.

⁶⁹⁴ Qāsim Amīn, *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 73.

⁶⁹⁵ The journals *al-Muqataṭaf* and *al-Hilāl* from 1893 to 1895 contained many debates on women's right. 'Imārah, *al-A'māl al-Kāmilah*. Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, *Qāsim Amīn* (Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣriyah al-'Āmmah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1963).

⁶⁹⁶ Amīn, *al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah*, 133.

supported her husband and her children, which was her correct social function, and not because of any inherent importance or self-development quality.⁶⁹⁷ In *al-Mar'ah al-Jadidah*, Amīn expressed the idea that women's traits extended to the family and thus society and the nation.⁶⁹⁸ Women were placed on a pedestal, as he explained: "a good mother is more useful to the race than a good man, but a corrupt mother is more harmful than a corrupt man."⁶⁹⁹

Amīn advocated the idea that men and women were equal, however, he did not support this equality for Arab women or support their participation in the public sphere. Other than their role in specific aspects of business and medicine, he argued that women should be educated in the art of cooking and cleaning in order to maintain their household. Music and history were also encouraged, in order to allow a woman to educate her children and serve her husband, as it was her duty to ensure her husband was content in the marriage and did not feel isolated.⁷⁰⁰ Thus, Amīn did not want to completely abolish the division of labour, but made concessions in cases where educating a woman would lead to a more sophisticated and fulfilled life for the man,

An educated man likes to have a well-presented and orderly home. He has good taste and is inclined to admire pleasant structures, fine feelings, and tender gestures. These things might mean so much to him that it could lead him to neglect material concerns. To understand a situation, he needs only a word, and would even prefer to have a sign. Sometimes he is silent, other times he speaks, and sometimes he laughs. He has ideas that he cherishes, a cause that occupies him, a society that he serves, and a

⁶⁹⁷ Amīn, *Tahrīr al-Mar'ah*, 246–247.

⁶⁹⁸ Amīn, *The Liberation of Women*, 66. Guity Nashat; Judith E Tucker, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 83.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁷⁰⁰ Amīn, *The Liberation of Women*, 66–67.

nation that he holds dear. He has mental (*ma'nawī*) pleasures and pains. He weeps with the poor, sympathises with the innocent and wrongly accused, and rejoices for any good that befalls others. With every thought, he develops a feeling that affects his nerves, and he wishes to find another beside him to explain his feelings and share the moment. This is a normal inclination in all of us. However, if this man's wife is ignorant, he will hide his joys and pains from her.⁷⁰¹

If a man is unable to share ideas and thoughts within his marriage, he will suffer both morally and intellectually. To him, the ideal wife possesses “delicate taste,” “astuteness of mind,” “good [household] management,” “the ability to maintain order,” “a warm heart,” “an honest tongue,” and “sincere loyalty.”⁷⁰²

The disconnection between Amīn's societal ideas and his personal practice is illustrated by a story published in a magazine called *al-Ṭāhir* in 1906.⁷⁰³ Amīn was reportedly shocked when a visiting friend asked to discuss some issues with his wife. Amīn refused his friend's request without consulting his wife, prompting his friend to ask, “How can you represent women's rights when you restrict your wife's right to see me?” Amīn replied, “My wife received her upbringing from her parents, she grew up in a traditional family and is not accustomed to speaking with other men.”⁷⁰⁴ If a woman is uneducated, then marriages could not be based on love, “because a man's wife is well behind him as far as her intellect and education (*tarbiyah*) are concerned.”⁷⁰⁵ By contrast, a woman would not be able to respect and love her husband,

⁷⁰¹ Amīn, *al-Mar'ah al-Jadīdah*, 246–247.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 334.

⁷⁰³ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Musnid, *I'tirāfāt Muta'akhhirah* (Riyad: Dār al-Rāya li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1991), 18. This story about Amīn's change of heart concerning the liberation of women towards the end of his life is based on a personal statement made by Amīn published in a magazine called *al-Ṭāhir* in 1906. (The magazine has not been sighted).

⁷⁰⁴ Musnid, *I'tirāfāt Muta'akhhirah*, 18.

⁷⁰⁵ Amīn, *al-Mar'ah al-Jadīdah*, 336.

as “respect is contingent on our knowing and appreciating the worth of those we respect, and an ignorant woman cannot appreciate her husband’s worth.”⁷⁰⁶ Barring his outward appearance, a wife cannot relate to her husband’s “intellectual and moral worth, his honest reputation, his sensitivity of feeling, the breadth of his knowledge, his work, and his goals in life.”⁷⁰⁷ Later on in his life, Amīn published in a journal, that he had retracted some of his ideas that Arab women should follow the West,

I should never have asked Arab women to remove their veils. And, I now realise the danger of involving women in business.⁷⁰⁸

The reasons for Amīn’s drastic change in his ideas was not made clear. However, it is vital to view this change in perspective within the lens of a male-dominated society, which was centred around maintaining the interests of men. Reconciling modern liberal ideas with traditional Arab thinking was rather difficult,⁷⁰⁹ and Amīn’s change in perspective symbolises prevailing attitudes towards the “liberation” of women in nineteenth century Egypt and Arab societies in general. A prime example of this is Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, who called for profound reforms in status of Arab women⁷¹⁰ and Buṭrus al-Bustānī, who advocated for the education of women.⁷¹¹ Amīn was an active member of Princess Nāzīlī’s salon where men and women

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 337.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 337.

⁷⁰⁸ Musnid, *I’tirāfāt Muta’akhhirah*, 18.

⁷⁰⁹ Muḥammad Ḥarb, *Tarbiyat al-Mar’ah wa-al-Hijāb* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Manār, 1905), 77. Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, *al-Mar’ah al-Muslimah* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Taraqqī, 1901), 5-6. Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Būlāqī, *al-Jalīs al-Anīs fī al-Taḥdhīr ‘Ammā fī Tahrīr al-Mar’ah min al-Talbīs* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1899), 9. ‘Abd al-Majīd Khayrī, *al-Daf’ al-Matīn fī al-Radd ‘alā Haḍrat Qāsim Bak Amīn ‘an Tahrīr al-Mar’ah* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Taraqqī, 1899), 48. Muḥammad al-Qāyātī, *al-Sunnah wa-al-Kitāb fī Hikam al-Tarbīyah wa-al-Hijāb* (Cairo: Mu’assasāt, 1955), 47.

⁷¹⁰ Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz* (Cairo: Dār al-Taḥaddum, 1905). Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *al-Murshid al-Amīn lil-Banāt wa-al-Banīn* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Madāris al-Malakīyah, 1872).

⁷¹¹ Buṭrus al-Bustānī, “Ta’līm al-Nisā’,” in Yusuf Qizma al-Khuri (ed.), *al-Jam‘iyah al-Sūrīyah lil-al-‘Ulūm wa-al-Funūn 1847-1852* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥamrā’, 1900), 45–53.

were guided by Nāzīlī to discuss literature, ideas and share perspectives.⁷¹² Thus, Amīn was able to converse with numerous female intellectuals and heard their views and ideas that were vital to the Arab Awakening.

Amīn is considered by many historians to be a key figure in the nineteenth century due to his advocacy of women's rights and the work that he contributed toward this sphere. However, deeper analysis of his work reveals that his endorsement of these rights was limited to the benefits men gained from the education of women. He, like many of his peers, never challenged the patriarchal societal norms and despite his liberal reforms, he reinforced the status quo. Despite Amīn's change-of-mind, his initial ideas and the bold, new perspectives he presented, were vital in inspiring future female thinkers and creating a platform for women to express ideas and challenge societal norms.

6.4 Women's Liberation between Secular and Religious Discourses

Both Qāsim Amīn and Muḥammad 'Abduh believed that the oppression of Arab women was not founded in religion but in social norms and cultural practices. While they differed on the degree of reform required, they both referred to Islam and were at pains to argue that women's education was consistent with religious doctrine, not at odds with it.

'Abduh was considered a man of great prestige and an eminent religious authority who offered a broad interpretation of the *Qur'ān*.⁷¹³ He insisted on the imperative to explore the essence of what it means to be a Muslim rather than a literal interpretation of the *Qur'ān*. He sought to demonstrate that not only does Islam oppose female subjugation, it calls for the

⁷¹² Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt and Cromer: A study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations* (London: John Murray, 1968), 95.

⁷¹³ Nabila Ramdani, "Women in the 1919 Egyptian Revolution: from Feminist Awakening to Nationalist Political Activism," in *International Women's Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2013), 39.

equality of the sexes. Muslim women, for example, have a right to education and the right to free disposal of their wealth and goods. The main reason Egyptian women were unable to exercise these rights was, he said, simply a lack of awareness of the *Qur'ān*'s teachings. Furthermore, religious laws were routinely misinterpreted or skewed by the social norms and dominant traditions of the day.⁷¹⁴

Qāsim Amīn arrived at a similar conclusion but argued from a social or secular point of view, in so far as secularism was possible in the Arab world. He was a lawyer, educated in Cairo and Paris, whose analysis focused on the social, ethical and legal structures inhibiting the freedom of women in the Arab world. Amīn did, however, argue that there was nothing incompatible with religion in his reform agenda.

Both men arrived at basically the same thesis, with both arguing that the principles of the *Qur'ān* were not contrary to women's progress but in fact they should actually serve as catalysts for women's liberation.⁷¹⁵ The fact that they were at least partly successful in this approach is evidenced by the support they each received from prominent religious scholars. The strength of the dominant Egyptian social and cultural values of the day meant that both 'Abduh and Amīn stirred immense controversy and faced powerful opposition. In particular, by calling for the veil to be removed from the face they hit a raw nerve. The custom was widely (and mistakenly) considered to be synonymous with religious doctrine.⁷¹⁶ For Amīn, the "veil was a symbol of women's oppression" and had no moral value, and he insisted that

⁷¹⁴ Amira Mashhour, "Islamic Law and Gender Equality: Could there be a Common Ground?: A study of Divorce and Polygamy in Sharia Law and Contemporary Legislation in Tunisia and Egypt," in *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2005), 562–596.

⁷¹⁵ Mary Ann Fay, "From Warrior-Grandeess to Domesticated Bourgeoisie: The Transformation of the elite Egyptian Household into a Western-Style Nuclear Family," in Beshara Doumani (ed.), *Family History in the Middle East: Household, Property, and Gender* (2003), 77–97.

⁷¹⁶ Helena J Kaler, "Inscribing Gender in the Imperial Context: The Woman Question in Nineteenth Century Egypt," in *Hawwa*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2006), 328–355.

national progress would be hampered for as long as the veil remained.⁷¹⁷ Amīn agreed that “women’s best place was in the home.” Women should be educated companions, able to help men in life, and they should be credited fully for their moral and intellectual capabilities.

Moreover, he believed that their children could not reach their full potential within education if the mothers themselves remained unlettered and their positions one of domestic slavery.⁷¹⁸

These radical ideas triggered conflicting reactions within society. Many Arab men regarded such ideas and reforms as monstrous, and to be resisted vigorously. Many writers of the time reacted to Amīn’s ideas by publishing books and articles criticising his perspectives. Ṭal‘at Bāshā Ḥarb (1867–1941), an eminent Egyptian economist was one example, who published two reactionary books *Tarbiyat al-Mar’ah wa-al-Ḥijāb* and *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī al-Mar’ah wa-al-Ḥijāb*. Ḥarb stridently defended the veil and denounced Amīn for promoting ‘corrupt’ ideas, even accusing him of conspiring with Western imperialists to undermine Egyptian society.⁷¹⁹ Ḥarb claimed that Western women were immoral, engaging in casual relationships, while the “veil is a symbol of women’s”⁷²⁰ morality, fidelity, modesty, and even their beauty. He referred to the *Qur’ān*, calling on true Muslims to maintain the practice.⁷²¹

Nevertheless, many intellectuals (men and women) supported Amīn’s ideas, using newspapers as a platform for the progressivism. Newspapers such as, *al-Jarīdah*, *al-Manār*,

⁷¹⁷ Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2010), 3.

⁷¹⁸ Eum Ikran, “Discourses on (un)Veiling in Egypt,” in *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4 (2000), 102–124.

⁷¹⁹ Mervet Hatem, “Secularist and Islamist discourses on modernity in Egypt and the evolution of the postcolonial nation-state,” in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad; John L Esposito (eds.), *Islam, Gender and Social Change* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85–99.

⁷²⁰ Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil*, 3.

⁷²¹ Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem, “The Modern Ordinary: Changing Culture of Urban Living in Egypt’s Traditional Quarters at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 52, no. 5 (2016), 825–844.

al-Hilāl and *al-Muqataḥaf*, provided a forum for the many voices that spoke in favour of women's liberation.⁷²² Indeed, the debate galvanised many prominent female intellectuals, including Labībah Hāshim (1879 or 1880–1976), Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif (1886–1918), and Nabawīyah Mūsá (1886–1951). Hudá Sha'rāwī credits Amīn's book with spurring on much greater participation by women in public life and government institutions.

6.5 Modern Education and the Role of Women

The growth and development of the Arab education system was greatly influenced by the Western model. It was increasingly inclusive of women and acted as both a driver and a result of the women's movement. Initially, some pioneers of Arab women's liberation were taught at home by tutors, while other Syrian women received their education in missionary schools. Many of these women established literary salons and home study circles. In 1873 the Egyptian government established the first public primary school for girls, offering a range of subjects, including religion, mathematics, history, geography, and *tadbīr al-manzil* (household economic management). Despite this progress, it was 17 years before girls were allowed to sit final examinations.⁷²³

The shortage of female teachers was a key factor in the lack of access and expansion of girl's education. In 1892, Ya'qub Artin (1842–1919), who was an undersecretary in the Ministry of Education from 1884 to 1906, spoke to parents of the possibility of their daughters being taught by male teachers. Because the majority of parents were opposed to male teachers, suggestions were made to consider educating and training Christian, Jewish women or female orphans to teach in Muslim schools. Artin understood that this approach would delay access

⁷²² Leila Ahmed, "The Discourse of the Veil," in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (2005), 315–38.

⁷²³ Cynthia Nelson, "Islamic Tradition and Women's Education: The Egyptian Experience," in Sandra Hocker et al (eds.), *The World Yearbook of Education: Women and Education* (New York: Nicoliar Publishing, 1984), 217.

to education for girls for approximately a decade.⁷²⁴ Therefore, until the first group of Egyptian girls were trained, Syrian women and women of other nationalities who had been educated in missionary schools took on teaching roles. A Syrian headmistress was assigned to the first girl's school and later, a Turkish woman was placed as director of a government school.⁷²⁵ Although European teachers worked at these schools, they were not considered to be as important because they lacked knowledge of the Arabic language.

Egyptian women who were trained as school teachers were able to work in schools all over Egypt. By end of the nineteenth century, there were also many female graduates who became writers and publishers. A new norm had become established, one where the dignity and morality of women were linked to their knowledge and education. This reform extended across at least the upper and middle-classes and it enabled women to strive for equality with respect to formal education and other reforms. The American writer Elizabeth Cooper (1877-1945) who travelled to Egypt in the early twentieth century, reported that the Egyptian minister of education stated that teachers were comfortable and that they received good wages; they were provided with accommodation at the school complex and were freer than they would have been in their own home. Despite these benefits though, female Egyptian teachers often left their jobs a few years after graduating in order to get married.⁷²⁶

Other programs were developed which aimed to improve teaching quality and broaden the curriculum. In 1901, nearly a century after the initial (male only) missions were sent to France and Britain, women were sent abroad to be trained as teachers. Women were selected based on their performance in the primary certificate exams. They were sent to England with

⁷²⁴ Ya'qub Artin, "L'Enseignement," 12, cited by Baron, "Campaigning for Education," 131.

⁷²⁵ James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Cass, 1968), 375. Ya'qub Artin, "L'Enseignement," 4, cited by Baron, "Campaigning for Education," 131.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

an English-speaking chaperone, where many of the women were trained to become both administrators as well as teachers in girls' schools. They subsequently became part of what was known as "special control" and became involved in widespread controversy.⁷²⁷ A debate erupted in the Arab press emerged about these women resulting in the publication of an article titled "A Great Danger," in which a critic had criticised the girls returning from England with "more immorality than knowledge." Other writers defended the girls asserting that they were honourable and pious, they prayed and fasted, observed religious obligations and only went out with the female supervisor, and "do not mix with men as people imagine."⁷²⁸ As a result of this controversy, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian and Jewish candidates were sent to England in place of Arab Muslims in 1911. This pleased the editor of *al-'Afāf* and he thanked the Ministry of Education for guarding the country's religious principles as well as its financial resources.⁷²⁹

Every Friday in the Egyptian University women took the opportunity to meet in vacant classrooms to discuss their issues and ways they could improve their social status.⁷³⁰ In 1912, however, the women's section of the university was closed by the university administration because female students were threatened by males protesting about the presence of women at the University.⁷³¹ Despite this threat, a number of bold women succeeded in continuing their studies at this university. These women actively encouraged others to follow them, linking their activism to education.⁷³² Female lecturers of the University Faculty, such as Labībah

⁷²⁷ Ibid., 131.

⁷²⁸ Fatima Rashid, "Yaqzat al-Mar'ah al-Sharqīyah," in *Tarbiyat al-Mar'ah*, 1, no. 11 (1326/1909), 161-65. Baron, "Campaigning for Education," 131.

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁷³⁰ Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 172-173.

⁷³¹ Baron, "Campaigning for Education," 131. The establishment of Egypt's first Western-style university in 1908. Ahmed, "Veil of Ignorance," 40. Baron, "Campaigning for Education," 131.

⁷³² Lama Abu-Odeh, "Egyptian Feminism: Trapped in the Identity Debate," in *Yale JL & Feminism*, no. 16 (2004), 145.

Hāshim, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, and Nabawīyah Mūsá, played important roles in improving the situation of women.

Three Different Perspectives on Women's Liberation

As a result of the ideas and works of ‘Abduh and Amīn as well as the development of modern schools and inclusion of women in Education systems, several key female figures emerged to become influential authors and intellectuals. These women became icons and teachers in the field of education.

Labībah Hāshim

Men write about women the way they know and think; women write about themselves the way they believe and feel . . . [Women] are more cognisant of the condition of women, their weak points and how to win over generations of women and lead them to what is best for the country and of benefit to themselves.⁷³³

The pioneering Syrian novelist and journalist, Labībah Hāshim (1880–1947) was born in Beirut. She studied at the English Missionary schools and graduated from Syrian Protestant College. In addition to music and painting, Hāshim was fluent in English and French.⁷³⁴

Nineteenth century historian and journalist, Jurjī Niqūlā Bāz (1881–1951), who greatly admired Hāshim intellect, noted that “she is an example for the women of this time.”⁷³⁵

Hāshim is central to the modernisation of Arab education and the women's movement.

⁷³³ Labībah Hāshim, in the introduction of *Fatāt al-Sharq*, no. 1 (1906). Hoda El Sadda, “Egypt,” in Raḍwá ‘Āshūr, Ferial J. Ghazoul, Hasna Reda-Mekdashī (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 102.

⁷³⁴ Muḥammad Tūnjī, *Mu‘jam a‘lām al-Nisā’* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2001), 151–152. Zirīklī, *al-A‘lām*, 5: 240.

⁷³⁵ Beth Baron, “Readers and the Women's Press in Egypt,” in *Poetics Today* (1994), 217–240.

In the early 1890s, Hāshim and her family fled Syria for Egypt, avoiding the Ottoman restrictions on freedom of speech at the time. In Cairo, Hāshim attended a literary reading circle which frequently held their meetings at the home of Wardah al-Yāzījī. The meeting included thinkers and writers who in turn introduced her to their literary circles.⁷³⁶

By 1896, Hāshim had contributed to various Arab magazines, including *al-Nahḍah*, *Anīs al-Jalīs*, *al-Hilāl* and *al-Ḍiyā'*.⁷³⁷ Hāshim explained to her audience that the importance of learning the language, “for every person, perfecting the Arabic language has primacy over every other type of knowledge.” She asserted that the learning language was “to shape every kind of expression and thought. The more beautiful this mould, the more exquisite the resulting meanings and thoughts.”⁷³⁸ To achieve better education men and women needed to be proficient in Arabic literature and Arabic reading.

Like other pioneers of the nineteenth century, Hāshim described in publication the situation of Arab women and the importance of improving the position of women in the Arab society. In an article titled, “Gambling and Marriage” (*al-Qimār wa-al-Zawāj*) written in 1904, Hāshim berated males who gambled, stating that they were a negative influence on the family, and she described the myriad challenges that this created within a marriage. While many articles at the time focused on the ways in which women were expected to behave, Hāshim detailed the way men themselves should behave within the family and toward their wives. In another article, titled *The Duties of Marriage (Wājibāt al-Zawāj)*, Hāshim

⁷³⁶ Labībah Hāshim, “Ta’thīr al-‘Ilm al-Saḥīḥ,” in *Fatāt al-Sharq*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1907), 44–48. Labībah Hāshim, “Ta’līm al-Banāt,” in *Fatāt al-Sharq*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1910), 44–52. Labībah Hāshim, *al-Ta’āwun* (Cairo: Matba’at al-Ma’arif, 1912). Beth Baron, “The Advent of Associations,” 183. Hoda El Sadda, “Beginnings Discourses on Ideal Manhood and Ideal Womanhood,” in *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 34.

⁷³⁷ Börte Sagaster; Theoharis Stavrides; Birgitt Hoffmann, *Press and Mass Communication in the Middle East Festschrift for Martin Strohmeier* (Germany: Bamberg University of Bamberg Press, 2018), 219–221.

⁷³⁸ Labībah Hāshim, *al-Tarbiyah* (Cairo: Maṭba’at al-Ma’arif, 1911), 112.

emphasised the idea that women should marry men who are their social equals, both economically and socially and that the marriage should be built on love.

Hāshim believed that women's periodicals and journals would benefit Arab women. She stated that "from the time that I could move the pen," noted Hāshim, "I thought of founding a women's journal to benefit the ladies and girls of the nation."⁷³⁹ In Cairo in 1906, she founded the magazine *Fatāt al-Sharq*, appointing a number of young women as freelancers writers and editors.⁷⁴⁰ This journal became one of the important periodicals for females in Egypt and Syria. The purpose of Hāshim's magazine was "service of the fair sex and advancement of Eastern woman." For thirty-four years (1906–1939) *Fatāt al-Sharq* was a platform for intellectual women to call for the improvement of women's education.⁷⁴¹

Hāshim hired many females to work as editors, and distributors at the magazine office in Egypt. Driven by a passion for women's liberation, Hāshim explored many avenues to distribute her magazine free to girls and women, to expose them to its ideas and encourage literacy and education.⁷⁴² This magazine was distributed without charge to girl's schools around both Egypt and Syria.⁷⁴³

Hāshim engaged strongly in public life and political reforms. In 1909, for instance, she wrote a letter to the Ottoman Parliament under new Sultan Meḥmed V. Reşād (1844–1918), explaining her idea for women's education in the Empire. She called for changes to the

⁷³⁹ Labībah Hāshim, "Ayna al-Sa'ādah," in *Fatāt al-Sharq*, vol.13, no. 7 (1919), 274.

⁷⁴⁰ Raḍwá 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 14. Kāmil Salmān Jubūrī, *Mu'jam al-Shu'arā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2003), 44.

⁷⁴¹ El Sadda, "Egypt," 108. Baron, "The Community of Readers," 87.

⁷⁴² Labībah Hāshim, *al-Tarbiyah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1911).

⁷⁴³ Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," in L. Beck and N. Keddie (eds.), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 277–294. Baron, "The Making of Journal," 78.

curriculum for girls and highlighted the need for more girl's schools in Syria.⁷⁴⁴ Between 1911 and 1912, the Egyptian (later Cairo) University invited Hāshim to a lectureship. She provided ten lectures to women in the university, contending that raising children was not a task that could be delegated to extended family members or servants. Mothers should, therefore, be caring for their children and be maintaining a strong relationship with them in order to oversee their growth, health and development. These articles appeared later in a book entitled *Kitāb fī al-Tarbiyah*.⁷⁴⁵ Hāshim stated, "it was rare to see a woman without a book or a journal in hand."⁷⁴⁶ Although there was no confirmation that women read these texts, the availability of printed texts established a new norm.

With the Ottoman Empire's entry into the First World War and their men away, many women "found themselves confined to the four walls of their home."⁷⁴⁷ Hāshim encouraged women into the workforce to earn an independent livelihood and to educate themselves, including about the war and the political situation.⁷⁴⁸ The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 saw the collapse of Imperial authority in Syria and the establishment of an Arab government in Damascus. King Fayṣal I declared himself the flag bearer for women's rights in Syria, inspiring Hāshim's support. Fayṣal appointed Hāshim "Inspector of Education" and advisor to the new parliament.⁷⁴⁹ From these positions, she lobbied strongly for laws in favour of women's rights and education.⁷⁵⁰ With the French occupation of Syria, Hāshim moved to Brazil where she founded another women's newspaper in Arabic, *al-Sharq-wa-al-Gharb*. She sought to show the equality of women and men and many Arab feminists today regard her as

⁷⁴⁴ Sagaster; Stavrides; Hoffmann, *Press and Mass Communication*, 221.

⁷⁴⁵ Baron, "Rethinking Work and The Family," 163.

⁷⁴⁶ Hāshim, *al-Ta'āwun*, 12. Baron, "The Community of Readers," 84.

⁷⁴⁷ El Sadda, "Egypt," 108.

⁷⁴⁸ Baron, "Pioneers of The Women's Press," 27.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷⁵⁰ Margot Badran; Selma Botman, "Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 28, no. 01 (1996), 132–134.

a pioneer and role model.⁷⁵¹ Hāshim's efforts, writings, and teachings had a lasting impact on women's status and education in the Arab world, even after her exile and death.

Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif (Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah)

The female activist, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif (1886–1918) who was born in Cairo, is best known for successfully and directly encouraging Egyptian girls to go to University. She was also a founder of The Egyptian Feminist Union.⁷⁵² Together with Hudá Sha'rāwī, Nabawīyah Mūsá (1886–1951), Nāṣif⁷⁵³ championed the education of Arab women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷⁵⁴

Nāṣif emphasised the need for females to be educated, to prepare and empower them for life in a patriarchal society. She herself taught girls for two years before marrying a Bedouin; only leaving her job because Bedouin custom strongly forbade married women from engaging in paid employment and participation in public life.⁷⁵⁵ She worked around this by writing about women's liberation and education under the pseudonym "Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah."⁷⁵⁶ Interestingly, Nāṣif never had children and her husband used this as grounds for their divorce,⁷⁵⁷ after which she resumed her role as public writer and teacher.

⁷⁵¹ Molly Youngkin, "My Ancestor, My Sister: Ancient Heritage Imagery and Modern Egyptian Women Writers," in *British Women Writers and the Reception of Ancient Egypt, 1840–1910* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 155–181.

⁷⁵² Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, *al-Nisā'iyāt* (Cairo: Multaqá al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhākirah, 1998), 24.

⁷⁵³ Margot Badran; Miriam Cooke, *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writing*. Bloomington (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 134–227. Hoda El Sadda, "Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah," in *al-Nisā'iyāt: Majmū'at Maqālāt Nushirat fī al-Jarīdah fī Mawḍū' al-Mar'ah al-Miṣrīyah* (Cairo: Multaqá al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhākirah, 1998), 10–13.

⁷⁵⁴ Mayy Ziyādah, *Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Nawfal, 1975), 51–52. Hoda Yousef, "Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif: Negotiations of a Feminist Agenda between the European and the Colonial," in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* vol. 7, no. 1 (2011), 70–89. Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 166.

⁷⁵⁵ Baron, "The Advent of Associations," 183. Badran, *Feminism Beyond East and West*.

⁷⁵⁶ Evelyn Aleene Early, "Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* vol. 40 (1981), 339–341.

⁷⁵⁷ Nemat Guenena; Nadia Wassef, *Unfulfilled Promises: Women's Rights in Egypt* (New York: Population Council, 1999), 13. Salamāh Musá, *The Education of Salama Musa*, trans. L. O. Schuman (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1961), 49–50.

Nāṣif's first publication, *al-Jaridah*, became a major newspaper operated by *Ḥizb al-Ummah* (the Nationalist Party). Her newspaper articles later appeared in a work entitled *al-Nisā'iyāt*. This publication included various essays and other writings focused on women readers, concentrating on their education and equality and drawing on European ideals.⁷⁵⁸ These writings fed a healthy and growing appetite amongst Egyptian and other Arab women for a new way that combined modernisation with the essence of Islam.⁷⁵⁹ This affiliation afforded her opportunities to lecture at the Egyptian University. Every Friday, when the university was largely empty, women discussed their issues and ways they could improve their social situation.⁷⁶⁰ Like Labībah Hāshim, Nāṣif was affected by the 1912 closure of the women's section of the Egyptian University due to threats from males who wanted to ban females from the University.⁷⁶¹ In one of her articles, Nāṣif showed that the barriers to the liberation of women was the fault of men who did not value education of women,

I am shocked that “enlightened” men, who have received the best education, can call for women to be taught only reading, writing, cooking, and washing. It is as if they are publicly insulting us by saying: We only want you to be house servants, not respectable women.⁷⁶²

Nāṣif, however, was not afraid to go against the grain, even against the emergent Arab feminism and modernisation movements.⁷⁶³ For instance, she felt that the push to unveil

⁷⁵⁸ Nāṣif, *al-Nisā'iyā*, 24. Badran; Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, 135–136, 228–238. Charles Kurzman, “Introduction: The Modernist Islamic Movement. In Modernist Islam, 1840-1940,” in Charles Kurzman (ed.), *A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 70–76.

⁷⁵⁹ Yousef, “Malak Hifni Nasif,” 70–89.

⁷⁶⁰ Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 172–173.

⁷⁶¹ Baron, “Campaigning for Education,” 131.

⁷⁶² Nāṣif, *al-Nisā'iyāt*, 103–104.

⁷⁶³ Margot Badran, *Feminism Beyond East and West: New Gender Talk and Practice in Global Islam* (New York: Oneworld Publications, 2013).

women was borne more of a pressure to follow Western fashions rather than to actually liberate Arab women.⁷⁶⁴ Rather, she argued, a European woman's social status had nothing to do with whether she covered her face or not. Since when, she said, was the hijab a mark of civilisation?⁷⁶⁵ Nāṣif argued that “we do not follow the opinion of a person who commands us to veil, nor the opinion of the one who tells us to unveil, based on what one person wrote or the other said.”⁷⁶⁶ An Arab woman, therefore, might keep or do away with the veil, as she saw fit, but ought not to attach her decision to the liberation of women. Rather, the root cause of inequality was a lack of education, the reform of which should be the central focus of the women's movement.

To that end, Nāṣif actively and tirelessly sought to motivate young girls to study.⁷⁶⁷ She favoured a comprehensive education rather than that provided by Christian missionary schools of the time.⁷⁶⁸ Nāṣif believed that the students of missionary schools,

They learn by rote, without any measurable amount of explanation or discussion. If you ask them about French history, they are undoubtedly quick to answer. However, ask them about ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb or Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī or Muḥammad the Conqueror, or others from Islamic history, and they say: We don't know.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁴ Nāṣif, *al-Nisā'iyāt*, 61. El Sadda, “Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah,” 140. Mervat Hatem, “Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif” in Hoda El Sadda (ed.), *Min Rā'idāt al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn: Shakhṣīyāt wa-Qadāyā* (Cairo: Multaqā al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhākīrah, 2001), 29–48.

⁷⁶⁵ Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif; Majd al-Dīn Ḥifnī Nāṣif, *Āthār Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah* (Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Anbā' wa al-Nashr, 1962), 278–279. Nāṣif, *al-Nisā'iyāt*, 61. El Sadda, “Bāḥithat al-Bādiyah,” 61.

⁷⁶⁶ Yousef, “Malak Hifni Nasif,” 70–89.

⁷⁶⁷ Myra Macdonald, “Muslim Women and the Veil: Problems of Image and Voice in Media Representations,” in *Feminist Media Studies* 6, no. 1 (2006), 7–23.

⁷⁶⁸ Fadwa El Guindi, “Gendered resistance, feminist veiling, Islamic feminism,” in *The Ahfad Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2005), 53–78.

⁷⁶⁹ Nāṣif, *al-Nisā'iyāt*, 68. Cited by Yousef, “Malak Hifni Nasif,” 70–89.

For that, Nāṣif advocated for the nationalisation of education, with all schools controlled by the Egyptian government offering a uniform curriculum of the highest standard, including history and culture, and not simply the basics. She went further, arguing that education should be the *highest* priority of the government.⁷⁷⁰ Nāṣif conceived of education being for the betterment of society, including ending the injustices against women in their home lives, and not simply as preparation for the work.⁷⁷¹ She joined the nascent call for a broader education, or *tarbiyah*, meaning something akin to individual Enlightenment or awareness of shared rights and responsibilities.⁷⁷² How else, she asked, could the social ills possibly be eradicated? Mothers should be educated to take care of their children's development emotional development as well their schooling. Nāṣif emphasised understanding, empathy, hygiene, and healthy mental strategies, as well as the teachings of Islam.⁷⁷³ It is also noteworthy that Nāṣif was the first Arab woman intellectual to receive a formal memorial service and the first to be honoured by her peers, women and men, at the Egyptian University.

Nabawīyah Mūsá

In the early twentieth century, (1906–1951) Nabawīyah Mūsá dominated the movement for Arab women's education and liberation.⁷⁷⁴ Along with Hudá Sha'rawī and Malak Ḥifnī

⁷⁷⁰ Wen-Chin Ouyang, "Mapping Arab Womanhood: Subject, Subjectivity and Identity Politics in the Biographies of Malak Hifni Nasif," *Sensibilities of the Islamic Mediterranean: Self-expression in a Muslim Culture from Post-classical times to the Present Day*. ed. Robin Ostle (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 174–194.

⁷⁷¹ Raḍwá 'Āshūr; Mohammed Berrada, Ferial J. Ghazoul, Amina Rachid, Mandy McClure, "Introduction," in Raḍwá 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 9–18.

⁷⁷² Pauline Lewis, "Zainab al-Ghazali: Pioneer of Islamist Feminism," in *Michigan Journal of History*, no. 6 (2007), 23–70.

⁷⁷³ Emily Golson; Loubna Youssef; Amanda Fields, *Toward, Around, and Away from Tahrir: Tracking Emerging Expressions of Egyptian Identity* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

⁷⁷⁴ Lisa Pollard, "Amateur Historians, the Woman Question, and the Production of Modern History in Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Egypt," in *Making Womens Histories* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 156. Bouthaina Shaaban, "Preparing the Way: Early Arab Women Feminist Writers," in *al-Raida Journal* (2003), 10–14.

Nāṣif, with whom she often worked in partnership, she believed in education as a prerequisite for the equal rights of females and males in politics, civic life, and affairs of state.⁷⁷⁵

Mūsá argued that the social context of Egyptian women, including their objectification by men, stood in the way of women's realisation of their full social potential. She shared Nāṣif's opinion that women's liberation was much broader and deeper than merely unveiling.

According to Mūsá, Egyptian society was not ready to accept unveiling, but it could come to embrace women's education, thereby enabling them to become independent, middle-class breadwinners for their families as well removing the systemic obstacles to progress.⁷⁷⁶

Mūsá became a key lecturer in the Egyptian University from its inception and encouraged a number of girls to acquire higher education.⁷⁷⁷ She was the first Egyptian woman to graduate from what today would be called high school and the first to become a school principal, though her path was challenging.⁷⁷⁸ When Mūsá decided to go to school, her mother opposed her decision. Mūsá stated in her memoirs that her mother considered schooling to be “a violation of dignity and modesty, and an affront to good upbringing and religion.”⁷⁷⁹ Mūsá told her mother if she prevented her to go to school, “she would leave home and enter school as a maid to avoid returning home.” Mūsá's brother threatened her, “If you go to school, I

⁷⁷⁵ Yousef, “Malak Hifni Nasif,” 70–89.

⁷⁷⁶ Fakhri Haghani, “Egyptian Women, Revolution and the Making of a Visual Public Sphere,” in *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2015), 162–175. Nina Hoel, “Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences, Margot Badran: book review,” in *Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2010), 105–109. Christina Civantos, “Reading and Writing the Turn-of-the-Century Egyptian Woman Intellectual: Nabawīyah Mūsá's, *Tārīkhī bi-Qalamī*,” in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 9, no. 2 (2013), 4–31.

⁷⁷⁷ Pollard, “Amateur Historians,” 156. Civantos, “Reading and Writing the Turn-of-the-Century,” 4–31.

⁷⁷⁸ Nabawīyah Mūsá, *Tārīkhī bi-Qalamī* (Cairo: Multaqá al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhākirah, 1999), 118. Lucia Sorbera, “Challenges of Thinking Feminism and Revolution in Egypt between 2011 and 2014,” in *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 1 (2014), 63–75.

⁷⁷⁹ Mūsá, *Tārīkhī bi-Qalamī*, 26.

shall cease to know you.” Again, in her memoirs, Mūsá stated, “Then I shall have one less [male] relative and that’s fine with me.”⁷⁸⁰

After Mūsá graduated from school, she took a teaching position in Cairo but quickly became frustrated with the discrepancy in pay between her and her male colleagues, all of whom had received diplomas in education.⁷⁸¹ She resolved to gain her teaching diploma to complete her education. Since there were no higher schools that allowed women, she complained to the Minister of Education who agreed finally to allow her to sit the examination for a teaching diploma, which she passed. In this strong position, Mūsá emphasised women’s right to get the education, work, and equal pay. The journalist and writer Salāmah Mūsá (1887–1958) wrote in his memoirs,

We witnessed Miss Nabawīyah Mūsá’s success as the first young woman who obtained her secondary school certificate, though Dunlop [the British education adviser] had placed many obstacles in her way.⁷⁸²

In 1920, Mūsá published *al-Mar’ah wa-al-‘Amal*, which was very well-received by the Egyptian board of education. In her book, Mūsá tried to cover all obstacles facing women within society, especially the “commonplace belief that an educated girl is a frivolous girl.”⁷⁸³ She discussed that the modern education that includes language, literature, and science, will help people to strengthen their thoughts and intellect. She argued that women’s education was the core of a better society and that through education women would be able to

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 26–27.

⁷⁸¹ Fleischmann, “The Other Awakening,” 107.

⁷⁸² Mūsá, *Tārīkhī bi-Qalamī*, 50. Cited by Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 171.

⁷⁸³ Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (London, England: Oneworld Publications, 2013), 5. Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2015), 205.

protect themselves in society⁷⁸⁴ and to support themselves economically. Women's education would increase opportunities for them to become doctors, nurses, lawyers, and dressmakers. Even women without financial support would be able to support themselves while maintaining Islamic ethics.

Among other social issues, Mūsá stated that polygamy should eventually be eliminated. Through education, she would become her husband's equal and this would also lead to increased self-esteem on a national level. For her notable efforts, al-Muḥammadīyah School for Girls employed Mūsá as its principal.⁷⁸⁵ Subsequently, the school's admissions doubled. Later in the 1924, she was appointed the first female school inspector in Egypt but was removed from her position in 1926 after criticising the curriculum. She established a private school which flourished with branches expanding to both Cairo and Alexandria.⁷⁸⁶

Mūsá was active in Egyptian and global women's organisations. She frequently spoke and wrote on the need for women's education in the Arab world and worked to ensure she reached a wide audience.⁷⁸⁷ In 1923, Nabawīyah Mūsá and Hudá Sha'rāwī attended the conference of the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage in Rome.⁷⁸⁸ After returning to Egypt, they removed their veils in defiance, however, they left their cloaks on. On this subject, she noted that,

⁷⁸⁴ El Sadda, "Egypt," 112.

⁷⁸⁵ al-Muḥammadīyah Girls' school was in south west Cairo in a region called Fayoum. El Sadda, "Egypt," 113. Laura Bier; Cathlyn Marriscotti, "Gender and Class in the Egyptian Women's Movement, 1929–1935: Changing Perspectives," in *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2010), 306–307. Ruth Roded, "Casting off the Veil: The Life of Hudá Sha'rāwī, Egypt's First Feminist," in *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2013), 63–67.

⁷⁸⁶ Nikki R Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 91.

⁷⁸⁷ Nada Mustafa Ali, "Feminism in North Africa," in Nancy Naples et. al. (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

⁷⁸⁸ Roded, "Casting off the Veil," 63–67.

I have dealt with all subjects relating to Egyptian women except for what they now call *sufūr* and *hijab* because I believe these are academic terms the meanings of which we are quite ignorant. I cannot call the peasant woman “unveiled” because she does not wear the transparent [face] veil that is known to us city women. The peasant woman goes about her way modestly... I cannot recall some of the city women “veiled” when they go out immodestly covered with ornaments and jewellery attracting the eyes of the passer-by while on their faces they wear a veil that conceals nothing but timidity.⁷⁸⁹

Additionally, Mūsá debated with an *al-Ahrām* male writer in Cairo, who was of the opinion that women must cover their faces. She reminded him that as this was the custom for peasant women, his family members in his village did not cover their faces,

Sir, you claim that men are wiser and more rational than women. If women are not seduced by your faces, and some of you are indeed handsome, how could you men who are more rational be seduced by women’s faces? You men should be veiled, and women unveiled.⁷⁹⁰

As an individual, Mūsá’s achievements and ideas were becoming a model for Arab women. She became a “founding member of the Egyptian Women’s Union in 1923.”⁷⁹¹ Through her unwavering advocacy for her own and other women’s education, Mūsá broke the barriers that had held Egyptian women back. Her efforts led to important reforms in education, including,

⁷⁸⁹ Nabawīyah Mūsá, *Tārīkhī bi-Qalamī* (Cairo: Multaqá al-Mar’ah wa-al-Dhākirah, 1999), 106. Cited by Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 68.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid. Cited by Badran, *Feminism in Islam*, 68.

⁷⁹¹ Khalidi, “The Legacies of Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,” 375.

for the first time, enabling women to complete higher education and to take senior institutional positions.

6.6 Conclusion

By the late nineteenth century, Egypt and Syria had a vibrant culture of women's writing and publishing, which promoted Amīn's *Tahrīr* not only to female audiences but also amongst learned men. This chapter demonstrates that several reformers, women and men, led progress towards greater access to education and other freedoms for nineteenth and twentieth-century women in Egypt and Syria.

Male reformers tried to convince their contemporaries that women were entitled to the same opportunities as men and men should cease their mistreatment of women. For so long as they both argued for reform (Qāsim Amīn, at least, later recanted on some of his views), these men shared a conviction that the suppression of women was counter to the essential teachings of Islam. They also believed that while women remained uneducated, Arab society would be held back from fulfilling its potential. This meant that the issue of women's education was bound up in contested ideas about what Arab society should look like and its religious practice, which included the question of the veil. It is not surprising, therefore, that men's advocacy received substantial opposition from conservative quarters. This chapter also shows that Arab women were far from being mere spectators in this debate; they were often fierce advocates of reform who left a lasting legacy on Arab educational institutions and Arab feminism. Collectively, their arguments went beyond the rationale that women's education was good for society to embrace genuine equality based on the inherent dignity of women. These women, often at odds with their families, successfully pushed through the barriers to

their own and others' education. They encouraged other women and girls to become educated and went on to ensure equal access to high school and university.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

Chapter 7 Conclusions

Scholars of the contemporary Arabic literature, by and large, have advocated the position that relations between the Arab World and the West in the nineteenth century were marked by an Arab struggle against a rising tide of Western domination and hegemony. This study offers a far more nuanced perspective and explores in depth the complexity in the Arab-Western relationship. It highlights the significant point that this contrast between societies cannot simply be reduced to an “Us versus Them” narrative.

The narrative fails to recognise how many Arab intellectuals eagerly explored and often, but not always, embraced key facets of Western modernity. The opinions at that time of the Arab intellectuals and the governing authorities were hardly uniform or consistent regarding Western modes of government, modern science, general education, and gender relations. The male intellectuals of the Arab Renaissance clearly and deliberately drew on Western ideas, particularly regarding the role of educated women, in achieving progress of their societies. It seems that many Arab intellectuals gained the blessing of leading Arab statesmen and received substantial support for their quest from the governing authorities and/or from the elite families in both Egypt and Syria. They embraced key liberal ideals of the Western Enlightenment and went on to apply these ideals to the modernisation of their societies.

In the first half of the nineteenth century men dominated Egyptian and Syrian public intellectual debates in regard to the role of women in society. They championed Western models of education, for example, the education of women and girls. These champions of progress argued that educated women “would make better wives and better mothers,” and all for the betterment of society. Ironically, male writers who advocated such liberal positions for the inclusion of women in public life rarely sought the opinions of women. Some men

who entertained more radical ideas were careful not to call for the total inclusion of women or to call for their total liberation.

Analysis of the writings of Arab men and women writers reveals the considerable influence of the West on the nineteenth century urban societies in Egypt and Syria. Much of this influence is reflected in the direct and indirect borrowing from Western ideas and systems (administrative and educational) in a manner that remains unrecognised by most contemporary Arabists. Importantly, this study demonstrates that women writers played an essential yet, for the most part, unrecognised role in the Arab Renaissance.

Following Napoleonic France's decisive military victory over Egypt, Arab intellectuals, far from being reluctant, became fascinated by the West's achievements and actively sought to adapt Enlightenment ideas to Arab society. Rather than being resentful of what they saw as the reality of Western military and technological superiority, they sought to emulate it.

Many believed that the equality between men and women was an essential element of the West's success. They concluded that the education of, and greater equality for, women was one of the principal keys to unlocking the door to Arab advancement. Intellectuals explored this notion of equality and other challenges to the prevailing traditional views on education, religion, and society at the time. They communicated their ideas through publications describing their travel experiences in the West. These nineteenth century men became vocal advocates for reform, forcefully arguing that the education of women was essential if the observable decline of Arab culture was to be reversed.

Women intellectuals, schooled in enlightened Egyptian and Syrian households and by Western missionaries, quickly found their own voices. New technologies of mass communication allowed their writings to spread rapidly. Some women even took on important roles as publishers and editors of influential journals which were popular with intellectuals and the growing middle class. It was this middle class in Egypt and Syria that fused patriotism into the central role of domestic life thus laying the path to a strong and prosperous Arab society. The role of educated women assumed growing importance in this new nationalist, yet still patriarchal, framework.

Women intellectuals of the early Arab Renaissance faced serious hurdles to achieve modest progress. They, in turn, however, inspired later generations of Arab women who became increasingly successful in bringing about reforms with the inclusion of women in key institutions from public policy to the family unit.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a new free press accelerated social change in Egypt and Syria. Women took up the opportunity to have a stronger voice and reach a wider audience. They wrote for and also established journals through which they stimulated debate and developed new ideas. Syrian women, in particular, won new freedoms at home though to a lesser degree, in public life. Importantly, they won greater recognition by both sexes for the contributions of women to Arab society. They produced, and were products of, a powerful new discourse in Arab society on what can be called “gender,” even before the concept of “gender” was fully developed in the West.

The latter half of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of European style literary salons and societies. Egyptian and Syrian women created informal spaces for intellectuals, both men and

women, to meet, to network, and to exchange ideas as equals. These gatherings helped to transform Egyptian and Syrian society, with the emergence of a national discourse and the articulation of a role for women at the heart of nation-building. The networks that resulted from these meetings became the formal women's organisations that drove progress in public policy and education. These women writers also actively participated in the international women's liberation movement, which was already growing strongly in Europe and the United States. It is important to add here that the country of origin (Egypt or Syria) of these women, may have impacted their writings and shaped their worldview particularly in terms of the positions they took on issues that they supported. Hence this was an important factor in understanding their individual contributions. However, this study supports the suggestion of Mervat Hatem that ethnicity and religion played a lesser role than suggested by earlier scholars.

By drawing on both secular and religious arguments, male nineteenth century reformers tried to convince their contemporaries that women were entitled to similar if not the same opportunities as men. They contended that for as long as women remained uneducated, Arab society would not reach its full potential. Islamic thought was at the core of the debate on the social role of women. The contested ideas included what constituted proper religious practice, such as wearing the veil and women's right to divorce. Islamic reformers also attempted to participate in this debate to defend women's rights and their education against the conservative Muslims

Throughout this study it has become clear that religious conservatives rigidly opposed the advocates for women's rights, but they were not the only ones. Conservative secular intellectuals also opposed women's equality using justification from both natural sciences

and religious texts. This shows the conflicting and contradictory positions that these men took as a result of their own education, family life, and the pressures of traditional society toward the inclusion of Arab women in public life.

Far from standing on the sidelines of the male-dominated debate, Arab women themselves became passionate proponents of reform. They went beyond their male counterparts, who argued for women's education on essentially patriarchal grounds, to push for genuine equality grounded in the inherent dignity of women. In so doing, many put themselves at loggerheads with their families and their societies. They had to clear substantial hurdles to not only become educated but also to teach in high schools and universities. Among those men who fought their societal norms were Rifā'ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and Buṭrus al-Bustānī, in Egypt and Syria in the early nineteenth century respectively. Their fight for progress was carried on by Muḥammad 'Abduh and Qāsim Amīn in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Encouraged by these men, many notable educated women emerged, such as Wardah al-Yāzījī and 'Ā'ishah Taymūr. These women were considered by many scholars to be founders and pioneers in the fields of modern Arabic writing and literature regarding popular women's issues. They paved the way for another generation of writers to follow. A generation that included Hind Nawfal and Alexandra Avierino Mariyānā Marrāsh, Princess Nāzli, Maryam Makāriyūs, Hanna Kasbānī Kouranī, Zaynab Fawwāz, Labībah Hāshim, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, and Nabawīyah Mūsá.

The Arab Renaissance that unfolded in Egypt and Syria in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might have been started by men and included male advocates for women's education, but women rapidly began to take ownership of their own destiny.

There is no doubt that Western ideas left an indelible mark on Arab society, regarding the issues related to the advancement of women. These Arab women were successful not only in securing key legal, educational and marital reforms, but also in demonstrating their essential equality with men.

The question of how to define these women writers of this period remains. Marilyn Booth was probably correct in articulating that feminism as a discourse born in the twentieth century did not apply to this time nor to these earlier traditions. She argues that the unique development of feminism in the West was a product of specific socio-political conditions starting from the early suffrage and continuing to the Women's liberation practices of the 1960's. None of these events had any connection to the women's movement in the Arab world. This study reinforces Booth's position; these Arab women writers cannot and should not be called feminists by contemporary criteria or on the evidence presented here. It is reasonable to suggest, however, that these women drew on and were part of the global women's movement that has today developed into what some call "Feminism." Further research is needed into the pathway from women's liberation to feminism and why the momentum was not maintained into this century. This further research should consider the term "Islamic Feminism" in relation to Egypt and Syria. The findings of this research suggest that the nineteenth century Muslim and Christian women of this study were the founders of what is now called "Islamic Feminism" rather than simply "Feminism."

Appendix A

Timeline

Timeline

		Fatimid dynasty	909–1171	
Johannes Gutenberg	1400–1468	Ayyubid dynasty	1169–1260	
Nicolaus Copernicus	1473–1543	Mamlūks	1250–1516	
Johannes Kepler	1571–1630	Egypt Eyalet	Ottoman Egypt	1517–1798
Galileo Galilei	1564–1642		French Campaign, Egypt	1798–1801
René Descartes	1596–1650		Muḥammad ‘Alī	1805–1849
Baruch Spinoza	1632–1677	Ottoman Egypt (The Khedivate of Egypt)	1867–1914	
John Locke	1632–1704	The Ottoman Empire in Syria	1516–1931	
Isaac Newton	1643–1727	Ibrāhīm Bāshā (Muḥammad ‘Alī’s son), Syria	1831–1840	
Immanuel Kant	1724–1804	The Ottoman Empire in Syria	1841–1918	
Montesquieu	1689–1755	The first printing press in Aleppo	1702	
Voltaire	1694–1778	The second printing press in Choueir (Mount Lebanon)	1733	
Rousseau	1712–1778	The third printing press in Beirut	1751	
Laura Bassi	1711–1778	Sultan Selim III	1789–1807	
Caroline Herschel	1750–1848	Americans missionaries began to arrive Syria	1820s	
Robert Boyle	1627–1691	Protestant Missionaries relocated their centre to Beirut from Malta	1834	
Frances Burney	1752–1840	Syrian Scientific Society	1847	
		Lecture on women’s education, Syria	1849	
		Khedive Ismail, Egypt	1863–1879	
		Sultan Abdul Hamid II	1842–1918	
		Meḥmed V. Reşâd	1844–1918	
		King Fayṣal I	1883–1933	

Appendix B

Arabic Women's Newspapers and Magazines Issued in the Nineteenth Century

Appendix B

Arabic Women's Newspapers and Magazines Issued in the Nineteenth Century					
#	Date	Name of Publication		Place	Editor/Author/Owner
1	1892	<i>al-Fatāf</i> ⁷⁹²	الفتاة	Alexandria	Hind Nawfal
2	1896	<i>al-Firdaws</i> ⁷⁹³	الفردوس	Cairo	Luwizā Ḥabbālīn
3		<i>Mir'āt al-Ḥasnā</i> ⁷⁹⁴	مرآة الحسناء	Cairo	Maryam Mazhar
4	1898	<i>Anīs al-Jalīs</i> ⁷⁹⁵	أنيس الجليس	Alexandria	Alexandra Avierino
5	1899	<i>al-'Ā'ila</i> ⁷⁹⁶	العائلة	Cairo	Esther Azharī Moyal
6	1900	<i>Al-Hawanim</i> ⁷⁹⁷	الهوانم	Cairo	Aḥmad Ḥilmī
7	1901	<i>Shajarat al-Durr</i> ⁷⁹⁸	شجرة الدرّ	Cairo	Sa'dīyah Sa'd al-Dīn
8		<i>al-Mar'ah fī al-Islam</i> ⁷⁹⁹	المرأة في الإسلام	Cairo	Ibrāhīm Ramzī
9		<i>al-Mar'ah</i> ⁸⁰⁰	المرأة	Cairo	Anīsah 'Aṭā Allāh
10		<i>Lotus</i> ⁸⁰¹	اللوتس	Cairo	Alexandra Avierino
11	1902	<i>al-Zahrah</i> ⁸⁰²	الزهرة	Cairo	Maryam Sa'd
12		<i>al-Sa'ādah</i> ⁸⁰³	السعادة	Cairo	Rayjīna 'Awwād

⁷⁹² Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-'Arabīyah* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Adabīyah, 1913), 1: 12. 'Abd-al-Laṭīf Ḥamza, *Qisṣat al-Ṣiḥāfah al-'Arabīyah fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1985), 123.

⁷⁹³ al-Firdaws was the first women's journal published in Cairo between 1896 to 1898. It included topics such as: household management and childcare. Beth Baron, "Pioneers of The Women's Press," in *The Women's Awakening in Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 16. Hoda El Sadda, "Egypt," in Raḍwā 'Āshūr et. al. (eds.), *Arab Women Writers* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 154.

⁷⁹⁴ El Sadda, "Egypt," 154. Jūrj Kallās, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisawīyah: Nash'atuhā wa-Taṭawwuruhā, 1849-1928* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), 44.

⁷⁹⁵ Ḥamza, *Qisṣat al-Ṣiḥāfa*, 123.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, 337.

⁷⁹⁷ El Sadda, "Egypt," 154.

⁷⁹⁸ Kallās, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisawīyah*, 44.

⁷⁹⁹ El Sadda, "Egypt," 154. Jirjī Zaydān, *Tarajim Mashāhir al-Sharq fī-l-Qarn al-Tāsi 'Ashar* (Cairo: Maṭba'a al-Hilāl, 1922), 1: 265.

⁸⁰⁰ Kallās, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisawīyah*, 44.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁰² Ibid., 44. El Sadda, "Egypt," 155.

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 44.

13		<i>al-‘Ālam al-Jadīd</i> ⁸⁰⁴	العالم الجديد	New York	‘Afifah Karam
14	1903	<i>al-Sayyidāt wa-l-Banāt</i> ⁸⁰⁵	السيدات والبنات	Alexandria	Rūz Anṭwān Ḥaddād
15		<i>al-Muḍa</i> ⁸⁰⁶	الموضة	Alexandria	Salīm Khalīl Farah
16	1906	<i>Fatāt al-Sharq</i> ⁸⁰⁷	فتاة الشرق	Cairo	Labībah Hāshim
17	1907	<i>al-Rayhanah</i> ⁸⁰⁸	الريحانة	Cairo	Jamīlah al-Ḥāfiẓ
18		<i>Ta⁸⁰⁹rqiyyat al-Fatāt</i> ⁸¹⁰	ترقية الفتاة	Cairo	Fāṭimah Rāshid
19		<i>al-Rayhanah</i> ⁸¹¹	الريحانة	Damanhour	Jamīlah al-Ḥāfiẓ
20	1908	<i>al-Jins al-Laṭīf</i> ⁸¹²	الجنس اللطيف	Cairo	Malakah Sa‘d
21		<i>al-A‘māl al-Yadawīyah lil-Sayyidāt</i> ⁸¹³	الأعمال اليدوية للسيدات	Cairo	Miss Vasiela
22		<i>al-Birnsīs</i> ^{814a}	البرنسيس	al-Mansoura	Fīṭnat Hānim
23	1909	<i>al-‘Ālam al-Jadīd</i> ⁸¹⁵	العالم الجديد	Beirut	Angelina Abū Sha‘r
24		<i>Murshid al-Atfāl</i> ⁸¹⁶	مرشد الأطفال	Beirut	Angelina Abū Sha‘r
25	1910	<i>al-‘Arūs</i> ⁸¹⁷	العروس	Damascus	Mārī ‘Ajamī
26	1911	<i>al-Mar‘ah al-Surīyah</i> ⁸¹⁸	المرأة السورية	Louisiana	‘Afifah Karam
27	1912	<i>al-Jamīlah</i> ⁸¹⁹	الجميلة	Cairo	Fāṭimah Tawfīq

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁰⁶ El Sadda, "Egypt," 155.

⁸⁰⁷ Kallās, *Tārīkh al-Ṣihāfah*, 44.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹² Ibid., 45.

⁸¹³ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 45.

28	1913	<i>al-‘Ālam al-Jadīd</i> <i>al-Nisā’i</i> ⁸²⁰	العالم الجديد النسائي	New York	‘Afīfah Karam
29		<i>Fatāt al-Nīl</i> ⁸²¹	فتاة النيل	Cairo	Sārah al-Mīhīyah
30		<i>Fatāt Lubnān</i> ⁸²²	فتاة لبنان	Beirut	Salīmah Abī Rāshid
31	1914	<i>Rawḍat al-Madāris</i> ⁸²³	روضة المدارس	Cairo	Mrs. Berry
32		<i>al-Karmah</i> ⁸²⁴	الكرمة	São Paulo	Salwā Salāmah Aṭlas

⁸²⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁸²¹ Ibid., 45.

⁸²² Ibid., 46.

⁸²³ Ibid., 46.

⁸²⁴ Ibid., 46.

Appendix C

Schools for Girls in the Nineteenth Century, Egypt and Syria

Appendix C

Schools for Girls in the Nineteenth Century, Egypt and Syria

#	Name of School	Year	Place
1	Girls' Day School ⁸²⁵	1829	Cairo
2	Schools of Midwifery ⁸²⁶	1832	Cairo
3	The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East (CMS) ⁸²⁷	1834	Cairo
4	American Missionary girls' school ⁸²⁸	1835	Beirut
5	Sisters of Charity-Besancon ⁸²⁹	1847	Lebanon
6	As'ad Ya'qūb al-Khayyāt School ⁸³⁰	1846? ⁸³¹	Beirut
7	Ecole des Moniales ⁸³²	1853	Lebanon
8	Sœurs du Cœur de Jésus ⁸³³	1855	Lebanon
9	The Ottoman Islamic National School ⁸³⁴	1860	Beirut

⁸²⁵ Arzu M. Nurdoğan, "The Landing of CMS Missionaries to an Ottoman Dominion: Missionary Education in Egypt (1825-1862)," in *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2016), 399-438. Paul D Sedra, "John Lieder and his Mission in Egypt: The Evangelical Ethos at Work Among Nineteenth-Century Copts," in *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2004), 219-239.

⁸²⁶ Aḥmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta'īm fī 'Aṣr Muḥammad 'Alī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1938), 297. Mervat Hatem, "Modernization, the State, and the Family in Middle East Women's Studies," in Margaret Lee Meriwether; Judith Tucker (eds.), *A Social History of Women and Gender in The Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo.; Oxford: Westview, 1999), 70. Guity Nashat; Judith E Tucker, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 85.

⁸²⁷ Vivian Ibrahim, *The Copts of Egypt: The Challenges of Modernisation and Identity* (London: Tauris, 2013), 29.

⁸²⁸ Phil Mansel, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

⁸²⁹ Jūrj Kallās, *Tārīkh al-Ṣiḥāfah al-Nisawīyah: Nash'atuhā wa-Taṭawwuruhā, 1849-1928* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), 76-77.

⁸³⁰ Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah*, 78-79.

⁸³¹ Dates with a ? indicate discrepancies within the range of years provided by the sources.

⁸³² Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah*, 76-77.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

10	Evangelical school for Girls ⁸³⁵	المدرسة الإنجيلية للبنات	1860	Lebanon
11	The English School for Girls ⁸³⁶	المدرسة الإنكليزية للبنات	1860	Aley - Lebanon
12	The American Evangelical College for Girls ⁸³⁷	الكلية الإنجيلية الأمريكية للبنات	1861	Beirut
13	Mrs. Tiller School ⁸³⁸	مدرسة مسز تيلير	1861	Mount Lebanon
14	School of Lazarians Nuns ⁸³⁹	مدرسة الراهبات العازاريات	1861	Lebanon
15	Prussian School for Girls ⁸⁴⁰	المدرسة البروسية للبنات	1861	Beirut
16	High School for Girls ⁸⁴¹	مدرسة البنات العالية في بيروت	1862	Beirut
17	The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East (CMS) ⁸⁴²	جمعية التبشير الكنسية لأفريقيا والشرق	1864	Azbakiya - Cairo
18	Mrs. Bruckner School ⁸⁴³	مدرسة مسز بروكنر	1867?	Choueifat
19	Mrs. Hikes School ⁸⁴⁴	مدرسة مسز هيكس	1868?	Shemlan - Lebanon
20	Latin School for Girls ⁸⁴⁵	مدرسة اللاتين للإناث في حوران	1871	Hauran - Syria
21	The Official School for Girls ⁸⁴⁶	المدرسة الرسمية للبنات	1873	Cairo
22	Sisters of Charity-Besancon ⁸⁴⁷	مدرسة راهبات المحبة للبنات	1874	Beirut
23	Damascus girls' School ⁸⁴⁸	مدرسة الإناث في دمشق	1877	Damascus

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 76–77.

⁸³⁶ Shāhīn Makāryūs, “al-Ma‘ārif fī Sūrīyah,” in *A‘māl al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī al-Sharqī 1882-1883* (1882), 79–106. Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah*, 76–77.

⁸³⁷ Makāryūs, “al-Ma‘ārif fī Sūrīyah,” 79–106. Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah*, 76–77.

⁸³⁸ Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah*, 76–77.

⁸³⁹ Ibid., 76–77.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., 76–77.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., 76–77.

⁸⁴² Vivian Ibrahim, *The Copts of Egypt: The Challenges of Modernisation and Identity* (London: Tauris, 2013), 28.

⁸⁴³ Kallās, *al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah al-Niswīyah*, 78–79.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid., 78–79.

24	Jam‘īyat al-Maqāṣid girls’ School ⁸⁴⁹	مكتب الإناث لجمعية المقاصد	1878	Saida
25	Sham‘ūn girls’ School of Jam‘īyat al-Maqāṣid ⁸⁵⁰	مكتب الشمعون لجمعية المقاصد	1880	Saida
26	Zahrat al-Ihsān School for Girls ⁸⁵¹	مدرسة زهرة الإحسان للبنات	1881	Beirut
27	Holy Family College for Girls ⁸⁵²	كلية العائلة المقدسة للبنات	1882	Cairo
28	Alexandria College for Girls ⁸⁵³	كلية الإسكندرية للبنات	1884	Alexandria
29	Orthodox School for Girls ⁸⁵⁴	المدرسة الأرثوذكسية للإناث	1885	Syria
30	Catholic School for Girls ⁸⁵⁵	المدرسة الكاثوليكية للإناث	1885	Syria
31	Lazarians School of Girls ⁸⁵⁶	مدرسة العازاريين للإناث	1885	Syria
32	Roman School for Girls ⁸⁵⁷	مدرسة الروم للإناث	1885	Syria
33	Upper Egypt School for Girls ⁸⁵⁸	مدرسة الصعيد للإناث	1887	Egypt – al-Ṣa‘īd
34	Nūr al-‘Afāf Orthodox charity school ⁸⁵⁹	مدرسة جمعية نور العفاف الإرثوذكسية	1898	Syria
35	Aleppo girls’ school ⁸⁶⁰	مدرسة البنات في حلب	1902	Aleppo
36	Cairo University girls’ school 861	كلية البنات في جامعة القاهرة	1908	Cairo

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵² Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵³ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., 78–79.

37	Syrian College of Nursing ⁸⁶²	مدرسة الكلية السورية للتمريض	1908?	Beirut
38	Teachers' House ⁸⁶³	دار المعلمات في مصر	1912?	Cairo
39	American School for Girls ⁸⁶⁴	مدرسة الأمريكان للبنات	1913?	Saida
40	al-Nahḍa Association School ⁸⁶⁵	مدرسة جمعية النهضة الحمصية	1913?	Homs
41	Sisters of Saint Joseph School ⁸⁶⁶	مدرسة راهبات القديس يوسف	1913?	Lebanon
42	Sur's School for Girls ⁸⁶⁷	مدرسة صور للإناث	1914?	Sur - Lebanon

⁸⁶² Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., 78–79.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., 78–79.

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