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**“Living Under Different Skies”: Misrepresenting Egyptian Education during the  
British Occupation in the North American Press**

By

**Shaymaa Zantout**

A Major Research Paper  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of History  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
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at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2021

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British Occupation in the North American Press**

by

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September 23, 2021

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## ABSTRACT

During the British occupation from 1882 to 1922, Egypt saw the rise of colonial educational reforms, American missionary projects, and foreign-subsidized schools. Consequently, newspapers in North America reported extensively on these colonial educational excursions. In the view of correspondents, the so-called “enlightenment” of Egyptians was dependent on their adoption of Western moral ideals and instructional models. The main criticisms levelled at Egyptian education centred on what was viewed as the “incompetence” of native instructors and schools, namely Muslim ones, as well as the need for the modern education of young women. Moreover, Christian or Western schooling was posited as the way to “civilize” these indigenous populations.

Overall, these writings not only helped simultaneously construct both the “abroad” and the oppositional, superior identity of the West to readers, but also legitimated the British occupation as a whole. Therefore, journalism in North America was upholding and reinforcing a colonially-mediated representation of the realities in Egypt. In response to this misrepresentation, Egyptian writers and activists took to Western publications to dispel such denigrating narratives and appealing to readers to consider the failures of their British colonizers. This study of collected articles on Egyptian education in North American newspapers at the time reveals and deconstructs Western observers’ misrepresentations of schools and teaching and learning activities in Egypt.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Bassim and Obeida, for instilling in me the love of learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

This project would not have been possible without the help of so many people. I would foremostly like to thank Dr. Shauna Huffaker for her guidance and mentorship, and for teaching me how to *do* history. Her patience and kindness as an advisor and a scholar have taught me so much. I also express my deep thanks to Dr. John Cappucci for his insight and encouragement throughout this project, and whose questions and comments extended my curiosity. I am so thankful to have met both of them during my undergraduate studies.

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I thank Allah for blessing me with my parents, whose support has been tremendous. This project has been one of the most difficult in my life yet, and their care, presence, and *du'ā'* have been a lifeline. Thanks to my siblings—never a dull moment. I extend my thanks to my wonderful relatives for their prayers and encouragement. I am grateful for my amazing friends, who were a vital support system and helped keep me grounded. My appreciation also goes to the Muslim Chaplaincy at the University of Windsor, and all the volunteers I've worked with in the Windsor Muslim community. Finally, thanks are due to my cohort of fellow graduate students for being such a supportive network; I am inspired by them. I will look back at my time here with a great deal of appreciation. *Alḥamdulillāh.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

On a November evening in 1909 at the grand Hotel Tuller, a *Detroit Free Press* reporter sat with Osman Abdel Razik, a young Egyptian studying at the local Michigan Agricultural College, now Michigan State University. Abdel Razik was accustomed to getting asked about the conditions of his native country, being, as he described, “the only Egyptian in this part of the world.” The interview began with the issue of education, where Abdel Razik candidly stated, “An Englishman living under different skies and bred under absolutely different conditions, and with no notion of our great religious and ethical teachings, attempts to instruct us in it.”<sup>1</sup> His sentiments became all the more profound as he described the failures of the British in bringing promised reform to Egyptian education nearly twenty-seven years into their ongoing occupation. These included the introduction of fees that made education less affordable to the masses, the replacement of native teachers with foreign ones, and the assault on Arabic in schools.<sup>2</sup> Yet troublingly, a general survey of news on the state of Egyptian education in American papers at the time would hardly corroborate Abdel Razik’s knowledge of what was happening to his country’s schooling.

Indeed, the Western press seemed to have a lot to say about the education of Egyptians at the turn of the twentieth century. Education was a field used by correspondents, travellers, diplomats, and other observers to judge the rate at which Egyptians were progressing, holding American and European standards as the primary

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<sup>1</sup> “Egyptians Held in Ignorance,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 26, 1909, 7. Interestingly, Abdel Razik disclosed that the matter of education was usually the first issue he was asked about regarding Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> “Egyptians Held in Ignorance.”

measures of success. In many ways, the underlying tone of such articles was often parochial and self-congratulatory in nature, attributing the “enlightenment” or progress of Egyptians to their absorption or acceptance of Western thought and moral ideals, or to the work being done by missionaries and colonial powers in the region. It seemed that journalists, too, were “living under different skies,” in the words of Abdel Razik, imposing derogatory narratives on Egyptians and their education and privileging colonial authority without attempting to understand local knowledge and practices. The main criticisms levelled at Egyptian education by Western observers centred on the incompetence of Muslim schools and instructors, as well as the need for the education of the country’s girls and women. Moreover, Christian or Western education was posited as the solution to the problems ailing indigenous Egyptians. The British occupation of Egypt beginning in the late nineteenth century had created conditions that encouraged the rise of missionary projects and foreign subsidized schools in the region. Consequently, the press in North America reported extensively on these American and European educational excursions in Egypt.

Calls for the reform of learning institutions and introduction of European systems of education were both informed by the view that education itself would fundamentally transform society and improve citizenship. Western and Egyptian educationalists alike held education as a “panacea” for the nation’s moral, social, political, and even economic ills.<sup>3</sup> Reports on Egypt’s education in the Western press reinforced this dominant point of view. In this case, however, foreign observers overwhelmingly supported imperialistic, colonial, and missionary endeavours to bring enlightened education to what was viewed as a

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<sup>3</sup> See Hoda A. Yousef, “Losing the Future? Constructing Educational Need in Egypt, 1820s to 1920s,” *History of Education* 46, no. 5 (2017): 561–77; and Mona Russell, “Competing, Overlapping, and Contradictory Agendas: Egyptian Education Under British Occupation, 1882–1922,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 21 (2002): 50–60.

hopeless and backward native population—“imperialism after all was a co-operative venture, and a salient trait of its modern form is that it was (or claimed to be) an educational movement; it set out quite consciously to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilize.”<sup>4</sup> In this way, journalism in North America was upholding and reinforcing a colonially-mediated representation of the realities in Egypt. Foreign correspondents and travellers writing from and about Egypt often positioned themselves as informed authorities who could communicate to readers the progress of the colonial project in Egypt, simultaneously claiming to have their fingers on the pulse of Egyptian society despite limited interactions and language barriers. Writing from this narrow vantage point encouraged observers to conclude that British and American education were doing a world of good for Egyptians.

This project analyzes articles written on the nature of education in Egypt through a reading of metropolitan news publications mainly in the United States, as well as Canada, during the years of the British occupation, formally 1880 to 1922. Articles in preceding and subsequent years are utilized to gain a fuller understanding of the direction of the rhetoric regarding the education of Egyptians, as seen mainly through the eyes or collected reports of Americans and Europeans in Egypt. This period is also significant because it clearly illustrates the increasing anxieties of Western observers about Egyptians as their calls for self-determination grew more vehement in the 1900s. Overall, news items appeared in the form of articles by special correspondents, editorials, opinion pieces, travellers’ letters, international news digests, and other dispatches, which were published and syndicated for a North American readership.<sup>5</sup> Three central themes in the study of these

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 269.

<sup>5</sup> While questions of audience and impact on readers are beyond the scope of this paper, this study analyzes the prevailing North American milieu of views on Egyptian education at the time.

sources become apparent. First, many articles offered reports on the activities of American missionary schools, keeping readers availed of the work being done by missionaries in Egypt. In addition, matters of instructional methods at Egyptian schools, centred on Islamic education, were commonly discussed, informing readers of the conditions inside local institutions. These discussions were predominantly focused on the primary *kuttāb* schools as well as al-Azhar University, which operated at the time as a teaching mosque among its other religious and social functions. Lastly, girls' education constituted a great deal of writings on schooling in the country, viewed by correspondents as a hopeful sign of things to come amidst an otherwise archaic system and people.

Finally, a compelling angle emerges in this study. In response to these misrepresentations in foreign news outlets, Egyptian writers and activists took to Western publications, mainly in England and France, to dispel such denigrating narratives about their education and nation's affairs as a whole, appealing to readers to consider the failures of their British occupiers. These increasingly articulate voices were beginning to make their demands heard in foreign circles. Due to the nature of transatlantic wire syndication services at the time, excerpts of such Egyptian interventions occasionally made it to small features in the columns of North American newspapers. Two notable examples will be discussed at the end of this paper, enriching discussions on Egyptian education as seen through Egyptian eyes, communicated to a Western audience accustomed to reading myopic views on the matter by so-called pundits. Like Osman Abdel Razik's interview, the presence of indigenous voices offers stark contrasts of the realities in Egyptian education against the overwhelming number of Western distortions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The transliteration of Arabic terms and names in this project follows the diacritic conventions laid out by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Historiography of Egyptian Education and Its Foreign Observers

Issues of education and its reform in Egypt under Western occupation have been widely explored by historians, presenting a vast body of both indigenous and colonial accounts of these efforts. Furthermore, the literature analyzes the perceptions of Western, namely English and French, observers of Egypt, offering a rich body of rhetorical analysis that unpacks colonial narratives in the literary and journalistic settings. This project builds on such works and extends similar analysis to writings found in North American newspapers. A diverse array of scholarship has provided context and framework, offering a view of what academics have contributed to these areas of study.

Hilary Kalmbach's *Islamic Knowledge and the Making of Modern Egypt* explores Egyptian educational projects of modernity. Kalmbach argues that European discourse—and to what this project extends, its American counterpart—about Egypt's education and affairs as a whole “simplified Egypt's physical and sociocultural landscapes to the point of misrepresentation.”<sup>7</sup> The country and its people were constantly evaluated by foreign observers against Western standards, and this “colonial-era discourse stressed an absolute division between European and local ideas, practices, and spaces. Criticism of local practices served to police a sociocultural boundary that separated foreign and local, and established the coloniser as superior to the colonised.”<sup>8</sup> Where Kalmbach only focuses on the reports of missionaries and European writers to present the views of these Western

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<sup>7</sup> Hilary Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 53.

<sup>8</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 71.

observers on Egyptian schools, the use of news articles in this study suggests that such depictions of Egyptian education were more common and extended to potentially a wider readership via these publications, with a transatlantic reach.

As Kalmbach also points out, modern “European approaches to literacy and knowledge transmission had become largely *ocularcentric*, or focused on using the eyes to read and write.”<sup>9</sup> As a result, European observers often reproached many of the deeply “audiocentric” Egyptian pedagogical approaches at the time, particularly in the realm of religious education, in which oral transmission played an important role in the communication and reception of knowledge. Kalmbach precisely notes that “any divergence from European ideals is seen as evidence of the backward nature of Islamic knowledge and the societies built upon it, even though large segments of European society also failed to live up to these ideals.”<sup>10</sup> These observers’ lens was coloured by Eurocentric, rigid views of literacy and what it meant to be truly “educated,” leading them to negate any practices that did not match these narrow conceptions.

Historian Hoda A. Yousef critically examines this notion of literacy in Egypt in the late nineteenth century when “the colonial imposition of the British occupation, the government’s growing interest in the everyday matters of its citizenry, and the emerging class of educated elites who preached a gospel of educational betterment” were all contributing factors to the discourse on literacy and education for Egyptians.<sup>11</sup> In *Composing Egypt*, Yousef uniquely broadens this discussion into one of multiple, everyday

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<sup>9</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Hoda A. Yousef, *Composing Egypt: Reading, Writing, and the Emergence of a Modern Nation, 1870–1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 13. Several themes and findings explored in Yousef’s research are reflected in Kalmbach’s *Islamic Knowledge*, which was published later, though surprisingly no direct reference is made by Kalmbach to any of Yousef’s work.

“literacies,” reflecting the diverse ways that men and women in Egypt engaged in practices of literacy across various spheres. Where literacy has too often been defined in terms of particular kinds of reading and writing and positioned as the saving grace of societies, this work demonstrates how various individuals and groups—themselves illiterate or semiliterate—were already using skills of orality, hiring scribes, and employing other tools to navigate an increasingly bureaucratic world to make their voices and needs heard.<sup>12</sup> It is these various forms of local knowledge and practices that are virtually undetected by Western observers, who instead pit reading and writing publics against illiterate ones.

While this period is often painted as one of competing systems, European versus Eastern, or primitive versus modern, recent literature has also presented alternative views that enrich historical understanding beyond reductive dichotomies, demonstrating that there was not merely a singular expression of modern education. For example, Yousef also reinterprets experiences within the Egyptian education system that have commonly been positioned as ones of tension and a total break with the past. Using as her case study the magazine *Rawdat al-Madāris*, an 1870s Egyptian ministry publication on education, she shows that many native intellectuals, educators, and administrators embodied an attitude towards education that was “eclectic,” embracing both traditional pedagogies as well as European ones in an amalgamation that reflected and cultivated the needs of Egyptians.<sup>13</sup> Yousef convincingly argues that Egyptian intellectuals did not simply make a break with

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<sup>12</sup> Yousef has also written extensively on rural and working-class Egyptians who used petitions to advocate for better education for their children, demonstrating how they were indeed concerned with education for various reasons. This directly opposes accounts of Western observers in this study who deemed Egyptians self-satisfied and uninterested in pursuing any education at all. See Yousef, “Losing the Future?”

<sup>13</sup> Hoda A. Yousef, “Reassessing Egypt’s Dual System of Education Under Isma‘il: Growing ‘Ilm and Shifting Ground in Egypt’s First Educational Journal, *Rawdat Al-Madaris*, 1870–77,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008): 112.

the past—nor did they want to. Rather, they adopted educational approaches that brought intellectual and moral “value,” even if they happened to come from Western sources.

While ultimately the debates on education grew much more polarized over time particularly throughout the decades of British occupation and missionary presence, Yousef’s case study demonstrates that there were various stages of change and negotiation of ideologies that took place. Not all of the nascent discussions about education were interested in the wholesale adoption of Western models, as observers often made it out to be. “Far from being a straightforward transplantation of Western ideas and methods,” argues Omnia El Shakry, Egyptian knowledge production, particularly in the realm of social sciences, “entailed subtle subversions and ironic historical reversals of colonial forms of knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> It is of these very forms of agency, resistance, and subversion that Western observers could not take notice. The eclectic “modernities” experienced by Egyptians also reveal the very fluid experience of modernity itself, whereas critics’ imperialistic conceptions of how Egypt *should* modernize—according to European and American standards—were rigid and parochial. Therefore, writers in the press were in many ways continually fortifying a hegemonic, colonial narrative on education.

Another central element of this study is certainly the role foreign correspondents played in bringing such images of Egypt to readers in Canada and the United States. Foreign correspondence was becoming a growing feature of daily newspapers in North America in the nineteenth century as editors adopted an increasingly enterprising and competitive outlook in their news gathering.<sup>15</sup> In its nascent years, this often came in the

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<sup>14</sup> Omnia El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Dell’Orto, *Giving Meanings to the World*, 23. A 1930 study which looked at nine-months’ worth of issues of the forty most widely circulated US daily morning newspapers in 1927 found that 58.5 per cent of their



form of reprinted digests or brief news bulletins that were published from mainly European publications, sent over by steamship mail, and later by Anglo-American telegraph networks created between Maritime Canada and England. As the interest and demand for foreign news continued to develop, publications began to station correspondents in major cities abroad to create a direct link with the news and events there. This meant that reporters were providing longer articles about their observations with a greater degree of their personal analysis, offering both “descriptive and moral value.”<sup>16</sup> Correspondents consequently became interpreters of culture, giving meaning to the societies they visited or inhabited. In the context of the US, these writers, credited or anonymous, were simultaneously shaping the American “common sense” about the world and constructing the “abroad” to readers.<sup>17</sup>

Journalism scholar Giovanna Dell’Orto explores how these earliest American foreign correspondents in the mid-nineteenth century, predominantly white men in the mainstream news setting, were constructing a “discourse of the ‘world’” for readers at home.<sup>18</sup> While Dell’Orto chooses not to examine the influences that shaped the practice of foreign correspondents at the time—including American foreign policy, relationships with news editors, the influence of readers’ changing tastes, and numerous other factors that may be too difficult to gauge—she demonstrates that these observers were not only creating images of the world abroad, but also creating and reinforcing an identity of the US itself.

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foreign news came from the Associated Press alone. The agency for some time had been criticized for monopolizing foreign correspondence. This further complicates the issue of representation considering that only a small number of sources may have been informing a great deal of the news. See Julian Laurence Woodward, *Foreign News in American Morning Newspapers: A Study in Public Opinion* (New York: AMS Press, 1968 [1st ed. Columbia University Press, 1930]), 68.

<sup>16</sup> A style of “literary journalism” was also developing whereby many writers adopted descriptive and interpretative literary conventions. See David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Dell’Orto, *Giving Meanings to the World*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Dell’Orto, *Giving Meanings to the World*, 4–5.

Foreign correspondents and news services, however, were not the only ones creating this discourse of the world and asserting Western power. Articles found in this study show that politicians, bureaucrats, essayists, and a variety of critics were also increasingly opining on matters abroad, including issues of education in Egypt. Therefore, the same narratives were being reinforced in a variety of modes and to different reading publics through travel letters, magazine-style essays, and other formats within newspapers, demonstrating the increasing commodification of news and editorial attention to readers' changing tastes.<sup>19</sup>

As reporters continued to professionalize their work and standards throughout the nineteenth century, issues of “objectivity” and relaying events “as they really happened” became growing concerns. In *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell also makes a noteworthy comparison of European literary writers at the time to photographers capturing images of Egypt, stating that “one very frequently finds the experience of its strangeness expressed in terms of the problem of forming a picture. ... Writers from Europe wanted to make pictures in the same way. They wanted to portray what they saw in words with the same chemically-etched accuracy, and the same optical detachment, as the daguerreotype or the photographic apparatus.”<sup>20</sup> Mitchell’s analogy of representation and objectivity in the literary realm lends itself very effectively to the work of foreign correspondents discussed in this project. Like these novelists and writers, Western observers in the press sought this “accuracy of representation” that came from a point of view of authority—correspondents attempted to be “detached and objective,” either tacitly or explicitly

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<sup>19</sup> This interest in Egypt and the “Orient” at large was part of a longstanding wave of Egyptomania—or as Malini Johar Schueller expansively refers to it, “orientomania”—in the West. An “appetite for oriental travel” and exotic knowledge were certainly factors influencing newsrooms. See *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 22. Citing one novelist, Mitchell argues that “like the photographer, the writer wanted to reproduce a picture of things ‘exactly as they are,’ of ‘the East itself in its vital actual reality.’” *Colonising Egypt*, 22.

informing readers that they were representing Egypt “as it is.”<sup>21</sup> With the exception of scant instances, there is also often no mention of guides or translators accompanying travelling reporters, erasing to readers any mediation between Western observers’ “objective” view and the subjects of their gaze. These factors extended their credibility on Egyptian matters and further cemented their (mis)representations of education in the minds of readers.

Ironically, journalists claiming to provide in-depth, objective details in their observations seemed to only further misrepresent Egyptians when they attempted to mold foreign characteristics into legible ones. This often came in the form of comparing institutions and teaching methods in Egypt against Western standards. Making comparisons was done not only to translate these observations into terms familiar to readers—and to the writers themselves, even—but also to carve out a superior identity that preserved the separation between the colonized and the colonizer, and by extension aligned American power with its British counterpart.<sup>22</sup> The language of difference and opposites used by correspondents and other writers also came to dominate descriptions of the colonized, furthering stereotypes and essentializing entire cultures, as David Spurr has explored at length in *The Rhetoric of Empire*. Spurr explores the common rhetorical devices in Western journalistic accounts of the “Other,” whereby such techniques as the classification of the indigenous according to Eurocentric standards and the “self-affirmation” of Western power were regular features of this colonial discourse. These texts carried “the voice of an individual writer, the voice of institutional authority, of cultural

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<sup>21</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> As Edward Said has argued in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, the West often sculpts its own image through the identity of others. According to Dibyesh Anand, this “production of knowledge about the Other through representations goes hand in hand with the construction, articulation, and affirmation of differences between the Self and Other, which in turn feeds into the identity politics amongst the representer as well as the represented.” See “Western Colonial Representations of the Other: The Case of Exotica Tibet.” *New Political Science* 29, no. 1 (2007): 25.

ideology...often at the same time.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, as Rana Kabbani has noted, Western writers and correspondents were contributing to “a communal image of the East,” a collective discourse that informed both readers’ and other writers’ imaginary of the Other.<sup>24</sup>

There is no doubt that many American and European observers misrepresented and reduced Egypt’s education and people in the press. Islam, in particular, became a catch-all for describing the primitiveness and mismanagement of the nation, reducing the entire religion into nothing more than a vague yet dangerous label while simultaneously flattening the diverse and complex social, political, and cultural realities. At the risk of this study simply reinforcing similar narrow and ambiguous categories, pitting West against East, or Christianity versus Islam, it is important to briefly consider the issue here. Edward Said helps illuminate this discussion in *Covering Islam*, affirming that “these enormous generalizations have behind them a whole history, enabling and disabling at the same time.”<sup>25</sup> As Said notes, these labels can also perform two main functions: they act as identifiers and, more significantly, “produce a much more complex meaning” to these categorizations.<sup>26</sup> Such meanings can bolster narratives in different ways, and therefore must be assessed critically. For the purposes of this project, such labels are used not only to identify subjects, but also because it is these very markers that writers and other observers utilized in their own reporting. Therefore, I work within these labels to continue making their meanings complex by critically deconstructing the assumptions and rhetoric they perpetuate and exposing their misuse and contradictions.

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<sup>23</sup> Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Europe’s Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 10.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books/Random House, 1981), 8–9.

<sup>26</sup> Said, *Covering Islam*, 9.

## CHAPTER 3

### North American Coverage of Education in Egypt

#### British Colonial Reforms and Missionary Schools

The rhetoric of a modern, new Egypt versus its regressive, fundamentalist counterpart was a common narrative woven by correspondents and critics in the press. Early on in the occupation, the educational efforts of British officials and other Western presence in the country were seen as enough “to make the difference between Egypt now and Egypt in the latter days of Ismail like the difference between light and darkness.”<sup>27</sup> This dichotomy helped reinforce the image of Western powers bringing enlightened education to Egypt. Furthermore, colonial reform was upheld by many writers as a necessary duty. Egypt, after all, was yet another extension of this “white man’s burden, a permanent burden, to be handed on from generation to generation.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the administration of Egyptian affairs was seen as a moral imperative and an inherited role. By 1900, the narrative pushed by writers was that colonial reforms already had started to create this “Redeemed Egypt,” as touted in a *New York Times* piece of that year.<sup>29</sup> The country was being emancipated from archaic Muslim rule and could now embrace modern education and other transformations brought forth by the occupation.

Because of their colonizers, Egyptian Muslims in particular were seen to be experiencing a great rebirth: “this opening up of Islam to the west has been, first, a

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<sup>27</sup> “England’s Rule in Egypt,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1893, 19. See also “Advantages of British Occupation of Egypt Enumerated,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 20, 1915, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Ellis, “Race Issue.”

<sup>29</sup> “Redeemed Egypt: What the English Are Doing for Its Political Reorganization and Industrial Development,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1900, BR12. The British impact according to another writer: “a splendid system of education perfected.” Charles T. Long, “British Rule in Egypt,” *The Globe*, September 8, 1906, 23.

renaissance. Into the Moslem world has come the science and the learning of the Occident. Minds wholly given over to superstition are acquiring scientific facts and scientific methods of thought.”<sup>30</sup> An awakening through the attainment of modern and, therefore, useful knowledge was directly correlated to Egyptians’ and Muslims’ consumption of Western ideas. Thanks to British colonial efforts, writers would regularly assert, education had also become “universal,” wherein “every little hamlet has its schools,” claims which completely effaced indigenous educational efforts before and during the occupation.<sup>31</sup> But “the British did not bring revival,” as historian Judith Tucker forcefully states.<sup>32</sup> In fact, colonial administrators had tremendously stifled Egyptian government efforts at education reform. English controller-general Evelyn Baring, otherwise known as Lord Cromer, had chosen not to fund education in Egypt for years based on his experience in India, where he saw this as an influence that initiated nationalist sentiment in the educated class.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, colonial administrators “purposely restricted the enrollment in secondary schools and universities to a narrow group... to prevent the growth of a class of disaffected intellectuals.”<sup>34</sup> Far from a school in every hamlet, the British occupation did not dramatically improve education as observers made it out to be.

Rather than illuminate Egyptian reform initiatives, however, the press turned in many instances to colonial officials as the main authorities on most cultural and educational

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<sup>30</sup> William Rapp, “Islam Fundamentalists Fight Modernist Trend,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1925. See also “Moslems Turning to Western Ideas,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1924, E1.

<sup>31</sup> See Thomas E. Green, “England’s Danger Point: Egypt the Treacherous,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 15, 1914, D3; and Ruth McClintock, “Religion, Greed, Cause Break in Egypt, Traveler Declares,” *The Chicago Defender*, January 3, 1925, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1985), 123.

<sup>33</sup> Roger Owen, “The Influence of Lord Cromer’s Indian Experience on British Policy in Egypt, 1883–1907,” *St. Antony’s Papers* 17 (1965), cited in Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt’s Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 91.

<sup>34</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 2016), 100.

issues. In one case, Cromer was even erroneously credited in such matters of religious reform as bringing “the El Azhar faculty to the view that the Koranic prohibition was aimed only at usury, but not at ordinary legal rates of interest, and thanks to this, Moslems of all classes in Egypt began to intrust their money to the principal banks.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, colonial administrator Herbert Kitchener was cited as having “succeeded in obtaining the reluctant consent of the administration of the vast riches and extensive property of the wakfs or pious foundations” and converting these endowments “into an ordinary Egyptian government department, subject to his supervision and control, a plan which the English government has long had in view”<sup>36</sup> In reality, such questions of reform had long been discussed and enacted by Egyptians themselves, and in many cases even before the British occupation—the likes of Muḥammad ‘Abduh, who became the Grand Mufti of al-Azhar, had issued new religious legal rulings, or *fatāwa*, on the subject of usury; and under the leadership of Muḥammad ‘Alī (r. 1805–1848), projects of nationalizing *awqāf* had been long underway. It is clear that most foreign correspondents did not have the expertise nor the access to local knowledge of which they claimed to accurately and authentically reflect such reforms in Egypt. Their reliance on colonial sources only bolstered colonial views of the country.

As the British languidly enacted their education reforms, another Western player was developing a great influence on education in Egypt under the occupying forces. In an 1892 interview with a Toronto *Globe* reporter, William Withrow, a Canadian Methodist minister stated, “the great body of the people, as far as I could judge from the testimony of missionaries and intelligent natives [sic], felt that British administration is the greatest

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<sup>35</sup> “Islam’s New University of Medina,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 1914, S1.

<sup>36</sup> “Islam’s New University of Medina.”

blessing Egypt has ever had.”<sup>37</sup> In addition to speaking on behalf of Egyptian natives, he went on to describe a number of Canadian missionaries travelling to Egypt and across the Ottoman empire to join the evangelizing effort. Withrow and the missionaries he acquainted were just a few participants among the vast networks of Western missionary educational endeavours.<sup>38</sup> American agencies, in particular, were portrayed by the press as a necessary force in the “civilizing mission” in Egypt. Their presence was seen as nothing short of revolutionary: “Do you realize how American education is revolutionizing the orient?” an article forthrightly begins, “It has been one of the chief forces which have modernized Egypt.”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the American mission represented a major influence in the modernization of Egyptian education alongside British colonial reforms.

These missionary projects, which began to grow throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were also positioned as an extension of the United States’ influence and advantageous position under the British occupation; the press spared no opportunity to weave this into a narrative of American exceptionalism. In this way, missionary work was becoming a “signifier of national power.”<sup>40</sup> A 1922 *New York Times* article extolled the perceived virtues of the role of the US in Egypt: “Her influence, in every way, is beneficial. Her opportunities for doing good to others and assisting herself are manifold. There remains only the necessity for the propagation in the United States of the knowledge essential for the guidance of American public opinion on matters affecting

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<sup>37</sup> “Egypt and the Holy Land,” *The Globe*, July 6, 1892, 3.

<sup>38</sup> As one writer noted, “the American missionaries alone have over 100 schools, and the English have many more.” Frank G. Carpenter, “Americans Revolutionizing the Orient,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 5, 1911, D4.

<sup>39</sup> Carpenter, “Americans Revolutionizing the Orient.” US influence was becoming increasingly clear to many observers: the mission had “taken a significant hold upon the life of the people.” Clayton Sedgwick Cooper, “Christian Education Seen Leavening Egypt’s Youth,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 16, 1913.

<sup>40</sup> Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms*, 43.



America in Egypt.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in a series of published correspondence from his travels, William Jennings Bryan—who would later become the US Secretary of State—discussed “the pioneer work done in the field of education by the United Presbyterians. They have several churches and a number of very successful schools, and must be credited with having contributed largely to the progress which Egypt has made and is making.”<sup>42</sup> The press, therefore, would play a central role in shaping Americans’ perceptions of their nation’s role in Egypt, as well as garnering support for the American mission.

The evangelizing role of American missionaries was also used to position them as more credible authorities on matters abroad, in Egypt and elsewhere, than indigenous populations themselves who were threatening progress and could not be trusted. In a 1922 article published on the cusp of Egyptian independence, Frederick Cunliffe-Owen—a British-born columnist who had earlier served as the foreign news editor of the *New York Tribune*—opined that the experience of American missionaries is “based on years of residence in the country, and having remained patriotic Americans, are more deserving of belief by their countrymen, than irresponsible native adventurers and plotters” who were ungrateful for the education that the British gave them.<sup>43</sup> This writer criticized Americans sympathetic to the indigenous, claiming that their trust is better placed in the missionaries on the ground. American missionary educators were viewed as more credible experts in a unique position to transform Egyptians because were seen as able to expertly navigate the social and cultural landscape. For example, one reporter believed that missionary teachers

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<sup>41</sup> H.A. Bradstreet, “America in Egypt,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1922, 88. Newspapers also reported on Theodore Roosevelt’s post-presidential visits to missionary schools as well as the American Mission College for girls and the “University of Egypt,” giving addresses to students and administrators and, by extension, demonstrating US interest in missionary endeavours. See “Roosevelt Talks to Cairo Students,” *The Hartford Courant*, March 29, 1910, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Bryan, “Bryan in Quarantine Five Days.”

<sup>43</sup> Cunliffe-Owen, “England’s Policy.”

were “among the best Arabic scholars in Egypt and through the ability which this knowledge of the vernacular affords them, they have acquired the power of securing a unique point of view regarding the Egyptian character and Egyptian tendencies.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, their ability to interact with Egyptians even on such a basic level as being proficient in the language rendered missionaries a source of expert knowledge.

In addition, observers believed that missionary schools were bringing the modern, utilitarian efficiency and expertise of Western education that was lacking or absent in Egyptian government schools. A correspondent observed in 1914 that hundreds of schools were “being directly influenced by the method of education reaching Egypt from Europe,” and that this “predominating tendency toward utilitarian education is evident among the Egyptian students who go to Europe for graduate study.”<sup>45</sup> European instructional models rooted in utilitarianism—which had been growing in influence throughout the nineteenth century—were evident to the writer; at the time, these ideas were being brought into Egypt through missionary schools, as well as European-educated Egyptians working in education.<sup>46</sup> However, the efforts of Egyptians in adapting such ideas were not the focus of correspondents’ reports, who mainly credited missionary agencies. In an extensive report of his visit to various missionary-led schools in Egypt, Clayton Sedgwick Cooper, a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, claimed that there were “no more efficient institution to be found in the entire country than that center of learning...at Assuit [sic] College. New buildings, up-to-date teachers from America, both men and women,

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<sup>44</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.” Cooper even claimed to be “impressed with the fact that the American teachers seemed to be as familiar with Arabic as were the natives themselves.”

<sup>45</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.” Interestingly, this writer noted that “no student has so deeply impressed him with his utter utilitarianism as did the Egyptian student.” Utilitarian education was clearly being imported into and enforced in the country’s foreign-run schools to a great extent.

<sup>46</sup> As Sedra has also noted, missionaries “viewed the Coptic Church as a conduit through which to channel evangelical notions of industry, discipline and order into Egypt at large.” From *Mission to Modernity*, 11.

athletics, thorough examinations and even the beginnings of what we would call in America, college spirit, are prominent.”<sup>47</sup> Modern classroom fixtures, athletic programs, and even the sense of collegial morale were all perceived here as hallmarks of a quality American education; consequently, by being transplanted in Egypt through missionary agencies, such schools would inevitably have a transformative effect on Egyptian students.

Western, Christian education, as imported by missionaries, was then posited as the driving force behind making a so-called “good Egyptian” by modern standards. American missionary educators were viewed as these “sensible teachers who are bringing to bear upon educational conditions in this awakening country the learning of the west, reaffirming the universal truth that in order to make a good Egypt, you must first make a good Egyptian.”<sup>48</sup> Missionaries were an indispensable key to instill morality and bring the largely illiterate Egyptians “to anything like adequate literacy, and the ability to think individually, or in harmony with an advanced modern civilization.”<sup>49</sup> These Christian schools, Cooper professed, “do not conceal the fact that their first mission is towards making a stronger and better manhood and womanhood in this land of the Pharaohs.... This emphasis is not only opportune, it is inevitable.” In this way, the evangelizing mission extended the colonial civilizing mission, and “education was an essential component of this effort to establish missionary authority—if not, indeed, *the* essential component.”<sup>50</sup> Through education, missionaries sought to reform moral and intellectual life for Egyptians.

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<sup>47</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.”

<sup>48</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.”

<sup>49</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.”

<sup>50</sup> Sedra, *From Mission to Modernity*, 32. As Paul Sedra has also argued, “Evangelical missionaries of the early nineteenth century were ‘colonizers’ in a quite specific sense. . . . Missionary colonialism, in contrast to, say, the colonialism of the settler or the administrator, aimed at incorporation of the heathen through domestication, rather than separation. This domestication was not possible without education.” *From Mission to Modernity*, 32.

Overall, missionary schools were often seen to be providing an education which rivalled that of the government schools in Egypt. Describing one American missionary college, a correspondent asserted that it was “said to give a better education than the government institutions, and that at the lowest possible cost”; consequently, this “twentieth century spirit of modern progress is stirring the Mohammedan world.”<sup>51</sup> In an 1886 article on Protestant-run schools, the writer declared, “I think all fair minded observers will agree with me when I say that these schools are doing more for the education of the subjects of the Turkish empire than any other one source.”<sup>52</sup> Missionaries, therefore, were understood to be doing the work Egyptians could not do for themselves. Clayton Cooper, like other correspondents, observed “the rapidly extending popularity of such education.” He wrote,

That the schools carried on by foreign missionaries in the land of the Nile are helping to afford both practical and moral ballast...is proved by the character of their graduates, and also by the manner in which the natives...are applying for membership of their children in the various educational institutions maintained by Christian missionaries.<sup>53</sup>

The observation that Egyptian parents were sending their kids to mission schools in numbers was a clear indication to journalists like Cooper of the need for these institutions. However, considering how subdued Egyptian government education became under British control, it is understandable why parents would want the quality of education provided by missionary schools. They were, after all, generally well-endowed and could provide Egyptian parents, as well as foreigners in Egypt, a decent education for their children.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Carpenter, “Americans Revolutionizing the Orient.”

<sup>52</sup> Woodward, “Turkey: Education in the Turkish Empire,” *Hartford Daily Courant*, January 14, 1886, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.”

<sup>54</sup> American Protestant missions, in particular, practically “‘had no *inhibitions* about money’; they took a business-like approach to fund-raising, collecting pennies but also seeking big grants from industrial giants” such as the Rockefellers. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, 12.

At home, these missionary education projects continued to receive a great deal of press coverage, which helped further support the cause socially and materially. Missionaries presenting at conferences or to local church congregations recounted the work being done at their schools and developments in the evangelization of the native population, and such speaking engagements were often covered in local newspapers.<sup>55</sup> In a 1901 meeting, Anna Y. Thompson, an active member of the American mission, spoke to a Detroit congregation about her work among Muslims in Egypt.<sup>56</sup> According to Thompson, of about 14,000 children in Presbyterian schools, “3,000 are sons or daughters of Mohammedan parents. In this way, we reach many of the followers of the false prophet, but in many instances the children are taken away from us after a few weeks or a few months. However, we have succeeded in implanting in their minds a groundwork that afterwards develops into a love for Christianity.”<sup>57</sup> Her use of statistics throughout the presentation and the claim that the mission was planting the seed of Christianity in Muslim minds were means of generating promise and enthusiasm about the mission—and of great importance, financial support—among Americans.<sup>58</sup> By covering these events, the press helped extend the outreach of missionaries, keeping readers availed of their work abroad.

Ultimately, missionaries and their schools were not particularly successful in proselytizing Muslims in Egypt. One correspondent conceded in 1914 that “the American mission, which counts among its converts 15,000 Egyptians in the last 50 years, reports

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<sup>55</sup> Missionaries would also recount their experiences to audiences about dealing with Muslims. See “Aggression of Moslems Told Student Volunteers.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. January 1, 1914, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson had been teaching in a number of mission schools in Egypt for several years, and also met regularly with wealthy American tourists and public figures to raise funds for missionary institutions. See Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> “Hotbed of Mohammedanism,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 30, 1901, 5.

<sup>58</sup> According to Sharkey, statistics also “gave missionaries a sense of possibility, progress, and purpose, and contributed to the heady optimism that marked Christian missions as the twentieth century began.” *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, 90.

less than 200 in this entire number as converts from Islam.”<sup>59</sup> Despite this, the narrative was often reframed to cast missionary work in a positive light, with claims that “those who are educated in the Christian schools seldom become Christians, but they soon recognize the weakness and the uselessness of their own religion and its conflict with modern progress.”<sup>60</sup> This echoes the same sentiment Thompson expressed earlier to a Detroit congregation: although the number of Muslim converts was admittedly low, Christian schooling was still having a supposedly powerful effect.<sup>61</sup> Missionary education was seen, to be capturing the minds of Egyptians because “Islam is failing at present to hold the real loyalty of educated men. It is a stationary faith and the students of Egypt are feeling keenly handicap of belated rules and exactions.”<sup>62</sup> The writer here argued that “as the Moslem student becomes Europeanized there is a very certain tendency to neglect his faith.”<sup>63</sup> This was seen as a favourable effect missionary education was having on Egyptian Muslims.<sup>64</sup>

Overall, missionary schools were represented by the press as being fully equipped and qualified to transform *Muslim* Egyptian society. “While these schools are attended quite largely by Coptic students,” noted a correspondent, “their influence is being felt increasingly among Moslems as well.”<sup>65</sup> It is evident that not all Egyptians were viewed through the same lens, but were instead categorized by both colonial officials and the press in a religious hierarchy whereby Muslims were seen as the problematic and less educated

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<sup>59</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.”

<sup>60</sup> William E. Curtis, “The Decay of Islam,” *Boston Daily Globe*, October 27, 1910, 12.

<sup>61</sup> As one observer expressed, “Educated Moslems generally lose their faith.” Curtis, “The Decay of Islam.”

<sup>62</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.”

<sup>63</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.”

<sup>64</sup> Mission schools were not always used by Egyptian students for the purposes intended by missionaries. Sedra has explored fascinating cases of Upper Egyptian Coptic peasants “whose attendance at mission schools in Asyüt resulted in exemption from forced labor.” Therefore, Egyptians were navigating these schools for their own needs in many ways, and missionary education was not necessarily the morally reformative force the press made it out to be. *From Mission to Modernity*, 13–14.

<sup>65</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.”

population in Egypt. In contrast, Coptic Egyptians were discussed in more positive terms—one reporter openly claimed that Copts “are more intelligent than the Mohammedans and they take naturally to education.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, according to a journalist, “Coptic education, while it is comparatively recent in its larger growth, is taking rapid strides at present and its modern schools and up-to-date methods give promise of an expanding education amongst this sect.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, the colonial education system, as explored by Mohamed Saleh, had “preserved, or even aggravated” social and class gaps between Muslims and Copts.<sup>68</sup> Muslims would be the real challenge for missionaries in their evangelizing efforts.

In praising the Coptic community, therefore, the press also maligned Muslims. This colonially-reified religious hierarchy was further cemented in the news whereby Muslims and Islam were often cited as the sources of Egypt’s mismanagement and regression, especially in educational matters, having “kept the people in ignorance and under oppression, without liberty, education or progress.”<sup>69</sup> Islam was also positioned by many writers as a false religion that incited fanaticism, whose adherents were “an essentially militant people” posing a threat to colonial order as well as to Christians and foreigners living in the region.<sup>70</sup> Not only did this misrepresentation and dehumanization of Muslims

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<sup>66</sup> Frank G. Carpenter, “American College in Egypt Detroit Free Press. September 22, 1907, D3. Carpenter made this claim on multiple occasions, in another article stating that Copts “are the most intelligent of the native population.” See “Education in Egypt,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 15, 1907, D5.

<sup>67</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.” The British Consul-General in Egypt, Eldon Gorst, also expressed “that no section of the community has profited more by the era of good government introduced into Egypt by the British occupation than the Copts,” further demonstrating the imbalanced effects of the occupation. “Egypt’s Position Plainly Stated by British Agent,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 25, 1911, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Mohamed Saleh, “Public Mass Modern Education, Religion, and Human Capital in Twentieth-Century Egypt,” *Journal of Economic History* 76, no. 3 (2016): 698.

<sup>69</sup> Curtis, “The Decay of Islam.”

<sup>70</sup> Dudley S. Corlett, “Moslem Peril Declared Real: Christians of Orient Said to Be Endangered,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1925, 2. In the view of one critic, Egypt’s problem of “religious fanaticism has instilled some semblance of virility into the most supine and degenerate people upon earth. “A Moslem Outbreak,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1907, II4. In another article, Islam was even described as being “directly contrary” to the rest of the world. “Science and the Koran,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 1913, 6.

help validate the need for missionary schools in the country, but it was also used to further legitimize the British occupation. Such narratives of Muslim “savagery” in Egypt were already well established: readers of the *Canadian Statesman* were told in an 1896 issue, for example, that “the basis of the Moslem faith is the same now as when Mohammed spread abroad his doctrines with fire and sword, and that hatred of all unbelievers is its principal and inflexible attribute.”<sup>71</sup> It is against this backdrop of longstanding anti-Muslim rhetoric that coverage of indigenous Islamic education in Egypt would take form.

### **Islamic Education in Egypt**

As he walked through the colonnaded halls of Al-Azhar, Frank Carpenter observed and recounted its educational activities to readers (Appendix A). “It bears a symbolic name, ‘el-Azhar,’ signifying ‘the flourishing,’” he wrote, “and this venerable seat of learning enjoys not only greater renown than any other in all Mohammedan lands, but also the distinction of being one of the oldest and most largely frequented on the face of the earth.”<sup>72</sup> The praise was short-lived when his attitude then turned into one of frustration: “I looked about me in vain for school furniture such as we have at home. There was not a chair nor a table in the halls; there were no maps nor diagrams and no scientific instruments. There were no libraries visible and the books used were mostly pamphlets.”<sup>73</sup> The remainder of Carpenter’s piece turned into a series of disparaging commentaries about the institution. This dissonance encapsulated the recurring attitude of Western observers that “in the rare cases where Egyptian agency could not be ignored, it was denigrated.”<sup>74</sup> In his view, the

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<sup>71</sup> “Notes and Comments,” *The Canadian Statesman*, January 29, 1896, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Carpenter, “Education in Egypt.”

<sup>73</sup> Carpenter, “Education in Egypt.”

<sup>74</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 71-72.



school was not organized in a familiar way indicative of an American or European classroom, and consequently, it was not equipped with the means to educate its pupils.

Like Carpenter, travel writers and reporters visiting Muslim schools and institutions in Egypt shared many of the same sentiments. By visiting these schools—sometimes accompanied by a guide or translator—and witnessing Muslim teachers interacting with students, these American and British writers positioned themselves as authoritative and reliable observers of Egyptian education.<sup>75</sup> Yet observers often could only talk about Muslim education by comparing it against Western instruction, and indigenous schools, students, and teachers almost always failed to measure up. In the view of one correspondent, “the meaning of education as understood generally in the West as a process of teaching young men to think or as an all round [sic] preparation for life, has not yet fully dawned in the land of the Pharaohs.”<sup>76</sup> For decades, Muslim sites of learning, particularly the primary *kuttāb* schools and al-Azhar University, were subjected to such misrepresentative claims by journalists in the North American press. These schools were either “teaching ancient and mediaeval ideas,”<sup>77</sup> breeding fanatics and nationalists, or doing nothing of use altogether. It becomes increasingly clear that these writers often lacked the insight, expertise, and access to local knowledge to discuss Muslim education. This disregard, however, certainly did not impede them from drawing a number of reductive and problematic conclusions, which will be unpacked extensively in this section.

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<sup>75</sup> In one example, Clayton Sedgwick Cooper noted that his “escort through these medieval precincts was himself one of the Sheiks, graduate of El Azhar.” Cooper, “A Visit to the Mohammedan Oxford.”

<sup>76</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.”

<sup>77</sup> “Moslems Discussed: Professor MacDonald Speaks on Certain Aspects of Mohammedanism,” *The Hartford Courant*, February 2, 1903, 8. As stated by the American Orientalist and missionary Duncan MacDonald, who added that “the great masses of the people probably believe that the earth is flat.” MacDonald made these sweeping claims in a lecture that was covered in this 1903 article, demonstrating how news coverage of local events helped bring such denigrating tropes to readers.

### *Kuttāb Education*

The primary *kuttāb* schools in towns and villages across Egypt were often cast in negative light and in need of reform.<sup>78</sup> Overwhelmingly, criticisms were aimed at the religious instruction and quality of teachers, both of which were inadequate and primitive in the eyes of observers. Correspondents expressed that the “virtually uneducated” instructors “frequently are unable to read or write, and impart their knowledge by reciting from memory.”<sup>79</sup> Because they did not exhibit a particular mode of literacy, some teachers were automatically deemed unskilled by Western observers. One journalist attempted to help readers visualize the setting of a *kuttāb* he visited: “the village sheikh at whose knee the Egyptian boy has learned his Koran, in dress, in ideals, in theology, and in intelligence is a counterpart of his ancestor of the seventh century.”<sup>80</sup> The *kuttāb* and its teachers were associated with a premodern, and therefore out-of-date, set of values and practices, a common framing of Egyptian education. In a dispatch to the *Christian Science Monitor*, a correspondent reported that “the scope of training in these small schools is still, as formerly, quite closely limited to teaching and memorizing of the Koran. The instruction is entirely in Arabic, and the teachers are still as a whole inadequate to meet the needs of the situation.”<sup>81</sup> The overall image constructed about these schools, therefore, made them out to be sites of incompetent teachers and a deficient religion-centred curriculum.

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<sup>78</sup> One account starkly claimed that in these schools, “of discipline there was none, of dirt and squalor there was much. Of the flies, the less said the better,” in “Egypt’s Girls Attend School.” Associating locals with dirt and uncleanliness was an immediate rhetorical signifier of their inferiority and a way to debase indigenous populations. See Anand, “Western Colonial Representations of the Other,” 33.

<sup>79</sup> Clayton Sedgwick Cooper, “Christian Education Seen Leavening Egypt’s Youth,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 16, 1913, 7; Frederic J. Haskin, “Odd Ways of an Odd World; Notes from Traveler’s Diary,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 23, 1906, E3.

<sup>80</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.”

<sup>81</sup> “The Universities of the World: Rudimentary Schools of Egypt Present Curious Lack of Efficiency,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 26, 1915, 5.

A common thread within these criticisms was the memorization of the Qur'ān in schools, which was often discredited in the press as an outdated practice that lacked any usefulness or value. A view echoed by many reporters, a *kuttāb* “merely taught the pupils to recite the Koran and gave them no real education.”<sup>82</sup> These critics highly problematized the notion that “the education of the people is almost entirely of a religious sort, based upon the study of the Koran.”<sup>83</sup> Travel writer Frederic Haskin, for example, informed readers that “the education of the children of Egypt goes little farther than teaching them to despise Christians and to learn passages from the koran [sic].”<sup>84</sup> The study of the Qur'ān not seen as “true education,” and its students and teachers were also deemed fanatical and ignorant. One observer was baffled by the way boys at one school would “bend their young bodies backwards and forwards over the leaves of the Koran.”<sup>85</sup> Similarly, in another observation, pupils memorizing the Qur'ān were “repeating unitedly in a shrill sing-song manner...over and over again in what seemed to be endless reiteration, with the sole object of committing the words to memory, since the meaning of these theological and recondite phrases were far beyond the understanding, not only of the pupils, but of the teacher himself.”<sup>86</sup> Embodied pedagogies of memory were therefore condemned as poor, uncritical methods.

What all these observers failed to appreciate, let alone recognize and acknowledge, was the value of the instruction given at these primary schools in Egypt, as well as the

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<sup>82</sup> G. Scott Dagleish, “Paradox of Independent Egypt,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1920, XX2.

<sup>83</sup> Green, “England’s Danger Point.” Such criticisms were abundant in newspapers, with much of the same rhetoric being echoed across decades of coverage. For decades into the twentieth century, critics were still fixated on denigrating Islamic education in the same ways: “the vast majority of Moslems have not our benefits of education except in regard to the Khoran [sic]. Every child is taught this till he can quote the book of Allah backwards.” Dudley S. Corlett, “Moslem Peril Declared Real: Christians of Orient Said to Be Endangered,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1925, 2.

<sup>84</sup> Haskin, “Odd Ways of an Odd World.” Haskin also wrote that “among other things the young Moslem is taught to believe [is] that women have no soul.”

<sup>85</sup> Cooper, “Christian Education.”

<sup>86</sup> “The Universities of the World: Rudimentary Schools of Egypt.”

skills both the students and teachers exemplified. Qur'ānic education entails sophisticated embodied processes in memory and oral transmission that are unnoticed or undermined by European and American observers.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the act of memorizing Qur'ān is considered by Muslims to be a virtuous endeavour in and of itself for students and instructors alike, yet is something that does not have a modern utilitarian value in many correspondents' view. Overall, this was another way that Egyptian education, particularly of a religious nature, was judged against Western standards “without attempting to understand what was (and was not) important in the eyes of Egyptians.”<sup>88</sup> These reductive reports on education in the *kuttāb* schools ultimately characterized them as inferior.

#### *Al-Azhar University*

In addition to criticisms of the Egyptian *kuttāb* schools, al-Azhar was perhaps the prime target of disapproval in the Western press. For centuries, al-Azhar had housed a preeminent centre of learning and scholarship for Muslims, and it continues to be an influential university today. This school is an explicit representation of Muslim education in the region, and is consequently a spectacle, a point of intrigue, and “Islam on display” for journalists writing at the time. At best, it was reduced to an immutable institution where “one feels the religious East of the seventh century; shut away from the whirlwind of modernity that rushes us along with inevitable swiftness, El Azhar says to us, ‘Islam remains unchanged by time!’ It is veritably the home of professional and passionate and

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<sup>87</sup> Kalmbach also notes that Eurocentric views of teaching and learning, even today, conceive of orality as a point of intrigue to be studied and observed in other societies, but do not necessarily recognize its inherent value. See *Islamic Knowledge*, 60.

<sup>88</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 57.

mystic religion.”<sup>89</sup> Much more commonly, however, observers sought to critique the teaching and learning being done at al-Azhar, even labelling the university as a site of nationalist activity. Instructors, students, classes, teaching methods, and other aspects of the education at this institution were regular objects of Western writers’ scorn.

To begin with, the *shuyūkh* and scholars of al-Azhar were often denigrated by writers. These Muslim teachers did not fit a particular image of a true educator in the Western sense for several observers and were consequently rendered unsuitable to hold such occupations. In one case, these instructors were described as having “harsh and discordant” voices, “so that a lesson in progress sounds like a dispute.”<sup>90</sup> Even their physical appearance was a point of reproach: “the majority of the scholars, too, whether old or young, are not pleasing to look upon, for the Egyptians are a far less handsome and less cleanly race than the other Arabs of Northern Africa, nor are their costumes nearly as picturesque.”<sup>91</sup> This perceived lack of refinement is a point of contempt for the writer and subsequently used to smear the Egyptian people as a whole. Such orientalist and blatantly racist sentiments are commonplace in these articles, reinforcing Eurocentric images of how an instructor should appear and act while debasing indigenous teachers.

Students at al-Azhar were also mocked and denigrated by several observers. Describing students rocking back and forth while reciting the Qur’ān, a reporter witnessing their class in 1894 described that “these motions are sometimes of a wild and convulsive character, painful to witness, and bear a strong resemblance to the ecstatic contortions and

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<sup>89</sup> Clayton Sedgwick Cooper, “A Visit to the Mohammedan Oxford,” *New York Times*, February 7, 1915.

<sup>90</sup> “An Egyptian University: The Ancient College at Cairo with 10,000 Pupils,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 29, 1894, 4.

<sup>91</sup> “An Egyptian University.”

twitchings of the dervishes.”<sup>92</sup> In 1915, travel writer Clayton Cooper similarly stated, “the exercise impressed me as a weird Oriental incantation, a kind of mixture of the old Greek chorus and a dervish dance, a half conscious, mystic blending of study and prayer in the rhythmic sentences of Islam’s prophet.” Much like descriptions of learning in the *kuttāb* schools, the activities of the students at al-Azhar are viewed as primitive and strange spectacles that are out of place in an institution of learning.

Notably, al-Azhar also had a college for the blind, but even the classes of visually impaired learners studying the Qur’ān and receiving religious instruction here were disparaged. Carpenter claimed, “In one section I found a class of blind boys who were learning the Koran, and I am told that they are more fanatical than any of the others.”<sup>93</sup> Another observer visiting the school described that “the blind students, who constitute a large portion of the attendants, are taught by shieks [sic] suffering from a like infirmity and wielding [sic] a stick, with which they occasionally belabor unsatisfactory pupils.”<sup>94</sup> Though they maligned those with visual impairments, correspondents neglected that Western education itself was increasingly excluding blind students as it became heavily based on visual and reading-centred instruction. In Egypt, however, as Kalmbach highlights, “the ocularcentric pedagogies of religious schooling made (and still make) it possible for students with visual or physical impairments to earn a living and contribute to their communities through reciting the Qur’an or becoming an Islamic scholar.”<sup>95</sup> Blind

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<sup>92</sup> “An Egyptian University.”

<sup>93</sup> Carpenter, “Education in Egypt.”

<sup>94</sup> “An Egyptian University.”

<sup>95</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 68. Similarly, in the Coptic *kuttāb* system, many individuals holding ‘*arīf*’ positions as monitors or teaching assistants were blind. Paul Sedra states that this baffled missionary observers, one visitor stating it was “almost unpardonable to employ a blind man as schoolmaster.” Sedra also notes that “travelers’ and missionaries’ accounts indicate that Coptic *kuttābs* differed little in their approach to learning from Muslim *kuttābs*—that the forms of knowledge Copts valued were comparable to

students could engage fully in Egyptian society due to such accessible learning methods. Furthermore, funding education for blind and disabled students was an important undertaking by native Egyptian benevolent societies, endowments, and other philanthropic entities, especially as the British officials paid little attention to such causes.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, what was a significant indication of Egyptians' agency and investment in accessible education was further reduced and misrepresented in the American press.

In addition to the instructors and students, the curriculum and teaching methods at al-Azhar were sorely behind the times according to many commentators. One correspondent stated, "Chemistry, astronomy, astrology and the higher mathematics, once considered indispensable acquirements for a scholar, have for many centuries been laid aside, and importance is attached only to the study of the Koran, including a knowledge of rhetoric and logic."<sup>97</sup> The perceived absence of more "secular" subjects is looked down upon as deficient scholarship. Another correspondent suggested that "so far as modern education is concerned it has been and continues to be a negligible quantity, despite the fact that it enrolls at present not less than 12,000 students."<sup>98</sup> There is an underlying sense of contempt here that such a significant institution with a large student body was not offering the *right* kind of modern education. Even when one observer found that Muslim educators were "admirable in imparting the Islamic equivalent of classical culture and in training students for the law and the traditional teaching profession," they were still seen to be "a whole world away from the modern education as it is understood in the

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the forms of knowledge Muslims valued. In short, the evidence indicates that recitation was the cornerstone of an approach to learning that Christians and Muslims held in common." *From Mission to Modernity*, 1–2.

<sup>96</sup> Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 97–98.

<sup>97</sup> "An Egyptian University."

<sup>98</sup> "New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt."

Occident.”<sup>99</sup> Muslim education could never be accepted by Western observers simply because it was not Western education.

Observers also took issue with *how* instructors at al-Azhar taught their classes, claiming their methods were entirely based on memorization. One correspondent declared that “this rote-like system of education naturally represses all originality of thought.”<sup>100</sup> Here again, forms of pedagogy involving memory and aural transmission was maligned. Ironically, however, much of the Victorian educational curriculum in American and British schools at the time was itself heavily reliant on rote memorization.<sup>101</sup> Even in Egypt’s government schools where the British were enacting some reforms, officials like Douglas Dunlop “encouraged only the hiring of British teachers who knew no Arabic, who were then expected to convey subjects...entirely in English. Thus, these teachers were forced to use the same pedagogical methods of rote memorization for which the British so heavily criticized traditional Egyptian teachers.”<sup>102</sup> Therefore, as Mona Russell has highlighted here, Western administrators were creating conditions for an increased reliance on memorization in schools while simultaneously disapproving of Muslim educators for their use of this method. Regardless of the contradiction, the absence of familiar, modern teaching methods to Western observers rendered Azhari instruction inferior in their eyes.

Criticisms of the teaching methods at al-Azhar were also accompanied by discussions of a perceived lack of intelligible order and organization. Much like Frank

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<sup>99</sup> “Modernism Rampant Among the Moslems,” *The Leamington Post*, September 17, 1925, 10.

<sup>100</sup> “An Egyptian University.”

<sup>101</sup> And even despite the efforts of some Western educationalists to adopt reforms in European and American schools to steer away from pedagogies based on memory, teachers and students alike actually became *more* reliant on memorization with the introduction of standardized examinations in schools. See Catherine Robson, *Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2012), 58.

<sup>102</sup> Russell, “Competing, Overlapping, and Contradictory Agendas,” 54. Dunlop himself was a former missionary and teacher appointed as an advisor to the Egyptian Ministry of Education by Cromer.



Carpenter's observations, Clayton Cooper described the university in 1913 as having "no regular organized faculty; no curriculum; no catalog of students; no rules or regulations; no diplomas or degrees, but a conglomerate form of instruction in every branch of learning from the A, B, Cs of the Arabic language to the most abstruse problems of mathematics and philosophy."<sup>103</sup> Because these aspects could not be readily identified by this foreign correspondent, they were rendered altogether absent. Yet, as Timothy Mitchell has noted, "life within the teaching mosque of al-Azhar required no walls to divide classrooms, no desks, no ordered ranks, no uniforms, no timetable, and no posted curriculum. In short... there was no order in the sense we expect, as a framework, code or structure that stands apart."<sup>104</sup> Institutions could provide a learning experience that provided value in their students' lives without having to subscribe to outwardly Western hallmarks of education.

In a 1907 piece, another writer offered commentary on why Western observers viewed the curriculum and structure at al-Azhar with disapproval and skepticism:

What to western eyes is particularly defective in the system of instruction at this ancient university is the absence of any connected series of lectures. The Moslem professor, it is true, devotes himself to a particular branch of study, but he does not apparently make any attempt to organize a systematic course, being content to seize apparently haphazard upon a text or a theme, and then to explain or expound it according to his own lights.<sup>105</sup>

Observers apparently interpreted the instruction of teachers at al-Azhar as having no clear thematic organization, making it a "haphazard" and disordered system of education

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<sup>103</sup> Cooper, "Christian Education."

<sup>104</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 82. This is not to say that education at al-Azhar and other schools did not carry their own sets of issues—as the number of enrollments continued to increase significantly, for example, institutions had to grapple with scaling their instruction to meet these needs, which was a difficult and necessarily arduous process. Egyptian educationalists and reformers were aware of these issues, however, and had the challenge of navigating various competing systems to institute change. Such discussions of reform by Egyptians, however, were nearly absent in the writings of Western observers.

<sup>105</sup> "World's Oldest Seat of Learning Proposes to Celebrate Its Thousandth Anniversary," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 6, 1907, B4.

altogether. To Western observers, this “disorder of traditional learning,” as Mitchell discusses, was a “precarious” approach whereby “organisation is absent, and anarchy hovers at the gate.”<sup>106</sup> Where missionary and foreign schools represented exemplary modern education, “this image of the old style of teaching was also the image of existing Egyptian society.”<sup>107</sup> The illegibility of the lessons, classes, and timetables, therefore, was a sign of disarray and lack of control to correspondents visiting the school. In the press, disordered education became a reflection of disordered Egyptian society, and vice versa.

This perceived chaos and disorder of teaching and learning at al-Azhar also made it a political target in the Western press. The institution was frequently positioned as a site of Muslim fanaticism, nationalism, and intolerance, and was a “hotbed of Mohammedanism” that both undermined and threatened British colonial rule.<sup>108</sup> Observers believed that fundamentalist teachings at this school would have “to reckon with Modernism,” and it was this “inflexibility of Mohammedanism” that was preventing such institutions from modernizing.<sup>109</sup> An article in the *Canadian Statesman* told readers, “Considering the bloody doctrines imbued by these thousands of students and emphasized by daily invocations to Allah, it is not remarkable that the brutish and half-savage followers of these Moslem priests carry out their instructions to the very letter.”<sup>110</sup> The use of such terms as ‘bloody,’ ‘brutish,’ and ‘half-savage’ by this anonymous writer epitomized a common discourse of debasement and misrepresentation aimed at al-Azhar students and Muslim adherents at large. Another reporter scoffed that religious tolerance was “a strange,

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<sup>106</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 81–82.

<sup>107</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 81.

<sup>108</sup> “Hotbed of Mohammedanism.”

<sup>109</sup> Rapp, “Islam Fundamentalists Fight Modernist Trend.”

<sup>110</sup> “Notes and Comments.”

new doctrine to El Azhar!"; in contrast, the Muslims' "political intolerance will speed on the wings of student zeal from Cairo to the uttermost parts of the earth."<sup>111</sup> Therefore, both students and instructors at the university were implicated in the press as dangerous fanatics, which could ultimately inspire more fanaticism amongst Muslims abroad.

Correspondents also played up anxieties about al-Azhar as the site of a dissenting nationalist movement within the country, referring to it as "the main centre of Egyptian Nationalist unrest, of which the students always are the spearhead."<sup>112</sup> Despite the efforts of Cromer and other colonial officials to modernize the university, tells a 1919 *Washington Post* article, "it remains the headquarters of Moslem reaction, and its students, unless their angles are polished off by subsequent stays at some of the French or English universities, remain very narrow-minded, fanatical, and despising the westerners, where they do not openly display their enmity."<sup>113</sup> Muslim students would therefore remain dogmatic and reactionary unless they were enlightened by Western education. Al-Azhar, characterized by another American correspondent as a meeting place of "what may be called Egypt's national soviet, is the fountain head of Islamic propaganda. Its ten thousand students, who are at present fiery nationalists, come from every region that hears a muezzin's call."<sup>114</sup> Therefore, many critics viewed al-Azhar and Egypt's defective education as a whole as merely a breeding ground for fanatics, fervent nationalists, and seditious teachers.

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<sup>111</sup> Ellis, "Race Issues." Unrest at al-Azhar also had "potentialities for almost a pan-Asiatic agitation."

<sup>112</sup> "Modernism Rampant Among the Moslems." Here, this Canadian *Leamington Post* piece cited an article from a "New York Herald-Tribune correspondent [who] writes that last December he visited Al Azhar." In reporting on Egyptian educational affairs, editors or columnists were referencing accounts and opinions from other major news outlets, further reinforcing a narrow body of knowledge about Egypt in the press.

<sup>113</sup> "Peasant Leads Egyptian Rebels," *Washington Post*, April 10, 1919, 6. This article provides the example of Saïd Zaghoul, a graduate of al-Azhar who had later led a significant anticolonial revolt, implying that his staunch nationalism was a product of his Azhari religious education.

<sup>114</sup> Ellis, "Race Issues."

Ultimately, Muslims in Egypt had not made meaningful contributions to the country's educational culture in the eyes of several observers. According to Curtis, "no Mahometan [sic] has invented anything or done anything to advance the welfare of his community.... Today there is scarcely a printed book in any of the libraries of the mosques in the Ottoman empire." He then claimed that "the greatest hindrance to any educational advancement among the native population is the fact that there are no adequate scientific or philosophical treatises in the vernacular. It is often said that the Arabic language is very well fitted for stories, but can never be efficiently used in treating the profounder affairs of human research."<sup>115</sup> In his view, not only was there an absence of sufficient teaching materials, but Arabic itself was a barrier to creating useful "vernacular" texts. In reality, however, this was a time of significant efforts and debates in the realm of linguistics by Arab intellectuals, centred on such matters as the introduction of various neologisms, translation, changing literary styles, and other modes of knowledge production.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, claims like Curtis's misinformed readers and did not at all accurately represent the intellectual culture and linguistic reforms taking place in Egypt.

Islam and Muslims, therefore, were scapegoated in the news as the source of any lack of advancement in the Egyptian education system. Long before the British invaded Egypt, much of the Western press had already been characterizing Islam as "the great hindrance to progress" in the country.<sup>117</sup> Adherence to the faith was also seen by writers as a regressive influence that was preventing the modernization and development of Egyptian

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<sup>115</sup> Woodward, "Turkey."

<sup>116</sup> Marwa S. Elshakry, "Knowledge in Motion: The Cultural Politics of Modern Science Translations in Arabic." *Isis* 99, no. 4 (2008): 703. As will be demonstrated in the next section of this paper, a case study reveals one Egyptian writer who responded to such claims of the supposed inadequacy of Arabic texts.

<sup>117</sup> As stated by the American essayist Charles Dudley Warner in "New Egypt: Notes by an Old Traveler," *New York Times*, April 25, 1875, 1.

schooling. Many critics believed that “Moslemism [sic] is not a religion of progress nor of education. The chief reason for the failure to establish a satisfactory system of elementary education in the country lay originally in a disinclination to interfere in any way in religious matters.”<sup>118</sup> Therefore, inadequate education was blamed wholesale on Islam, which was perceived as a regressive faith whose adherents fanatically resisted change. Under the headline “The Decay of Islam,” American correspondent William E. Curtis wrote that “Islam has not provided its believers with any means to improve their conditions; on the contrary, it has assisted to keep them in ignorance and poverty.”<sup>119</sup> Yet again, the religion was singled out as the barrier to progress and a negative influence on its followers.

### **Girls’ Education**

In the face of this so-called fanaticism, nationalist angst, and backwardness plaguing Muslim schools, the press saw one “sign of hope” in Egyptian society: the education of its girls. Indeed, the country was seeing significant strides in the education of young women as government schools for girls began to open across the country throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, with further initiatives spurred by the efforts of Egyptian women advocates and philanthropists in upper class circles. In the Western press, however, female education was also positioned as a modernizing influence that could disarm the religion of Islam and “would alone deal mortal blows to the Mohammedan

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<sup>118</sup> Dalgleish, “Paradox of Independent Egypt.”

<sup>119</sup> William E. Curtis, “The Decay of Islam,” *Boston Daily Globe*, October 27, 1910, 12. Muslim education as seen by the West also could not be relied upon to instill morals in its students: “In the Mohammedan world religion and morals are not associated with each other as they are with us... [To Muslims] religion is everything and morals nothing.” Writers in the press made moral judgments about the uneducated and therefore immoral Egyptian people, with problematic claims that “of all the great religions of the universe, that of Islam is the least comprehended by the Occident. Its ethics are considered as offensive to Christian ideals.” See “Moslems Discussed” and Corlett, “Moslem Peril Declared Real.”

faith.”<sup>120</sup> It was the force that would resuscitate Egypt and the “Muslim world” at large. In addition, the progress of Egypt’s girls and women was viewed as a litmus test for the nation’s development. Headlines of articles discussing girls’ education included such phrases as “New Life” and “Daybreak,” signifying what was seen as a break with Egypt’s dark past. Plainly stated, Egyptian women needed to be freed from the so-called archaic social and religious—namely, Muslim—structures in order to join the ranks of the modern, educated Western woman. Moreover, all these changes were often framed in the press as a product of Western influence and missionary work, further cementing in the public consciousness the critical importance of American and European presence in Egypt.

The condition of women and their education in Egypt was seen by observers as a reflection of the nation’s overall standing. This was the belief that the status of women reflected the condition of the “Muslim world” as a whole, and education was the key to unlocking better standards for women and girls. Under the headline “New Life for Egypt,” one correspondent directly expressed to readers that “the future of all Moslem races and the elevation of their moral and physical standard depends in a great measure on better education of the Moslem woman and on her emancipation from the secondary—one might with all truthfulness say degraded—social position that she occupies even today.”<sup>121</sup> Therefore, education was seen as the emancipatory force that could free Egyptian women from their status as second-class citizens. In addition, even the increasing education of men was beginning to positively influence women’s position in Egyptian society.<sup>122</sup> In this

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<sup>120</sup> “The Moslem Peril,” *The Globe*, October 16, 1911, 6.

<sup>121</sup> “New Life for Egypt: Better Education of Moslem Women Will Pull Them from Degraded Social Position,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1914, A1. This excerpt from a 1914 London *Times* article was republished in the *Tribune*, and likely syndicated elsewhere in the US, demonstrating again the ease and frequency with which British colonial views came directly to a wider, North American audience.

<sup>122</sup> “New Life for Egypt.””

reporter's assessment, "the raising of the standard of education among the men has had for natural consequence a demand for educated wives, and parents, realizing this fact, are seeking by all means in their power to obtain for their daughters the instruction that will render them intellectually attractive when the time comes for them to be married."<sup>123</sup> The schooling of girls and women was advantageous, then, because it supplied the demand for educated wives and mothers, which seen as a by-product of men's own intellectual growth. It was also linked directly to women's development in the domestic sphere—a necessity for nation building—by Western and Egyptian educationalists alike during this time.<sup>124</sup>

But what was the *real* source of this shift towards expanding the education of girls and women in Egypt? Much of the Eurocentric narratives at the time surrounding female education situated any progress in Egypt in conjunction with Western influence. As a result of colonial rule, according to one observer, "the Egyptian woman is beginning to discover herself. For this significant and strategic advance, the English government must be credited with high praise."<sup>125</sup> Discussions of female education and local women's movements were coloured by this self-assured, paternalistic attitude that their success was a natural outcome of European and American influence. However, colonialism had significantly stagnated educational developments, and this "colonial imposition of European models represented a break in Egyptian state formation which adversely affected women's educational and professional opportunities" especially.<sup>126</sup> Writers were often oblivious to this, and instead chose to celebrate what Western power had done for Egyptian girls and women.

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<sup>123</sup> "New Life for Egypt."

<sup>124</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 8.

<sup>125</sup> "Universities of the World: Instruction Affecting Domestic Circle."

<sup>126</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 131.

Therefore, Egyptian women were becoming successful because they were finally imitating the educational work and activism being done in the West. The modern Egyptian woman, according to the press, had “entrenched herself in the upper class of Egyptians, Mohammedan as well as Christian Copt. She has spread through the middle class by means of the spirit of emulation and the power of education.”<sup>127</sup> A *Canadian Statesman* reporter expressed this causation to readers even more directly: “the admission of European governesses and missionaries, the reading of Western books and journals may also be said to be the main factors in the production of what is perhaps the most significant development of modern times, the universal cry of women for equality with men.”<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the consumption of Western books and presence of foreigners were rendered the influences promoting female education and empowerment.<sup>129</sup> Another observer stated that “a glimpse of the work of La Femme Nouvelle and of the Mohammed Ali Society...leaves one with the same impression as would a visit to Hull House, Chicago, or to a settlement house in the Whitechapel district in London.”<sup>130</sup> Yet again, Egyptian women and their philanthropy were noteworthy when they reproduced familiar Western institutions and movements.

Missionary agencies were one such Western influence credited with radically shaping girls’ education in Egypt. Writers deemed female missionaries, in particular, as those setting progressive standards for Egyptian girls and consequently paving the way for the nation’s modernization. Reporters informed readers, for example, that “the missionary institutions for girls conducted by the American mission are among the most flourishing

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<sup>127</sup> “Women in Egypt.”

<sup>128</sup> “Women’s Rights in Orient,” *The Canadian Statesman*, October 12, 1911, 3.

<sup>129</sup> As David Spurr has also noted, “The spread of Western influence in its various forms has been a preoccupation of the media, which finds the avid consumption of Western goods to be evidence of the approval of Western culture as a whole.” *Rhetoric of Empire*, 35–6.

<sup>130</sup> “Women in Egypt.” See also “Moslem Women of Today: They Are Quite Up to Their Educated American Sisters.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. October 3, 1891, 16.



and efficient of the girls' schools in Egypt," particularly those of the Protestant missions.<sup>131</sup> One observer went so far as to express that "the women of America and England and Germany are to be congratulated on having the most successful work done in the Turkish empire, in the educational line."<sup>132</sup> Much of the success of girls' schooling in the region was framed as owing a great deal to the work of foreigners, and was also a means of affirming Western, Christian influence. According to journalist Christian Cooper, missionaries "indeed were the pioneers of these schools for girls, and the changed attitude on the part of Moslems towards such excellent institutions as the Abbas schools for girls in Cairo...marks almost a revolution in sentiment." These improvements in education, then, were especially impressive when they seemed to impact Muslim students. While observing several missionary schools in Asyut and Luxor, Cooper also saw girls' schools "which would compare favorably with the average girls' schools in America and Europe."<sup>133</sup> This again highlights how Western standards were used as the primary measure of success in Egypt. Thanks to missionaries, these standards could be transplanted locally.

In the early 1900s, the role of Egyptian female activists, particularly those working in the realm of education reform, also came to be highlighted frequently in these newspapers. Under the headline "Daybreak in the Orient," a *Chicago Tribune* article informed readers that particularly Muslim women were "now beginning to assert themselves."<sup>134</sup> However, the legitimacy of these education advocates was called into question when they held onto their religious values. With discussions of Egyptian women's

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<sup>131</sup> "The Universities of the World: Instruction Affecting Domestic Circle Is Foremost of Egypt's Education Needs—Ignorance and Seclusion the Rule for Women Until England Changed It," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 11, 1915, 5; Woodward, "Turkey."

<sup>132</sup> Woodward, "Turkey."

<sup>133</sup> Cooper, "Christian Education."

<sup>134</sup> "Daybreak in the Orient," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 15, 1914, A4.

educational activism often came subtle or explicit critiques of their religious practice. In particular, visible religious and cultural symbols like the *hijāb* and veil were discussed with a great degree of condescension, seen to be hindering educational progress: it was “a custom which is but slowly giving away to western ideas; if the eyes of the children were protected with half as much care as the faces of women, what benefits would result.”<sup>135</sup> In one instance, a writer visiting classes at al-Azhar claimed that this institution educated both genders, including girls until the age of ten “when the Egyptian maiden must veil her face and give up all thought of further education.”<sup>136</sup> With the tremendous ignorance of local practices throughout these newspapers, it is not difficult to see why erroneous claims are often made with impunity in regards to religious acts or any other realities on the ground.

Overall, observers often could not reconcile female education with religious and social tradition, and women were often the targets of these criticism as they visibly embodied these cultural practices. In a profile on the Egyptian activist Safiya (“Sophia”) Zaghoul and several women in her upper-class circle, writer and suffragist Grace Thompson Seton expressed her sympathy with their anti-colonial cause, yet what struck her most was that “these progressive women, while they advocate higher education and greater activities for women and are blazing the trail for freedom of public action, have little wish at present to throw aside the symbol at least of the face covering.”<sup>137</sup> To reconcile what she viewed as a contradiction between their education advocacy and practice of veiling, Seton wrote, “It is safe to predict that the next generation of women will not be wearing it, because the fast spreading power of education will have broken down the

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<sup>135</sup> William Jennings Bryan, “Bryan in Quarantine Five Days,” *Boston Daily Globe*, July 15, 1906, SM4.

<sup>136</sup> “An Egyptian University.” The writer even claimed that “the Koran exempts all womankind from prayer.”

<sup>137</sup> Grace Thompson Seton, “Mme. Zaghoul Pasha of Egypt,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1922, 23.

tradition of seclusion and segregation which it symbolizes.”<sup>138</sup> Therefore, Egyptian women would only be celebrated when education freed them from their antiquated practices.

While in reality many Egyptians were able to negotiate and adopt both local and Western knowledge and practices over the years, foreign correspondents and observers—who were not seeing Egyptians as they were but rather as what they ought to be—often framed this into a narrative of incompatible worldviews. A reporter describing what he saw as this dissonance between Western education and Muslim practice noted that Khedive Abbas II’s wife Iqbal “is exceptionally well educated, even according to American standards... and save for the yasmak, or veil, which she wears when out driving, has little to distinguish her from European great ladies. Yet with all that she is a devout Mohammedan, in which she resembles her husband.”<sup>139</sup> Therefore, observers’ anxieties about the perceived contradiction between Islam and intellectual life were projected onto Egyptians, reinforcing this image of incompatibility.

All in all, Egyptian girls’ schooling and its native female advocates were both classified according to Western standards in the press. Female education was framed by observers as a way for Egypt’s women to “step from the Middle Ages” and become truly modern women, reinforced by the hackneyed trope of Egyptians coming out of their darkness and into modernity.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, the development of Egypt’s girls, in the eyes of many foreign observers, was a direct result of colonial presence and missionary influence. When the work of Egyptian women in the realm of education *was* highlighted, it was a

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<sup>138</sup> Seton, “Mme. Zaghoul Pasha.”

<sup>139</sup> “Khedive Comes to Attend the Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 15, 1904, 15. Abbas II was similarly described through this lens: “in spite of his European education and his western mode of life, [he] is so strict in obeying the precepts of his religion.”

<sup>140</sup> “Egyptian Women to Demand Freedom,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1923, 13.

worthy cause only when it emulated Eurocentric stances. It was another means for writers to idealize the West even in the “imperfect copies” made by the colonized.<sup>141</sup> But moments of anxiety began emerging as writers had trouble bridging the gap between a woman’s edification and her religious and cultural commitments. It is the issue of such tensions and contradictions in observers’ views on Egyptian education that will be examined next.

### **The Colonial Paradox of Education: Tensions and Contradictions**

Despite the preoccupation of Western journalism with the need to reform Egypt’s education system, the press also presented another contradiction: were Egyptians becoming *too* educated? Writers often spoke of this “paradox” of an educated Egypt, whose growing intellectual and professional class was seen as a threat to Western power. Such discussions were weaponized by writers to argue in favour of continued British rule. A pro-occupation piece claimed that “the brains of the Nationalist movement lie in the Pasha class, in the Ulemas and Sheikhs...and in the lawyers, journalists and students.”<sup>142</sup> Like the discussions of al-Azhar as a site of dissent, the educated class as a whole came to be viewed through this lens of danger tinged with racial anxieties. According to one critic, Egyptians were “converted by English rule into an educated, prosperous population...while the profound respect and even subserviency which they formerly conceded to white folk, and especially to white officials, have entirely vanished.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the educated also threatened white supremacy and the colonial status quo. In addition, British initiatives like placing Egyptians in provincial councils to have some power in governing education were seen as a failed

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<sup>141</sup> Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 36.

<sup>142</sup> Dalgleish, “Paradox of Independent Egypt.” According to the byline, Dalgleish was the former head of the Agricultural Bank of Egypt and served as president of the Cairo International Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>143</sup> “Kitchener to Handle Grave Situations in Egypt,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1910, SM3.

experiment and “mere instruments of the Nationalist agitation against the Occupation.”<sup>144</sup> Granting Egyptians participation in their own education reform, even under British auspices, could only create openings to thwart colonial rule from within.

Although indigenous education presented a myriad of issues according to the Western press, the “problem” of education in Egypt was not limited to native institutions. Egyptians who studied in Europe, for example, were viewed as a threat because they understood and could subvert the Western mindset, or, at the very least, experience an upward social mobility that challenged the colonial racial and political hierarchy. As one critic stated bluntly, “Our rule, or to put it more correctly our supremacy, is based on our prestige, which no longer exists in the eyes of the Oriental educated abroad.”<sup>145</sup> In fact, European-educated Egyptians were positioned as “England’s danger point” who “brought back with them advanced ideas as to reform and the emancipation of Egypt from foreign control.”<sup>146</sup> Writer William Jourdan Rapp told readers of the *New York Times* that “a questioning attitude of mind appeared in many parts of Islam. Mohammedans went in increasing numbers to school in the West.”<sup>147</sup> However, these “parts of Islam” opening up to modern inquisitiveness would apparently have troubling implications: Western-educated Egyptians “furnish the nucleus for most of the agitation and discontent.”<sup>148</sup> Therefore, Western education, as consumed by Egyptians, threatened the British occupation.

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<sup>144</sup> “Egypt’s Position Plainly Stated by British Agent,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 25, 1911, 12. A *Washington Post* article also expressed that “the attempt to rule the land of the Nile through native agencies is a hopeless task” altogether. See “Huns Stir Revolt in Egypt,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 1919, S1.

<sup>145</sup> “Kitchener to Handle Grave Situations in Egypt,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1910, SM3.

<sup>146</sup> Green, “England’s Danger Point.” For him, this education only made Egyptians “dangerous demagogues.”

<sup>147</sup> Rapp, “Islam Fundamentalists Fight Modernist Trend.” Rapp went so far as to claim that “it is not an exaggeration to say that more Moslems today go to England and France for purposes of education and commerce than go on the pilgrimage [sic] to Mecca. This was, in fact, quite an exaggeration, underscoring the extent to which correspondents made hyperbolic or misrepresentative statements.

<sup>148</sup> Dalglish, “Paradox of Independent Egypt.”

Regardless of how Egyptians attempted to expand, modernize, or institute educational reforms, critics could only see that “beneath the adopted garb of modern education affected by those who live in the towns of Egypt, is still the old fundamental hatred of the Christian, as dominant as in the days of the Crusades.”<sup>149</sup> If Egyptian Muslims, in particular, modernized, it was either merely a façade masking their hatred, or a potential nuisance to Western powers. According to one journalist, the West should see Egyptians’ education as nothing but a “vener”; no matter how learned they became or what Western morals they adopted they could never excel and “always will have to be ruled by white men.”<sup>150</sup> Therefore, along with such infantilizing rhetoric, colonial rule was positioned as a necessary duty. Others saw that modern education was altogether ineffective against the “backward” tendencies of Muslim students, where “no amount of progressive education has yet been competent to minimize the power of the seventh century Koran.”<sup>151</sup> In this way, as Kalmbach succinctly expresses, “Egyptians were often damned regardless: local Egyptian practices were so backward that only European actors could exert effective reform, yet Egyptians who crossed sociocultural boundaries to attempt to change these practices through exercise of agency were inauthentic and unnatural.”<sup>152</sup> No matter what Egyptians did, their actions would be belittled and demonized by Western observers.

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<sup>149</sup> Dudley S. Corlett, “Egypt’s Status Explained: British Citizen and Former Resident in the Sudan Tells Why England Must Exercise Control,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 1924, B11.

<sup>150</sup> William T. Ellis, “Race Issue in Egypt,” *Washington Post*, June 27, 1919, 4.

<sup>151</sup> “New Education Brings Changes to Old Egypt.”

<sup>152</sup> Kalmbach, *Islamic Knowledge*, 73.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Egyptian Interventions: Dispelling Misconceptions to Western Readers**

Although American and European observers continued to brazenly misrepresent Egypt's educational matters, Egyptians were not merely passive targets of Western disparagement. Within the pages of these North American newspapers, evidence surfaces of some Egyptian writers and intellectuals who sought to counter colonial rhetoric and correct these distortions to foreign readers. While these indigenous voices are not nearly as abundant as the Western views ironically dominating writings on Egypt, they offer a significant window into the work being done by Egyptians to infiltrate foreign news and dispel misconceptions about their country and its education system. Lawyer and activist Mustafa Kamil and journalist Saleem Makarius provide two cases of such efforts in American newspapers, which will be discussed in this section. Their writings demonstrate that the work of Egyptian cultural elites was traversing borders and actively refuting colonial narratives; they were not merely recipients of a repressive discourse on Egypt and the East at large, but also active agents in rectifying such images perpetuated by the press.

The *New York Times* section "News and Views from Foreign Lands" published brief news bulletins and opinions, sometimes by native informers. A small 1906 feature in this section titled "The Egyptian Question from the Moslem Point of View" told readers that "Moslem opinion proves interesting, whether considered from the religious or political point of view." The feature quoted a communication to the *London Standard* written by Mustafa Kamil, an Egyptian nationalist, lawyer, and vocal opponent of the British

occupation.<sup>153</sup> In a commentary on colonial education reforms in Egypt, Kamil wrote that the British colonizers had “stood against the rights of the Egyptians and their desires, and robbed them of every power or authority in their own country. They recast the educational system in Egypt, and remolded it in very bad style. They waged destructive wars against the poor classes—the largest classes—by taking their sons from the Government schools.<sup>154</sup> Kamil asserted his observations here on the failures of the British occupation and its attempts at educational reform to a Western audience, appealing to readers to consider the situation from an Egyptian’s point of view.

Kamil had been strategically utilizing the French and British press to condemn colonial actions like this in Egypt and stir up anti-British sentiment, as historian Ziad Fahmy has explored. “For the first time some mainstream British newspapers were sympathetically covering Kamil,” particularly after the Dinshawai incident of 1906.<sup>155</sup> Backlash toward this event, “coupled with the 1905 election of a liberal government, gave Kamil an unprecedented political opening to make his case directly to the British people.”<sup>156</sup> Although it is remarkable that an excerpt of one of his writings came to appear in the *New York Times*, bringing his views to an American readership, the fact remains that this short snippet was relegated to something of a novelty feature. It was not necessarily centred as an authoritative view on Egypt as other American or English correspondents’

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<sup>153</sup> Ziad Fahmy, “Francophone Egyptian Nationalists, Anti-British Discourse, and European Public Opinion, 1885–1910: The Case of Mustafa Kamil and Ya‘qub Sannu‘,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28, no. 1 (2008): 182.

<sup>154</sup> “The Egyptian Question from the Moslem Point of View,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1906, SM5. Kamil concludes by appealing to the reader: “The Briton who is astonished at such sentiments which animate the Egyptians may ask himself, ‘What would he do if England were occupied by a foreign power which followed the same course and attitude of his country in Egypt?’”

<sup>155</sup> In the village of Dinshawai, Egyptian villagers were publicly hanged or harshly sentenced by a colonial tribunal after a confrontation with British officers who had gone pigeon hunting. This event caused a great deal of backlash against England both locally and abroad. Fahmy, “Francophone Egyptian Nationalists,” 182.

<sup>156</sup> Fahmy, “Francophone Egyptian Nationalists,” 182.



work had been, yet this piece offers a small window into the actions of Egyptians working to subvert colonial rule and redefine the image of their people in Western arenas.

In another case, a 1901 feature on Arab intellectuals in Egypt written by a reporter named Saleem Makarius was published in the *Los Angeles Times* (Appendix B).<sup>157</sup> Makarius described to readers the flourishing literary culture and educational developments being made in Egypt as well as Syria, issues not widely reported on by foreign correspondents. Responding to pessimistic claims that Egypt was experiencing a stagnant illiteracy, he asserted to readers that “the present intellectual movement in Egypt is in its beginning, and as education becomes general and knowledge grows more diffused, the number of Arabic readers will rapidly increase.”<sup>158</sup> Makarius showcased key figures in the literary revival such as Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī, a prominent philologist and translator, and Ya‘qūb Sarrūf, a journalist and cofounder of the scientific magazine *al-Muqtataf*, “in order to illustrate the nature of their work and the actual modes of literary activity in Egypt” to American readers.<sup>159</sup> Although the many names he mentioned were predominantly Christian Arabs, Makarius brought these burgeoning literary circles to the attention of a Western readership.

The writer described at length the various ways Egypt, its intellectual class, and education systems were modernizing, and how these efforts were being carried by out by Egyptians in their own ways. While observing that “Western ideas have influenced the warp and woof of our literary fabric,” Makarius simultaneously emphasized that “a new

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<sup>157</sup> While additional information about Saleem Makarius could not be located, an 1898 letter to the editor of the British journal *Nature* identifies him as a correspondent for the Egyptian publication *al-Muqattam* in Cairo. See Saleem Makarius, “Syrian Fishes with Abnormal Eyes,” *Nature*, no. 59, (1898): 149.

<sup>158</sup> Saleem Makarius, “The Times’ Current Topics Club: Contemporary Literatures of the World VI—Writers of Modern Egypt,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1901, 10.

<sup>159</sup> Makarius, “Writers of Modern Egypt.”

Arabic literature altogether different from any that has preceded is in the process of formation” thanks to the work being done by intellectuals and scholars in Egypt. Specifically, he noted several native translators who “have coined a large number of words in order to convey scientific, philosophical, and political ideas, and have introduced into the language hundreds of expressions and phrases that have now become current. Many of their writings are literary masterpieces and are used in some schools and colleges as models of style.” These endeavours also meant that “textbooks on different subjects are continually being translated and published in order to enable the rising generation to study the different branches of science in their own tongue.”<sup>160</sup> Therefore, Makarius’s writing here illustrates the magnitude of the work involved in translating these innumerable texts and educational materials. This discredits the claims by correspondents, previously cited in this project, who believed that no sufficient teaching texts existed in Arabic.

In addition, Makarius intentionally expressed to American readers the complexities of Arabic, underpinning this point by quoting statements from American missionaries like Samuel Zwemer, who had expressed that “without any doubt Arabic is one of the most difficult languages in the world to acquire with any degree of fluency.” By doing so, the writer aimed to demonstrate that Egyptian scholars were more than qualified to undertake this great effort. Because of their work, “the revival of science and literature is becoming general, and within another generation the movement, now in its infancy, no doubt will have made great progress in its development.”<sup>161</sup> Makarius offered readers a rich, alternative view of the intellectual realities on the ground as well as optimism about the future, an outlook that certainly was not always afforded to Egyptians by observers.

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<sup>160</sup> Makarius, “Writers of Modern Egypt.”

<sup>161</sup> Makarius, “Writers of Modern Egypt.”

Recent scholarship rightfully interrogates the actual reach and impact of the work of European-educated Egyptian intellectuals and elites in enacting major change for the Egyptian masses during this period. After all, with an illiterate majority and a cultured elite in Egypt, it is a complex historical debate to gauge the effectiveness of the calls for reform coming from these intellectual circles at the time.<sup>162</sup> However, the writings of Kamil and Makarius reveal attempts made in Western circles to dispel misconceptions about Egyptians and to showcase their modernizing efforts in the face of a foreign press that continually misrepresented and demonized them. The nature of syndicated and telegraphed transatlantic news services at the time meant that Egyptian views mainly being expressed to appeal to English and French readers were sometimes being republished for American audiences, who could be exposed to these voices. Overall, the cases demonstrate that Egyptian intellectuals' work crossed borders, engaged in the Western public sphere, and challenged prevailing colonial attitudes about their nation. When much of the Western narrative on Egyptian education is characterized by misrepresentation, indigenous voices become all the more crucial in correcting this distorted lens.

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<sup>162</sup> Many of these cultural elites ultimately worked in government and educational capacities and were able to enact some level of administrative and institutional reform within the scope of their work, such as Rifā' at at-Taḥṭawi and Muḥammad 'Abduh. Elshakry further notes that "the relationship between the educated intelligentsia and the state was also solidified through the employment of many university officials in prominent governmental positions." *The Great Social Laboratory*, 16.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

Osman Abdel Razik, the Egyptian student in America whose interview opened these pages, captured the frustration of many of his native compatriots: “The British government is constantly sending out the report,” he stated, “that it is working for the uplift of Egypt—which is nonsense, nonsense. The opposite is true.” Abdel Razik declared that the English colonizers’ main goal was really “to suppress education and enlightenment, because holding people in darkness was the best way to gain possession of Egypt as an English colony.”<sup>163</sup> Here was a young Egyptian describing the colonial impact on his country’s education, yet these were the realities least visible in Western newspapers. Various educational endeavours came to be covered by correspondents, travellers, and other writers from North America, who misrepresented, denigrated, or altogether ignored Egyptian modes of instruction while bolstering and extolling the virtues of Western and Christian schooling. The country was portrayed to be rising as a reformed nation by abandoning its ancient past and embracing modern education and Western sensibilities.

This rhetoric was certainly not new. Much like the French had done as Egypt’s colonizers decades prior, these contestations of power were reframed as “a rhetorical battle between liberty and fanaticism.”<sup>164</sup> It also echoed much of the same narratives about other colonized populations in the press, as was done extensively about India, journalists to often draw comparisons between the two colonized nations.<sup>165</sup> Despite their claims to objectivity,

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<sup>163</sup> “Egyptians Held in Ignorance.”

<sup>164</sup> Juan Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 248.

<sup>165</sup> See, for example, Frederick Cunliffe-Owen, “England’s Policy in India and Egypt,” *New York Times*, January 15, 1922, 32; and “A Moslem Outbreak,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1907, II4: “The fact that there

writers' narratives were often "so strongly coloured by bias and supposition," and it is these representations of the East which became "sublimated in the public consciousness."<sup>166</sup> Ultimately, this project points to the role Western journalism has played in shaping discourse on affairs abroad while in many ways failing to accurately represent the agency of the society on which it reports. It has also provided an opportunity to probe the history of what are now considered mainstream, legacy news publications, and the ways they have platformed explicitly colonial, racist, and pejorative views over the last two centuries.

Overall, news of Egyptian education in the Western press highlights three rhetorical trends. First, these discussions helped construct the "abroad" to readers, creating images of indigenous education, where schools were seen as a chaotic reflection of the nation, and vice versa. As a result, orientalist representations of Egypt were continually constructed and reinforced. Next, and by contrast, such depictions were used to carve an oppositional, superior identity of the West itself. American and European institutions were upheld as beacons of true, progressive education driving Egyptians' enlightenment. Lastly, discussions of education were used to legitimate the British occupation and call for the preservation of a racial and social hierarchy. Writers often linked what they saw as an illiterate and obstinate people to the need for the occupation to continue. Paradoxically, the increasing education of Egyptians were posited as another reason to sustain the occupation, so as to control nationalist uprisings sparked by educated natives. When these factors are considered, it becomes clear that the press played a key role in feeding an entire generation of readers such misrepresentations of Egyptian people and the imagined East as a whole.

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is disaffection in India and Egypt has become almost one of the commonplaces of the telegraphed news of the day.... It is a far cry from Egypt to India, but the two problems are actually one."

<sup>166</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 138–9.

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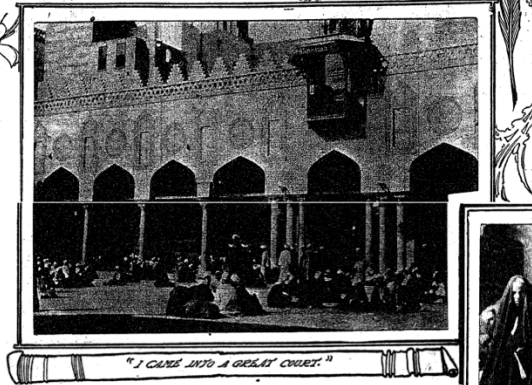
Appendix A

EDUCATION in EGYPT.

The British Administration has Introduced Common Branches of Study Into Mohammedan Schools, and Illiteracy is Slowly Being Stamped Out.

By Frank G. Carpenter, September 15.—(Special to the press.) I have returned from a visit to the Mohammedan schools of Cairo, and I have seen more than any of our colleges...

A Mohab Mohammedan Peter. The university has been in existence for almost a thousand years. It was founded A. D. 855 and from that time to this has been educating the Mohammedans...



...denia wear turbans of white, black or green, and there is not a hair under them except on the top of the crown, where a little tuft may be left that the owner may be the more easily pulled into heaven...

...The Mohammedans never wear their turbans as we do ours. While it is being read they will not allow it to lie upon the floor, and no one may read or touch it without first washing himself...



"I COME IN THE EL AZHAR UNIVERSITY."



"MY NEARLY BROTHERS STARRING IN THE HALLS OF THE EL AZHAR UNIVERSITY."

...There was not a chair nor a table in the halls, there were no maps nor diagrams and no scientific instruments. There were no libraries visible and the books used were mostly pamphlets...

...I looked about me in vain for the school furniture such as we have at home. There was not a chair nor a table in the halls, there were no maps nor diagrams and no scientific instruments. There were no libraries visible and the books used were mostly pamphlets...

Frank G. Carpenter, "Education in Egypt," Detroit Free Press, September 15, 1907, D5.

Appendix B

The Times' Current Topics Club.

Papers by Experts and Specialists. Six Courses of Study.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE OF THE WORLD.

WRITERS OF MODERN EGYPT.

THE PEOPLE'S COLLEGE. The Times' Current Topics Club. Papers by Experts and Specialists. Six Courses of Study.



Sheikh Ibrahim El-Tarzi.

In South Africa, Turkey, Southern Russia, Persia, Afghanistan, India, China, Sumatra, Java, the Philippines and New Guinea know something of his literature through their sacred book, the Koran. But it is only in Egypt and Syria that the Arabic language is spoken as the vernacular. It is a language of the present time. Arabic, divided at the present day into Arabic, and the Saharawi, while English,



V. Sarruf, Ph.D.

more adopting modern ways of thinking and writing and a new Arabic literature altogether different from any that has preceded it in the process of formation. Most of what is done in the way of translation, for without that the subject would be left in the dark as to the progress of European and American civilization. Students on different subjects are continually being introduced and subjected in order to enable the rising generation to study the different branches of science in their own tongue. Books, tracts, novels, essays, poet pamphlets are likewise translated with different aims in view. But within this translation is an important feature in

today's literature, originality is by no means wanting.

Original books and essays do not appear and exhibit remarkable ability. However, magazines and newspapers have multiplied to an ever increasing extent in the last twenty years, and they may be said to form a very important part of the present literature.

LEADING EGYPTIAN AUTHORS. A well-known writer in Arabic is H. M. Moustafa, who has distinguished himself more by his elegant style and the beauty of his form than by the amount of what he has done. He is the author of "The Nile" which appeared as a series of letters from Constantinople in the Mokadder magazine. He has also written the secrets of the Sultan's palace, where he was employed for some time. Moustafa has since altered his political opinions, and is now a supporter of the Turkish ruler. He has started a weekly newspaper in which articles of a good literary character appear. Moustafa is of Chios origin, and is usually mentioned in Arabic rhyme, with his musical style and melody, formerly had a peculiar charm. Today it is growing out of fashion, being considered stilted

and artificial. Moustafa has a son who has followed in the footsteps of his father, and who is a writer of no mean order.

Another author of high repute is Sheikh Ibrahim El-Khatib, who is considered an authority on the Arabic language. He comes from a Syrian family, and has a literary background. Sheikh Ibrahim is versed in the Arabic vocabulary and his diction and style are undoubtedly by his father on a superior level. He has written a number of other works, but has become somewhat of a standard work. He has written a commentary on Al-Makassab, the great Arab poet, which is considered among



H. M. Moustafa, Ph.D.

the best. He edits a literary magazine, Al-Fish, which is justly regarded for the purity of its diction and the beauty of its style. It is a pleasure to read the work of such an artist who can use the richness of language as a means to his end. It is a pleasure to read the work of such an artist who can use the richness of language as a means to his end. It is a pleasure to read the work of such an artist who can use the richness of language as a means to his end.

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But of all modern writers those that have examined the greatest mass of the Arabic-speaking world and have aimed in forming a truly correct picture are certainly Dr. Y. Sarruf and Dr. F. M. Moustafa. Having graduated from the American college of Beirut, Syria, these two gentlemen were soon afterward appointed tutors and then adjunct professors in that institution. Being thus in a position favorable to the pursuit of Arabic and literature, they started in 1894 their excellent review, Al-Makassab. This review, which is now upon the eve of completing a quarter of a century of its existence, has been one of the most potent factors in the present intellectual and literary movement. It has contributed during that period, as Premier Bae says in the nineteenth century, "to

the present intellectual movement in Egypt is in its beginning, and as education grows more general and knowledge grows more diffuse, the number of Arabic readers will rapidly increase. One of the chief difficulties encountered by Arabic-speaking persons in studying their own language lies in the fact that spoken Arabic is widely different from written Arabic. There is only one writing language, but there are five numerous dialects in speech. These dialects differ at times almost as much as the languages of French and English. Having met an Algerian in Paris who spoke French, I tried to converse with him in Arabic. It was impossible for us to understand each other, and thus we had to carry on the conversation in French. The grammar, moreover, is extremely difficult. Its rules are many and highly complicated. A grammatical mistake would almost be unpardonable. And yet it receives several years in the hands of scholars. How difficult Arabic is may be judged from what Professor LeFebvre has said of it. One of the veteran missionaries of Egypt, who in 1861 would make a grave error to have the Arabic language. The late Sir John Palmer, who passed the several languages trip on Cambridge, and a special course in Arabic at Lehigh wrote of it as being "more intelligible," and the Rev. R. H. Zeller in his book entitled "Arabic," that Arabic is a language that "without any doubt, Arabic is one of the most difficult of languages in the world to acquire with any degree of accuracy in its attainment merits the name 'poisonous' and 'confuse'.

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Salem Makarius, "The Times' Current Topics Club: Contemporary Literatures of the World VI—Writers of Modern Egypt," Los Angeles Times, May 5, 1901, 10.



## VITA AUCTORIS

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