Lebanese Masculinities

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Beginning to make inroads into traditionally male territories, masculine identities are changing in complicated ways. This involves a radical questioning or redefinition of the meaning of masculinity in post-war Lebanon where there have been great ideological and political upheavals precipitating changes in social values, including greater freedoms for women. This complex gender dynamics has brought about a shift in the notions of masculinity within the Lebanese society. Today in Lebanon, women are still seen as bastions of traditional values. Their identities continue to center around the importance of virginity and on their achievements as wives and mothers. In other words, men are still in control of women’s sexual behavior. Despite that, the ideology of patriarchal structure has undergone change in response to the complexities and transformations of the contemporary world. Indeed, if there are forces within the Lebanese society that insist on maintaining conventional ideas of manhood by stabilizing the idea of masculinity, and valuing and positioning men in cultures that under the influence of modernity fluid and contest these ideals. Masculinity is being redefined and interpreted to meet the specific exigencies and complexities of current conditions. The Western cultural assault has penetrated an extensive range of institutions and socio-cultural realms making it impossible for men to resist an inevitable modernization. Indeed, many men see the need to embrace modernity to remain in touch with civilization. Accordingly, for a large section of the middle class urban sector of society the meanings of masculinity and femininity are becoming increasingly blurred, varied, and problematic. For others, change is seen as a potential blow to their cultural, values, and language. As a result, regression towards original mythology appears to be the only way to preserve one’s identity. Since the Islamic world has been unable to compete with the West at the scientific, technological, economic, and educational levels, Muslims present an alternative in the one area in which they take pride and feel secure, namely the realm of religion and culture. This perspective, however, demands that men adhere to essentialist definitions of masculinity, and ensure that women remain in their places since they are seen as the major symbols of stability.

Nevertheless, despite resistance by supporters of traditional masculinity, Lebanese culture is becoming more feminized where women below the urban middle classes have started to adopt habits and embrace acts formerly reserved for women. Earlier on, it was women who cared about their physical appearance, while men’s indifference over their own image was the male norm. Today, if one casts a look at urban areas inhabited and frequented by the upper middle class, one notes that, in every case, gender has become blurred. The clothes that are worn by young people in these places such as T-shirts, sweaters and pants are predominantly unisex. Furthermore, androgynous fashion which presumably masculinates the male wearer is seemingly everywhere. The opening of our culture onto Western patterns and standards has created a breed of men who are very much concerned about body image. Captivated by new ideals of male fashion, style and beauty, these men polish their nails, wear earrings, diet, exercise, and go to plastic surgeons to improve their appearance. Young men wear trendy clothes, sport body piercing and tattoos, grow their hair long, wear ponytails, color their hair, apply styling gel, and pull their eyebrows. Older men, worried about hair loss, spend a lot of money on shampoos and chemical creams or go as far as undergoing hair transplants. Men’s beauty salons have replaced the old barber shops while special cosmetics for men such as hydrating creams, anti-wrinkle creams, all kinds of face masks and many other kinds of cosmetics are readily available. Indeed many men are spending increasing amounts of money and time to improve their physical appearance.

Satellite TV channels are broadcasting programs that run counter to our culture and tradition. Despite reservations at various levels, reality is that this has changed the ways of viewers. Still Academy aroed on The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation has seized the opportunity to encourage men to adorn themselves. Even though the idea of young, unmarried men and women together runs counter to our customs and traditions, the program was a great success. These men and women who participate competed on equal basis without discrimination between male and female and won the love of the masses all over the Arab world. Furthermore, if the organization of Mr. Lebanon contest is not as popular as Miss Lebanon, young men are taking a chance that would put them in the limelight and ensure a better future for them. These young men do not seem to worry about the fact that they are becoming objects of the (female) gaze. Indeed, middle-class, educated women and men are more boldy and valuing them according to their appearance.

Indeed, Middle class educated men have a whole range of other sources of identity open to them, through their work, through fathering, through the way they treat their working within the family and within wider social networks. Men are increasingly gaining a stronger sense of identity by sharing responsibility with their wives at home and with the children, where they are learning that they too can be nurturing, caring and emotionally expressive. They are more in touch with a feminine side that they thought did not exist.

Since women are working with men and competing with them, men feel the need to appear attractive in the way the women do. This is becoming very evident in the West where surveys conducted in the West found that the more financially secure the woman is, the more important a man’s looks were to her.

As the new age of globalization, free market capitalism and consumer culture takes over, men who have been associated with the success stories of the type of work and jobs that they have held traditionally, are taking jobs that no longer require physical fitness and where an increasing number of women are working in the fields traditionally reserved for women. Men who are increasingly present in the fields traditionally reserved for women and women are getting more positions in social, and business life that used to belong to men. The growth of the service economy has removed physical strength and fitness as a requirement, and thus has accommodated women, in addition to men, to the workforce. In the not too distant future, the demand for the male main vehicle of expression, men who have nothing to measure their achievements against, have increasingly sought approval not for their actions and feats, but for the commodities that they possess such as expensive cars, houses and their physical appearance. The growth of service economy worldwide has changed the way men do business. For many, work value rests solely in one’s ability to earn money and capital to buy such commodities in order to influence the perceptions and views of those around them. The rise of the male fashion industry epitomizes the importance of male appearance in a world where the image and spectacle predominates.

Because masculinities are stretched by the exigencies of change, the process of accommodating old definitions to new conditions often drive men to reexamine their experiences and reinvent their masculinity. In Lebanon, one could say that this is taking place across the board. Masculinities are everywhere. For some it is seen as a threat, while for others it is a blessing. The definition of manhood is changing and many men are searching for a new understanding of manhood suited to the modern age. Owing to changes precipitated by modernity and the empowerment of women, the Lebanese culture is becoming more feminized causing men to adopt habits and embrace acts formerly reserved for women. Nevertheless, opposing forces of modernity and counter-modernity stretch and strain the country’s social fabric, and cherished ideals of masculinity are being challenged and interrogated. At the same time, traditional masculinity continues to struggle to settle its aims to ensure that the field is still under male control.

End Notes


I want to speak about women under occupation in Palestine and Iraq. As we are caught in the clutches of war, speaking about ending violence against women means combating violence not only at the local and national level but also at the global level. Global forms of violence range from capitalist globalization to occupation, wars and militarization, and women in the third world are the primary victims of these forms of violence.

If we as women claim to care about violence affecting women, then I would expect us to have some sort of agreement on what defines violence and what qualifies as a threat to women. Can we agree that economic globalization is a form of violence against women? Do we think that the preemptive war, which the United States of America - residing over the largest military arsenal in history - waged against Iraq, in violation of international law, was a form of aggression against Iraq women? And finally, can we agree that the Israeli occupation of Palestine - the only colonialist occupation that still exists in this day and age - constitutes a form of violence against Palestinian women?

Let’s consider some of the effects of military conflicts, continued occupation, chaos and absence of security on the daily lives of women. Today, under the US occupation in the “liberated” Iraq, women are afraid to go out. Iraqi women suffered tremendously and for decades under the previous regime, but according to a senior UN official they are worse off now, if that is possible to imagine. The poor security situation presents a direct threat to their personal safety. Young women cannot walk the streets without male relatives accompanying them because of the increase in instances of rape, attacks and kidnapping. Scare is the rise of religious forces in Iraq under US occupation. While not all religious forces are reactionary, those that are, advocate traditional attitudes about women’s role in society. The American appointed Iraqi Governing Council - obviously not an elected body - recently passed what is known as resolution 137, designed to install religious laws in place of the Iraqi civil code dealing with personal status laws. The Iraqi Governing Council, an interim entity appointed by the occupation authority, has no legitimate powers to change Iraqi civil law, a culmination of 50 years of struggle by Iraqi women and progressive forces in Iraq, not the product of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Resolution 137 amounts to a direct attack on Iraqi women’s rights. In response to this resolution, a large number of Iraqi women took to the streets protesting it. Consequently it was repealed, at least for the time being.

Shifting to the occupation of Palestine, let’s ask ourselves, what is life like for Palestinian women living under the Israeli occupation? It would indeed be stating the obvious to say that the Israeli occupation and aggression have a very negative impact on the lives of Palestinian women who have been the victims of massacres, rape, ethnic cleansing, economic blockade, torture, confinement, curfews and school closures. Countless numbers of Palestinian mothers have been forced to deliver still born babies at Israeli checkpoints because Palestinian ambulances aren’t allowed to pass through to nearby hospitals. And this is routine procedure. The rights of Palestinian women and their families are impossible to realize under these circumstances. These women are only able to exercise the full range of their rights when they live in free communities and in a society free from military conflicts and occupation.

Palestinian women have always been politically active on the nationalist front and the gender equality front. They have been aware of the link between homegrown patriarchy and the Israeli occupation in the sense that both are instances of dominance of one group over another. Seeing the close link between their feminist and nationalist struggles, they have organized, mobilized and have been very active in the national liberation movement and in women’s rights organizations.

The Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation has been sustained to a large degree by the resourcefulness of Palestinian women. During the first Intifada in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, Palestinian women took a pioneering role in the campaign to boycott Israeli products in the occupied territories. With no pre-existing indigenous industry to fall back on, Palestinian women took it upon themselves to provide alternative sources of income and products. They began establishing their own manufacturing industries from cheese and jam making to bread baking and cultivating community gardens. In doing so, not only did they enable the boycott campaign and made it possible to succeed, but actually developed a nucleus for the infrastructure of a Palestinian economy.

International women’s organizations interested in playing a role in combating the oppression facing Palestinian women as women have to recognize the connection between patriarchy and occupation that manifests itself in the daily lives of women and integrate this connection in the theory, practice and agenda of the international women’s movement.

It is important at this moment in our history to be politically informed and to be aware of what’s going on in the world and of the role governments plays in world events affecting women. Critical political knowledge is central to developing oppositional spaces and cultures of resistance where critical thinking can function at a time when policing mechanisms are tightened and a demagogic discourse of national security and terrorism is sweeping our public space.

Finally, being politically aware and being committed to issues of social justice is of essence. The women of Palestine and Iraq need us to stay informed, committed and to make people aware of the oppression they face. They need our solidarity in their effort to end the occupation so they can live in free communities.

Forthcoming:
Young Arab Women
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F il m s

And Along Came a Spider
This documentary exposes the shocking portrait of the world of a recently captured serial killer, who believes that murdering prostitutes is in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Over the span of a year, 16 women were murdered in the Iranian city of Mashad. Because the victims were lured into the killer's traps, the press soon called this case “no doubt is a large part of the logical reasons. The question for women is who the lucky winner will be. And the problem is avoiding bad or too-early or serial commitments. But narcissism isn’t like that, perhaps again for biological reasons. It is naturally unfocused and amorphous. It is a challenge for men to focus desire onto one person, one woman, one life partner. Hence the culmination of sexual adulthood for men is found. If men engage in too-early-sex or pre-pre-sex promiscuity, not only is true sexual adulthood subverted, but the man to the birth of her son lives with her tyranni- cal mother-in-law, away from her husband, who visits her once a year only.

All About My Mother
A single mother in Madrid sees her only son die on his 17th birthday as he runs to seek an actress’s autograph. She goes to Barcelona to find the lad’s father, a transvestite named Lola who does not know he has a child. She wants to tell him that their son’s last written words were directed to him, even though he never knew his father.

As soon as soft hair began to thicken above my lips, whenever I looked in a mirror I began to imagine myself with a complete and perfect moustache. What I envisaged was a model moustache of the kind that I would have liked to have had, not as it would actually have been. I was handsome in that moustache which I added to my face like one adds a pair of sun-glasses, though I didn’t acquire a pair of those until I was past forty. Nevertheless, a moustache and sun glasses, together with a pipe: the image was never far from my mind, though when I did adopt the pipe I only used it for about ten days. Pipe, moustache, sun glasses, and also the overcoat which we used to imagine as the dress of secret policemen, all this combined to make up the complete man who lacked nothing. (Hassan Dasouf, Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East, p. 273).

It would help to sort out from the usual cliches about “men-and-sex vs. women-and-love” the genuine intuition about what makes male sexuality distinctly male. Everyone has heard the cliches that say, when it comes to sexual relationships, women focus on the intimacy part and men focus on the physical part. But what really makes male sexuality distinctly male? Maybe it can be stated like this. Female sexuality is specific. Women rarely want sex-in-general: their passion is focused on one with whom the sex is desired. Commitment is inherent to the sex-act. And of course, no doubt is this large part of the logical reasons. The question for women is who the lucky winner will be. And the problem is avoiding bad or too-early or serial commitments. But narcissism isn’t like that, perhaps again for biological reasons. It is naturally unfocused and amorphous. It is a challenge for men to focus desire onto one person, one woman, one life partner. Hence the culmination of sexual adulthood for men is found. If men engage in too-early-sex or pre-pre-sex promiscuity, not only is true sexual adulthood subverted, but the man to the birth of her son lives with her tyranni- cal mother-in-law, away from her husband, who visits her once a year only.

A single mother in Madrid sees her only son die on his 17th birthday as he runs to seek an actress’s autograph. She goes to Barcelona to find the lad’s father, a transvestite named Lola who does not know he has a child. She wants to tell him that their son’s last written words were directed to him, even though he never knew his father.

Arab masculinity (nujah) is acquired, verified and played out in the brave deed, in risk-taking, and in expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness. It is attained by constant vigilance and willingness to defend honour (sharaf), face (waaj), kin and community from external aggression and to uphold and protect cultural definitions of gender-specific propriety. … In the Palestinian context, the occupation has seriously diminished those realms of practice that allow men to engage in, display and affirm masculinity by means of autonomous actions. Frequent witnesses to their father’s beatings by soldiers or settlers, children are acutely aware of their fathers’ inability to protect themselves and their children.” (Julie Peteet, Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East, p. 107).

Men’s clothing has been repeatedly restyled in the past, and contemporary trends suggest that it is still undergoing transformation. Some, for instance, have observed a ‘feminization’ and ‘emasculisation’ of men’s fashion, particularly in the realm of haute couture. Recent designs fashion plays on gender reversal in male fashion … Apart from this gender swapping, there is also an air of androgyny surrounding modern fashion in general. ‘On Catwalks and even in showrooms’, it appears, ‘gender has become blurred beyond all recognition.’ (Alejandro Diaz, Fashioning Masculinity: Change and Paradox in Men’s Fashion, p. 3. http://www.stafford.edu/~amd/download/masculinity.pdf) Although patriarchy has certainly changed in form over the last century or more, especially through the growth of the state, men’s power still resides at least in part, in the family and the institution of fatherhood. Historically, fatherhood is both a means of possession of and care for young people and it is a means of descent (through the maternal line). It has also been and still is a way for some men of living with, being with, being violent to, sexually abusing, caring for and loving particularly young people (those that called ‘your own’), and a way of avoiding connection, care and contact with other young people more generally. Even nice fathers can switch to become nasty ones. Fatherhood has involved giving something to the family, an absolute right of ownership, but nothing, an assumption of rights and authority over others, principally women and children, rather than responsibilities for them. The problems of both father absence and father distance are now recognised more than ever (Williams, 1998). For some men, becoming fathers can and obviously does involve major changes in responsibilities and more work. (Jeff Hearst, A Crisis in Masculinity or New Agendas for Men, p.7). <http://www.europroforum.org02.infos2/con- trix/04/02/en masculinities.htm>
From France

Restoring the Clitoris

(…) A tall, elegant Somalian woman in her late twenties slips nervously into the reception area of the Louise XIV hospital in Saint Germain-en-Laye outside Paris. Elham Farah has been booked in for a two-hour operation to be carried out by a man who has become a savior to thousands of victims of female genital mutilation (FGM). Dr. Pierre Folds is the only surgeon and urologist to have developed a surgical technique which restores the clitoris.

Elham is unable to give the exact details of what happened to her 20 years ago when she was led to a house outside her village in Somalia and was held down by a number of women including her grandmother and two aunts. Her legs were prised apart by two other women. She passed out when one of the women applied a knife to her genitals. When she came round she remembers an excruciating pain between her legs, which had been tied together. It was not until several weeks later that she discovered that her genitalia had been sliced away.

Elham is just one of 130 million women worldwide who are estimated to have undergone FGM, with an additional two million girls and women undergoing the procedure every year. In some cultures it is seen as a female rite of passage preventing promiscuity, and is mainly performed on girls aged between four and 12 years. The practice is prevalent in 28 African countries, with figures varying widely. About 5 per cent of females in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) and Uganda undergo the procedure; that figure rises to 98 per cent in Somalia.

There are three types of FGM: the removal of the clitoris only; the excision of the clitoris and surrounding labia; and, most radical of all, the removal of clitoris, inner and outer labia and the sewing-up of the vagina, where only a small opening is left for urination and menstrual blood. It is estimated that 15 per cent of women who experience FGM have undergone this most severe mutilation, known as infibulation.

In France she came across articles and programmes on sex and female anatomy. “I realised what had been taken from me and how much I suffered physically and emotionally because of it. I became very angry. My womanhood has been cut away I have never known what it’s like to have normal sexual feelings. I am not a real woman. I always feel ashamed and dirty.”

Every year Dr Folds, 51, operates on 200 women like Elham, including at least six from the UK. Most of his patients are Africans aged between 18 and 45 living in France. His doctor wife, Beatrice, and five children hardly see him, he performs the operations in addition to his full-time hospital work. He refuses to charge for the operations because he considers his patients to be victims of one of the biggest crimes against humanity. “Victims shouldn’t pay for the crimes against them. These women have already paid a huge price,” he says.

He explains the reasons for his determination to continue with his work: “Excision is worse than rape because the family are involved. And it is much worse in terms of the clinical aftermath,” he says in his heavily accented English. Short-term complications include severe pain and a risk of haemorrhage; there is also a high risk of infections such as gangrene. Long-term complications include urine retention and infections, obstruction of menstrual flow causing internal infections and infertility, and prolonged and obstructed labour. (…) When, 15 years ago, Dr Fords embarked on his mission to develop surgical techniques to restore the clitoris he was shocked to find that the only organ in the human body devoted to pleasure had been metaphorically excised by the male-dominated medical fraternity. “It was invisible,” he says indignantly. “It was shocking for me to discover in my research that there was nothing, absolutely nothing on this organ, although there are hundreds of books on the penis, and several surgical techniques to lengthen it, enlarge it or repair it. Nobody was studying the clitoris because it is associated with female pleasure. There was very little anatomical detail on it. It was as if it didn’t exist. I had to start from scratch.”

What Dr. Fords discovered was that the organ, which Sigmund Freud, father of psychoanalysis, once likened to kindling wood, is much larger than originally thought, with nerves surrounding the vagina and extending down the thighs. “It’s about ten or 11 centimetres long, like a penis, and changes shape when erect,” he explains.

To reconstruct a clitoris, Dr Fords removes all scar tissue that has grown over the excised tip and snips the ligaments that support it, hence allowing more of the clitoral body to slip down so that it is exposed as a small tip like the original. The ligaments are then repaired. “After six weeks the area starts to look normal, but my patients tell me that it takes four or six months for them to feel anything,” he says. Whether his patients are later able to experience orgasm is something he is not willing to guarantee. (…) Sexism and Women’s Rights: Bulletin 2004 - 10 http://news.scotsman.com/features.cfm?id=516382004

Governor of New South Wales

Marie Bashir Visits IWSAW

On March 23, 2004 the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) in collaboration with the Australian Embassy in Beirut hosted Her Excellency Professor Dr. Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales. Professor Dr. Bashir gave a talk on “Challenges for Women in a Changing World.” The talk was attended by Ambassador of Australia in Lebanon, Her Excellency Stephanie Shvabasky, friends, Australian nationals, Professors, and students.

IWSAW director Mona Khalaf, IWSAW program officer Anita Nassar with participants in the EPIL workshop

The European Project for Interreligious Learning (EPIL)

The European Project for Interreligious Learning (EPIL) held in cooperation with the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University was the last module of an adult education program for women which took place from February 4-12, 2004. This program explores problems of living together as Christians and Moslems. It should be mentioned that the program consists of five modules that were held respectively in Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Lebanon.

Twenty seven participants from these countries attended the module. Emphasis was placed on various ways through which national reconciliation took place in Lebanon, and this through a series of lectures given by prominent Lebanese speakers. In addition visits were organized to various religious groups during which Lebanese women gave testimonies about how they lived the war.

From left to right: Dr. Abdallah Shih, H.E. Dr. Marie Bashir, Mrs. Mona Khalaf, Dr. Rajy Nassar and H.E. Stephanie Shvabasky

IWSAW News

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On the occasion of the International Women’s Day, the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University held, an exhibition “Women and War: Photos and Facts” on March 9, 2004. The exhibit highlighted the various roles women play in times of war as active participants, passive bearers or forceful agents for peace.

IWSAW Celebrates International Women’s Day

Scholarly attention to gender issues in the Middle East has been focused almost exclusively on a quest to understand feminism. There are as yet no significant studies that make Muslim men visible as gendered subjects, and masculinity in Arab Islamic cultures has so far remained an unrecognized and unacknowledged category viewed in essentialist terms and perceived as natural, and self-evident. Indeed, men have been seen exclusively as oppressors of women, and the stereotype of domination and subordination remains dominant. Nevertheless, studies in the 1980’s began shifting from women’s studies to gender studies which are changing from an exclusive focus on women to a new interest in Middle Eastern men. Indeed, the aim is not to distract attention from women’s issues, but rather to underline masculinity and femininity as relational constructs. The rigid demarcation of gender roles is gradually changing, and masculinity is increasingly being seen as an unstable sign which has changed with modernity and the various political, social and economic changes that have affected the Middle East, forcing men to look at themselves and the world around them with different eyes. This indeed is a historic turning point where ideas about what it means to be a man have been under maximum pressure at all levels. While men are the real beneficiaries of power in their societies it is interesting to note that men’s dominance is not restricted only to women but also to other men who are considered inferior. In other words, many men, like women, continue to be under the tight control of a limited number of men who actually possess the power. Patriarchy is being reinterpreted, and reinvented to meet the specific exigencies of current conditions, and gender relations are being seen as variable, shifting and changing in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. In reaction to the monolithic view of men who were viewed as the uncomplicated agents of oppression, the articulation of masculinity at this particular historical moment is more complex and more complicated where there is a great disparity between inherited masculine values and the patterns of actual behavior by men. For many men, masculinity is a goal to be achieved and experienced in particular times and settings creating a great deal of anxiety and trepidation. Furthermore, in the Arab world, it is clear that both men and women are subjected to oppression in an atmosphere of war and under regimes that continue to subject men as well as women to social and economic oppression as well as political control and violence. Indeed as Deniz Kandiyoti puts it, “the denunciation of men (by feminists) as the main enemy could easily go against the cultural grain in societies where both men and women are tightly enmeshed in familial networks of mutual rights and obligations, where both sexes may be laboring under much harsher forms of economic and political oppression”. (Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996, 15).

This issue of Al-Raida attempts to show how various masculinities are defined and redefined in particular times and settings and the plurality and diversity of men’s experiences, attitudes, beliefs, practices along lines of class, sexual orientation, religion, region, and various other categories. The file in this issue includes several articles dealing with different forms of masculinity in the Middle East, from the early Twentieth Century until the present. “The Turban, the Turbush and the ‘Top Hat’” underlines the interconnectedness between masculinity, modernity and national identity in interwar Egypt where the turbush was seen as a sign of the modern and the traditional, the national and the foreign, and the masculine and feminine helping to define Egyptian masculinity at the time. Another article “Male Infertility: Masculinity and New Reproductive Technologies in the Arab World” reveals changing views among Lebanese men to male infertility and the belief by celebrated middle-class men that infertility has nothing to do with virility. Catriona Lloyd’s article studies the crisis of masculinity in Algeria through the press, feature films and literature. “Female Genital Mutilation and Constructions of Masculinity in Twentieth Century Egypt” deals with intertwined as well as changing attitudes among Egyptian men to Female Genital Mutilation. Nadia Ziani and Martha Bradly’s article deals with adolescent boys’ responses to gender differentiation in rural upper Egyptian villages. “Humiliation and Masculine Crisis in Iraq” studies the impact of targeting men in Iraq on Iraqi masculinity and self-image. Zazah Sharar’s Baydoun presents a field study on the ways Lebanese university students perceive their preferred partners. “Masculinity in Morocco” is based on a field study that focuses on views of sexuality and masculinity in Moroccan ministerial administrations. Eliisa Perkin’s article focuses on the effects of the 2004 Mudeawwana Reforms on Moroccan masculinity. The file contains an intriguing interview with Mosbah Baddak, the only Lebanese male belly dancer in Lebanon. The last three articles deal with masculinity in modern Arabic fiction and film. The file is completed with a review of Mai Ghoussoub’s and Emilia Sinclair-Webb’s Imagined Masculinities (London: Saq Books, 2000).

Michel Herzfeld, The Poetics of Manhood.

IWSAW News

What About Masculinity?

There is less focus on ‘being a man’ than on ‘being good at being a man.’

Michel Herzfeld, The Poetics of Manhood.

Samira Aghacy
In the current state of the world, there can hardly be a more pressing object of analysis than the Middle East. As the birthplace of Islam as well as Judaism and Christianity, this area is rife with patriarchal approaches to spirituality. As one of the more dangerous parts of the planet, currently engaged in the second of recent hot wars between the U.S. and so-called terrorists, it is also an area that has until recently been quite low on the priorities for study and analysis. This means that we are abundantly cursed with stereotypical representations of the peoples of the area, with half-informed prejudices about such ideas as the “Muslim mind,” and with many self-serving portraits of the Islamic faith. Also, and most seriously, in my opinion, there have been a quite a few truly insulting predictions made by purported scholars of the Middle East about the nature of a great clash of civilizations; the clash seems to me to stem from misunderstandings by the West rather than from some eternal quality of a fantasized “Islam.” In a manner similar to the creation of the dangerous sex-obsessed Negro male in the post-emancipation American south, we have now constructed a fantastic and blantly false picture out of the swarthy Muslim male, once again dangerous to the property of the Euro-American, to the ostensibly civilized Western world.

Does everything have to occur at least twice, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce?

Islam as a faith and a practice has been repeatedly and increasingly linked to terrorism, and terror is almost exclusively the work of men. What then is the connection between the religion, political acts of violence, and masculinity? To start off on the right foot, we need to clarify the relationship between Islam and what is so frequently called fundamentalism in Western media sources. I argue, as do many others, that it is inappropriate and inaccurate to use the term fundamentalism to describe political movements in Islam. My preference is “Islamist” for the following reasons.

Fundamentalism appeared first in the United States between 1910 and 1919, through publications and conferences of the World Christian Fundamentals Association. In the 1920s the movement moved beyond its millenarian origins and took on the characteristics that we use to define fundamentalism today. Hawley and Proudfoot (1994) describe it as a form of militant religion that opposes the modernist, liberal forces unleashed in Western society since the Enlightenment. In favor of a return to a notional past in which people are held to have experienced no tension between secular and religious loyalties, and in which the authority of scripture defined a community where truth was unlinked by the relativity of knowledge (p. 16-7).

This return to basics is hence a response to the conditions that arise from modernity and its dislocations. This has held true in each subsequent appearance of the phenomenon of religious neo-orthodoxy, whether fundamentalist or Islamist. For example, Hawley and Proudfoot (1994) further argue that “[i]n Khomeini’s Islamic revolution, many of the principal traits of American fundamentalism were visible: anti-modernism, anti-liberalism, the intent to return to a religious golden age when scripture held sway, and a social base composed of people who felt alienated and displaced by the groups they deemed responsible for the Western-style secular reconstruction of society” (p. 17). Such claims are but half-right, since Khomeini claimed many of the principles of modernism, but distinctly opposed its consumerist, secular qualities. But an examination of Iran’s 1979 constitution does not find a document that would satisfy only religious fundamentalists – it is, as Humphries (1999) says, a mixture of theocratic piety and a democratic welfare state (p. 36). It is in many ways, quintessentially postmodern.

Fundamentalists are deeply concerned with boundary definition, needing to clarify differences from others external to the group as well as those inside the group who stray through mistakes or through deliberate apathy. These internal error-makers are some of the major enemies perceived by fundamentalists. Yet, Karen McCarthy Brown (1994) has argued, there always remains another internal enemy – the ever available yet ever alien “opposite sex.” Women’s behavior is regarded not only as being synonomous with cosmic dislocation but as being its cause. Embodiment of the other that is not once intimate and ubiquitous, women serve as a focus for projective feelings of general bestialism. They are close enough to serve as targets, yet pervasive enough to symbolize the cosmic dimensions of the challenge (Hawley and Proudfoot “discussing Brown’s work” p.27).

This parallels arguments I have made elsewhere about the gender research directions of men worldwide who perceive themselves as losing control in an increasingly confusional world. So many then blame women, who have often benefited in some very public ways from incursions of Western-oriented modernity, and seek to regain the control they believe they have lost to those women. This phenomenon has become a cross-cultural patriarchal response in this [post]modern period to the unfulfilled promises of Western Enlightenment modernity. Brown (1994) describes it in the following way:

While the phenomenon is hardly unique to the Arab-Muslim world, it is a good basis for understanding the conditions there, where post-colonial idealism once had produced high hopes for change. But the promises were not kept, and social transformations did not take place as expected or predicted. In fact, things seemed to go worse and worse. Independence segued into economic neo-colonialism, and cultural pride was squelched by cultural imperialists. This has been a continually dominant Western European and United States. It is owing to such circumstances that Oliver Roy attributes The Failure of Political Islam (1994), to those who wonder whether the turn toward Islamist solutions to the problems of North Africa and the Middle East.

Roy (1994) argues that the emergence of Islamist movements is a rational response to modernity. Far from “being a strange inrupturn of an irrational, archaic phe- nomenon,” he believes that the call to follow sharia is “as old as Islam itself, yet still new because it has never been fulfilled” (p. 4), and still remains a primary focus of Islamic discourses. The other focus emerges as a more recent phenomenon, described by Roy as rooted in the anti-imperialist perspectives of those who led the fight against colonialism. This perspective was eventually transformed by circumstance and time into a more violent,
over-arching anti-Westernism (as distinct from anti-modernism), at least for a vocal few. Nevertheless, it turned out that struggle against the imperialist order was insufficient in the aftermath of independence since the capitalist order of the West more importantly keeps the ex-colonies still within its grasp, just under a different hierarchical order, though one disguised by a titular freedom from direct control.

But Islamists are not anachronistic, rural folk (with the exception of the Taliban, and possibly some of their remnants in Northern Pakistan). Roy correctly sees them as urban, and quintessentially modern, in spite of their anti-Western views. He calls their ideology “militant rationalism” (p. 21), demonstrating that the modern, rationalist, urban mode has permeated Islam. “Moderernity,” Roy says (1994), “creeps into Muslim countries through the voices of Islamists themselves, playing a part in this secularization of the religion.” He makes a good case for Islamist movements being modernist as well as being a response to modernity itself.

Modernization occurred, but outside any conceptual framework: it happened through rural exodus, emigration, consumption, the change in family behavior (a lower birthrate), but also through the cinema, music, clothing, satellite antennas, that is, through the globalization of culture. Such changes occurred through the establishment of states; that, fragile, corrupt, and clienteloret oriented though they may be, are nonetheless profoundly new in their method of legitimation, their social base, and their division into territories frozen by international investment. Protect against the West, which includes contesting the existing states, is on the social model that is that cosmopolitan anti-WB or anti-immigrant arguments: are they arguments one can present when it is too late (p. 23).

I would argue, in fact, following Hinneks (1995), that the entire Islamist enterprise smacks of post-modernity, as a nostalgic reclamation of a mythic past, utilizing the most modern of tools (media, electronic technology, computers), in the most modern of locations (urban centers, universities). Advocates of Islamist movements use images out of reconstructed memories of a mythic past to cope with the difficulties of the hyper-alienated present. I would also argue that patriarchy, as both an individual expression and as a social phenomenon, is being reinterpreted, reinvented to meet the specific exigencies of current conditions. Mervat Habib (1998), examining the Egyptian case of the Muslim Brotherhood (the ‘original’ political Islamist movement), argues that they have their own interpretation of modernity. Conservative modern views of gender at well with conservative Islamist views, so that the two are unequal in declaring the importance of science, reason, professional education, and technology in the building of the new society. Since the Islamist groups and their discourses have been part of the historical development of modern society in Egypt, it is not surprising that the Islamist, oppositional, discourses is very modernist. It accepts the nuclear family and the modern systems of education and training as the basis of its alternative Islamic society (p. 97).

Essentially, Islamist discourses are concerned with the reconstruction of the relation of the religious human being to a complex social, economic and political order often devoid of the spiritual. Part of this reconstruction is the relationship between women and men, which has elements in all three - the social, the economic and the political. Let us turn now to one writer’s attempt to delineate the process of this reconstruction in North Africa.

On Neopatriarchy as a Conceptual Tool

One of the questions that requires examination is how patriarchy is changing over time. How is the ideology of patriarchal structure responding to the complexities and transformations of the contemporary world? This is addressed by Hisham Sharabi in Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society (1988). In this work, the neopatriarchy builds on a tradition of colonization and its aftermath, many of whom wrote about the French experience in North Africa (see Fanon 1961, 1967; Memmi 1966, 1985). These early theorists envisaged the relationship between the colonized individual’s identity and his/her subjugation to colonial authority. Writing before the advent of feminist movements, these thinkers believed that no generic term, Faron and Memmi stepped around the edges of the implications of being conquered had for gender identity.” In the forefront were socalized, penile pecuniary national forms, and their racism. Central to all forms of neoversity as having a real sense of how that process affected men and women differently. Eldridge Cleaver in Soul on Ice (1968) had broken with his own views of realism. He deplored the cruelty of the black male in the United States the concrete issue; women, black or white, were tools for Cleaver to displace the power of the white male. Sex and sexuality, and rape, were features of the struggles among skin colors, classes and ethnicities. Cleaver’s work approaches the ways one may view the colonial experience today, where self, identity, sex and sexuality, gender and ideology are all involved (see Nandy 1983; Stoler 1991; Jolly and Macintyre 1989; Ahmed 1992; Kandiyoti 1994). Sharabi (1988) focuses on the ways in which patriarchal structures of family and society have metamorphosed in response to the complex pressures of the modern world. He argues correctly that the pristine form of patriarchy, argues…

The Islamists, transform what was previously a reflection of one’s degraded self-image into a source of dignity.

One minor but important aspect of the success of Islamism is precisely that it offers frustrated youth a justification for their frustration. Western asculturization has not made it any less true that education and its financial inaccessibility. Value is still attached to a girl’s virginity, but age at marriage is rising, and the young are more promiscuous. More and more, because of the ease of transportation, everything is cooled, from schools and universities to housing and transportation; temptation is reinforced by the model of sexual freedom conveyed through television, film, magazines, but also by experiences of and stories about life in the West. Immobilization and overpopulation make it difficult for young people to have independent lives. Muslims have been presented with a defense of chastity and virtue, a defense that is in fact widely divergent from a certain art de vivre inherent in Muslim cultures for centuries. The Islamic defense of chastity and virtue has what was previously a reflection of one’s degraded self-image into a source of dignity (p. 56).

This is exactly what appears to be going on throughout the Muslim Arab world of North Africa, the Middle East, now Central Asia and reaching into Southeast Asia. All the themes are there: unemployment for the educated, the Western orientation that stayed behind as the colonizers were pushed off, Sharabi, writing in the eighties before the oil crisis in Algeria of the nineties, the rise (and more recent) tempests of the anti-Western, anti-government activity of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, and before the rise and fall of the Afghan Taliban, still saw Islamist movements as “absolute,” as “oppressive,” and as “authoritarian.” (1988: 34). He did see much here of the modernist response that Roy takes as central to his argument. But Roy wrote later, and his ideas are in some sense more respectful of this creative, challenging, and indigenous response to modernity. On the other hand, Sharabi is aware of the patriarchal nature of the movement, which Roy overlooks, taking the structures of economy and politics as key. But underneath Roy’s arguments, there is still a current that shows a consciousness of the disruptive effects of these structural changes on the sex and gender order. Examining the following quotations from Roy (1994), one finds many of the themes I find most salient, particularly his full awareness of the importance of education and sexuality in the overall picture.
the impossibility of attaining dreams offered by Western ideology and the disappointment with a distorted sex/gender order, anger at the West, the Zionists, the Americans, the rich and powerful, and a deep-seated pill revealed the last possible source of force, of validity and rightness. The people most affected, and men in particular, hope to become the future elite, maybe even leaders of their countries. As Karen Brown (1994) puts it:

Fundamentalism is not primarily a religion of the marginalised, as some suggest. Its most salient feature is that it develops among people caught off balance. Hence, fundamentalists group usually arise in situations wherein social, cultural, and economic power is up for grabs... far from being essentially marginal to the societies in which they exist, fundamentalists are often directly involved in the political and economic issues of their time and place. And they often have a significant, if precarious, stake in them (Brown 1994:190).

The question, then, is whether the citizens of the Arab-Muslim world are caught off balance. Let us turn to examine the conditions of gendered lives in some of the leading nations of the area.

Gender, Social Change, and Middle Eastern Economy and Politics

Years hence, if my suspicion is correct, we will look back on the latter half of the 20th century as a time of change as profound for the Muslim world as the Protestant Reformation was for Christendom. Like the printing press in the sixteenth century, the combination of mass education and mass media is transforming this world, a broad geographical crescent stretching from North Africa through Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and across the Indonesian archipelago. In unprecedentedly large numbers, the faithful—whether in the vast cosmopolitan city of Istanbul or in Oman’s tiny, remote al-Hamra—are changing those values and norms that for so long allowed the impositions of Muslim belief and practice in ways that their self-conscious predecessors would never have imagined. This highly deliberate examination of the faith is what constitutes the Islamic Reformation (Eickelman 1998, p. 82).

One part of this Reformation includes the re-examination of gender ideologies in light of pressures from the West, transformations in a changing economy, new sources of knowledge from global information technology, new desires for consumers due to cultural imperialism that has reached a stunning level. All of these are producing movement, if not movements, inside the nations that seek to protect their very essence from the transforma-
across the globe. For even in the Muslim world, as Yvonne Haddad (1998) points out:

modernization in fact has had a serious impact on women’s lives and their relation in the family. Since the 1970s, several new factors intensified the process of change. These include the dramatic economic fluctuations of the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of new states, and an increase in labor migration (especially of young male), women’s participation in salaried work, state ideology, and politics; the growth of the populism of the Islamist movement; and international and regional input such as the Islamization campaigns and Western feminist demands (p.7).

Here we find many of the themes in the discourses of Arab-Muslim men. Their awareness of and concern over these transformations of their society is quite undeniable. The changes already have an impact upon them, and will continue to do so for some time to come. The task for many of these men is to work out some sort of arrangement that could preserve their position, the resulting negotiations and cultural presentations take many forms. Weiss (1994), speaking about the Muslim world in general, argues that a “reallocation of obligations is occurring” between men and women, which “results in a redistribution of gender-based rights and obligations” (p.127-8). Yvonne Haddad (1998), reflecting on the work in Arabic of Lebanese writer Mustafa Hijazi, discusses some of the ways in which men and women are working through the process of inter-connected opposition. Hijazi points out that there are visible and invisible differences in roles for women: working class people carve a sharp division between the expropriating man’s status, strength, and aggressiveness, which necessitates that the woman be weak and oppressed. “She is transformed into a utensil for his self-pleasure with no regard for her wishes and desires. She dies in her psyche that he may gain the illusion of life; she is crushed that he may gain the mirage of self-fulfillment” (p. 11, quoting Hijazi). Hijazi may be exaggerating for effect here, but the struggle he describes is clear. One sees it quite distinctly in Umm Wilan’s portrait (1996) of working class women in Cairo. Her protagon- istic, the resilient Umm Ali, demonstrates for us the struggles of a Cairene mother holding her family togeth- er in a situation in which her husband is unemployed, rather ineffective, yet violent. Wiklan describes the intra- class and institutional survival of simple literacy, second, exploiting labor opportunities for women resulting in changes in the perception of gendered work; and third, the renegotiation of personal power and mobility within the family. The first two of these areas are direct outcomes of what it is that women are doing differently from the past, resulting in the introduction of a more powerful control tool they have held over women and also expecting women to hold different roles. The last category, the renegotiation of personal power and mobility within the family, is a direct result of the first two. Because of women’s increased competencies, men are also realizing that women do not need them as much as in the past, and that it is possible for women to now be self-reliant. Needless to say, this creates ample confusion in a society where social norms still revolve around honour and respect as there is a discernible increase in men’s fear of what uncontrolled, qualified women might do (p. 135).

Uncontrolled, qualified women, indeed. What Weiss leaves to our imagination is the psychic effect this all has on men. She speaks of men’s fears, and of husbands’ desires to control their wives. She tells us of a reduced level of trust among men, even among biological and fic- tive kin, due to increased corruption. She even tells us that men are beginning to abandon their families, through divorce, labor emigration, and drugs. But since this article is about women, the analysis of men ceases at that point. I read between the lines of a profound disso- ciative failure of an old trusted gender ideology; masculi- nity is in tatters, manhood is in flight. Once again, women seem to bear the burden of survival, even in the face of a new permission to challenge their self- actualization. There has of course been a strong conser- vative reaction to social changes in Pakistan, even as Benazir Bhutto served as prime minister, and as head of one of the largest political parties. But we can see in Bhutto’s own changes over the years, during which she took to wearing ‘modest dress’ and tempering her Western ways, to counter the demands limiting illness to their self- actualization. There has of course been a strong conser- vative reaction to social changes in Pakistan, even as Benazir Bhutto served as prime minister, and as head of one of the largest political parties. But we can see in Bhutto’s own changes over the years, during which she took to wearing ‘modest dress’ and tempering her Western ways, to counter the demands limiting illness to their self- actualization. There has of course been a strong conser- vative reaction to social changes in Pakistan, even as Benazir Bhutto served as prime minister, and as head of one of the largest political parties. But we can see in Bhutto’s own changes over the years, during which she took to wearing ‘modest dress’ and tempering her Western ways, to counter the demands limiting illness to their self- actualization. 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enormous efforts to escape the prisons of femininity and sex-roles defined and guarded by the guardians of sharia. The Islamic regime has not opened the gates. Women are jumping over the fences” (quoted in Najmabadi 1986, p. 59).

In one of the great ironies of unintended consequences, it appears that the Islamic Revolution in Iran has freed women from some of the restrictions of the past. The imposition of modest dress notwithstanding, the Islamic regime has brought about an expansion of the appeal of advanced education and employment from women from middle classes to working class women who are observant Muslims. Segregation of men and women has increased the need for professional women to serve the female population (Esffarian 1997). Again, as in Pakistan, the “new Islamic woman” has carried the day. Ex-President Khomeini’s daughter Faezeh Hashemi has even been quoted as saying, “What I want to know is, what prevents a woman from becoming the President of the Islamic Republic?” (Afshar 1998, p. 63).

And if the Iranian women interviewed by Haleh Esffarian (1997) are any indication, there has been a great reduction in women’s respect for men as the Islamic Revolution unfolded.

In general, if the comments of these women are any guide, respect for men’s competence, good sense, fairness—has sharply declined. The idea of men as “natural” leaders in politics, business, and public affairs has been discounted. Women are much more likely to see men as full of swagger and bravado, but empty shells when it comes to displaying real courage and backbone in crises. Women feel far more independent than before the revolution. This is why women far less dependent on their husbands (p. 172).

It seems as if this particular façade of Sharia-based ‘reform’ ‘revolution’ masculinity has been truly pierced by women’s intelligence and drive. And it seems that this has happened regardless of the policies of individual governments. I wonder what the ultimate Islamic Reform will consist of—perhaps it (though there are likely to be multiple forms) will be a reformation of the sexual order within a modernized Islamic frame. We shall see.

So we’re back once again where we began. Each path we take into the literature on gender relations in the Middle East and North Africa leads us to extensive material on what has been happening to women in families, schools, and workplaces. Each scholar or analyst finds plenty of material to explicate the ways men and women see this process; in other words, women are present in the writing and are being interviewed, not rarely, as she first suspected, to cloak their deeper, essentially patriarchal values. In the process of puzzling over this, she discovered the work of Bob Connell (1987), whose work in hegemonic masculinity is the standard framework for identifying the multiplicity of masculinities in any given socio-cultural system. Kandyoty was forced to return to the data about men’s upbringing in the classic Arab household for clues to the puzzle of such variations. Examining Boudihna’s work: Sexuality in Islam (1985), the novel of Egyptian Naib Mahfoud of the series of recent interviews from Turkey, and a study of one homosexual subculture in Istanbul, she came to an interesting conclusion:

I was also intending to make a strong case for situating masculinities—however fragmented and variegated they may appear—in historically and culturally specific contexts which delimit and to some extent constrain the range of discourses and choices available to social actors. . . . I learned in the process that behind the enduring facade of male privilege lie profound ambiguities which may give rise to both defensive masculinist discourse and a genuine desire for contestation and change (p. 212).

Kandyoty provides for us a model of moving beyond the expected, and showing how male is equipped with patriarchal masculine and masculine as seen as uniform, to a method in which the particular historical and cultural conditions of a gender construction are examined, in which men are expected to demonstrate variations even in a unique historical and cultural situation. It is the direction we need to go to do much more work, and I am hoping many more anthropologists are willing in the wings to study this obviously needed area. The state of the world seems to hang in the balance. While I would argue it is equally essential to study the Texas-Kennebunkport-Washington Nixon connection, it is going to take a great deal of effort to show the wider public (particularly in the U. S.) that Muslim males are not the new danger, tumultuously reconstituted as an archetypal reflection of the African-American male of the post-slavery South. For men in the Middle East are facing the same crises and dislocations as others male worldwide, and, while their religious and other cultural heritage may lead them to some unique solutions, it is singularly inappropriate to construct an elaborate false image of a unitary Muslim male, designed to cloak our own aggressiveness, our own insecurities, and our own collective denial and disregard for the impact of our nation’s actions upon the world.

End Notes

1. This term, as used by Hawley and Proudfitt, is easily challenged. As is argued below, fundamentalism has become a creative response to the modern world that is only “antimodern” in certain very delimited ways, especially as modern is seen as a subset of Western, American, and capitalist influences, rather than a function of modernity itself. In that sense, all non-Euro-American versions have gone a step beyond the original US-based movement.

2. See Fanon’s A Dying Colonialism (1965) in a chapter entitled “The Algerian Family.” While aware of the impact of colonialism and the war for liberation on family relationships, he remains pre-gender, so to speak, by leaving masculine and feminine in the realm of what is natural.

3. As Robert Bellah, there is nothing specifically “Islamic” about this interlinkage of women and cultural values; it can be argued as a near universal.

4. Matthew Gutman (1997), “In ‘Backfiling in Islam: The Anthropology of Male Dominance’ had this to say: “Insufficient attention has been paid to men-as-men in anthropology . . . and much of what anthropologists have written about masculinity must be inferred from research on women and extrapolations from studies on other topics” (288).

References


The Turban, The Tarbush, and The Top Hat: Masculinity, Modernity, and National Identity in Interwar Egypt

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On October 29, 1932 a major celebration was organized at Ankara Palace in honor of Turkish Republic Day. The Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal had invited foreign dignitaries and the local elite to the evening festivities. Among the distinguished invitees was the Egyptian ambassador to Turkey, Abd al-Malik Hamza Bey. He arrived dressed in his formal regalia topped off by the symbol of Egyptian (and up to 1925, Turkish) officialdom—the tarbush.1 Ataturk coldly greeted the Egyptian representative and ordered him to remove the tarbush while in his presence. When Hamza Bey hesitated, Mustafa Kemal barred an order to one of his servants to demand from the guest his tarbush. In order to avoid a diplomatic incident, Hamza Bey acceded to the will of “the Gazi.”

In spite of the Egyptian diplomat’s effort to avoid controversy, the event did escalate into an incident through it, it seems, the provocation of the British press. Two weeks after the fact, the Daily Herald carried a report detailing the affair faced by the Egyptian ambassador in Ankara. It was only with the publication of that article that the Egyptian press and public came to learn about “the tarbush incident.” Suddenly there appeared calls for action including the severing of all relations with Turkey. The incident was immediately framed as a question of national honor.

The prominent Egyptian historian Yunan Labib Rüks has recently surveyed the coverage of “the tarbush incident” as it was reported by Egypt’s leading newspaper al-ahram.2 Although he suggests that there were different “swords of opinion in Egypt”—i.e., pro- and anti-tarbush—the possible meanings of these positions are subsumed by the larger, ostensibly more significant, story of Egyptian-Turkish relations since World War I. In this essay, I too will situate the positions staked out in the tarbush incident within a larger narrative, but the beginningting and end are less clear and the main themes are internally incoherent. I will take debates about dress as a lens through which to view the shifting, contradictory, and contested nature of notions of national identity, modernity, and masculinity in the making of Egypt.3 Since the tarbush incident was instigated by him, one possible beginning would look to the figure of Atatürk. Mustafa Kemal’s efforts to forcefully westernize Turkey are well known; among his most famous dictates are the banning of the veil and the codification of a secular state. Perhaps less well known is his banning of the tarbush in

November 1925. 1 In Egypt, however, this act touched off a flurry of open discussion on the deities of the tarbush that lasted well over a decade.

The personal decision of Mustafa Kemal which continue to animate cultural and political life in contemporary Turkey came on the heels of other monumental and world-historical events, the aftermath of which, the region and the world in general continue to endure. At the end of World War I, France and Britain had divided up between themselves the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire that they had effectively colonized—Syria and Lebanon went to France while Palestine and Iraq went to Britain. 2 The Treaty of Sevres in 1920 had severely undermined the sovereignty of the defeated Ottoman state. Meanwhile, a national army of resistance was being assembled in the Anatolian heartland by Mustafa Kemal. Over the course of the next three years, they engaged in an exercise of military will and through diplomatic negotiations, the dissident faction led by Mustafa Kemal successfully procured the Treaty of Lausanne (July 24, 1923), which affirmed Turkey’s national sovereignty and control of most of the territory that had been lost in 1920.

The events unfolded in the international theater from 1914 into the 1920s, particularly those involving the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Turkish Republic, had far-reaching but conflicting implications for the political and cultural spheres of life in Egypt. The British war effort had placed unprec¬ edented strains on the military, the majority of Egypt’s peasant population. The imposition of martial law and the stationing of imperial troops in Egyptian cities also had material and psychological repercussions on the middle and upper classes.

By the end of the War there was a unified political opposition to the continuation of the British occupation in Egypt. However, also by the end of the War the process of re-orienting Egypt’s elite cultural identity away from the Ottoman sphere—that had began, one could argue, with the emergence of a Western-educated middle class and a new landed Egyptian elite in the mid-nineteenth century—was finally complete.

Or, so it would seem as the Egyptian nationalist movement led by the Wafd staked out its claims to independence at the Paris Peace Conference. 3 Following on the heels of a thorough and unexpected mass uprising against occupation in 1919—forever emblazoned in nationalist historiography and still remembered in the Egyptian collective consciousness as the nationalist revolution of 1919—Egyptian leaders forged a national party that engaged in negotiations for three years. The British strategically and militarily declared Egypt independent on May 29, 1922, while preserving four areas in which it would continue to maintain control. 4 In the following years, Egyptian political life was marked by the promulgation of a constitution, which restricted some of the traditional prerogatives of the monarch and the British, and the ensuing struggle to establish a regularized form of parlia¬ mentary political life. As these struggles over the political sphere oscillated among the three poles—the Wafd, the King, and the British—other struggles were waged in the seemingly sexless cultural sphere, as seemingly trivial matters like the proper headdress for men.

Within these debates, the tarbush was simultaneously a sign of the modern and the traditional, the national and the foreign, the masculine and the effeminate. As the form of headdress worn mainly by a certain class of men—the effendiyya—the tarbush was the signifier of a problematic bourgeois masculinity. 5 In the 1930s, it became invested with the additional signification of being a consumer item supported by the mercantile apparatus of the tar¬ bush was a contested site for the production of new cultural meaning and a site through, or against, which new masculine desires and anxieties were expressed. In the con¬ tests over the tarbush, concepts such as the nation and the modern were invested with new and sometimes contra¬ dictory signification while simultaneously constituting new masculine subjectivities.

Here the re-definition of the relationship between Egypt and the British Empire was, once imperial language was re-framed with the different outcomes of their interna¬ tional and local struggles for national sovereignty. In the other version of the event with which we began this chapter, the Egyptian ambassador Abd al-Malik Hamza Bey was “given permission” by Mustafa Kemal to remove his tarbush for his own “dignified” and “military” purposes. The official line that formally closed the tarbush incident. Apparently it was very hot in the palace halls that evening, and Mustafa Kemal was simply being a gracious and thoughtful host, who knew that Egyptian diplomat¬ ical protocol required the wearer to retain the tarbush on his head until invited to remove it. After the initial outcry, in which there were voices calling for the severing of all ties with Turkey, representations of the tarbush incident largely reflected the views of the two camps that had emerged in the preceding years: the pro- and anti-tarbush camps. 6 Admiring the Turkish model of modernization, who were also generally anti-imperial, were waiting to voat for another explanation of the inci¬ dent. Supporters of the tarbush, which had become re¬ classification as the national symbol, as a particularly Egyptian nationalist symbol through its public expression of opposition to the British, read the incident as yet another example of Egypt’s Turkish-bred leaders com¬ promising its national honor. 7

Dress and National Honor: Prelude to an Argument 8

The question of national honor and dress in the Egyptian context is usually associated with the debates around veiling and the conditioning of women, which were set off by the publication of Qasim Amin’s Tahiri al-Mar’a (Women’s Liberation) in 1889. I argue that situating the question of dress within the broader contexts of colonization, modernity, and subject formation, which requires one to consider both men’s and women’s fashions, will give us a better understanding of how the early debates about the veil were initiated by masculine anxieties about power and self-rule (or the lack thereof). By the latter I do not merely mean the right to self-determination in a geo¬ politica l sense. I intend the added signification of governing one’s individual self according to a particular understand¬ ing of enlightened principles. Implicit within this rubric of self is also an intimation of the significance of having the right to wear a separate individual identity. This right, however, was often per¬ ceived and construed as a force pushing against the col¬ lective will and collective identity.

It was perhaps among the very Arab-speaking officer corps that was expanded during Saîd’s reign (1854-1863) that the first signs of such a separation between language and the Egyptian leadership were most evident. Although Egyptian peasants had been conscripted in large numbers in Muhammad Ali’s efforts to construct what was, in effect, a new class of soldiers, while most of the officers were Arab. It is true that the Egyptian army was one of those of the world in which officer corps was ethnic and religiously non-mixed; it was also true that the officer corps was, at least in terms of rank and status, largely composed of men from the Ottoman Empire.

In Ahmet Döleande’s work on this neglected period of Egyptian history (the reigns of Abbas and Saîd’s), he terms the “forgotten years,” he hints at how the rela¬ tion between the opening of new opportunities for the sons of Egypt’s rural notables in government and mil¬ itary service and the change of dress required, spoke to the transformation of self and cultural identity. 9

Although he does not put it in these terms, Döleande’s argument suggests that while the change in notions of po¬ litical correctness, as expressed through dress, was not viewed as a threat by the Ottoman-Egyptian elite nor as a basis for opposition by the aspirants to elite membership dur¬ ing the middle years, it did condition the funds and in thinking in terms of national identities. He concludes his chapter on how the social divide between the elite and non-elite was produced and represented through lan¬ guage, dress, etiquette, and modes of using and moving through space with a note on how the desire to cross that divide eventually gave rise to an oppositional con¬ sciousness. About the newly promoted and newly dressed, he writes:

“The tensions that existed between them [Arabic-speaking officers] and the other more senior officers constituted one of the main factors behind the events of the 1880s that led to the Ybori Revolt. At mid-century, however, they were still making their first steps up the ladder towards becoming full-fledged members of the Ottoman- Egyptian elites.”

So at mid-century a movement was clearly afoot, and it began with the symbolic crossing of the threshold of elite culture. A powerful image of this transformation of self that a change of fashion effected is given in the memoirs of Ali Mubarak. In this particular recollection, Mubarak recounts the story of his return home to his village of Birbinal after fourteen years of absence. He had arrived in his “French” military dress uniform complete with sash and sword at his side. The momentary lack of recognition by his mother due to his changed appearance serves to reaffirm for Mubarak that he really had transcended his peasant roots.

Another episode again reaffirms that the movement out of peasant garb to European-style military dress was one of personal transformation and, furthermore, a change that was viewed as positive. In a memoir of the era of Pasha (r. 1844-1854), in which Ali Mubarak was given the commission of schools’ inspector, the latter was also informed of the punishment for the failure to carry out his duties honestly. Along with being stripped of one’s rank and benefits was a form of public shaming. The guilty one would be made to wear the turban, and to live like a peasant. 10 After swearing to carry out his commission, Mubarak was accorded his new rank and decorated with the appropriate medals: a silver half-cres¬ cent moon and a gold star encrusted with three diamond stones. He closes this scene by telling the reader that he left feeling happy and content. 11

After the British occupation of Egypt, cultural issues such as dress and manners became politically charged issues in which it was often thought that the very essence of his Egyptian identity was being contested. The expanding
Another dimension emerges when the illustration is read slightly apart from the only signifying a "false strength." the striking of certain poses the body of the mimicking man is made to represent a new masculinity. The different picture boxes illustrate the repertoire a man must acquire to inhabit this new subjectivity, which, is it important to note, is not being rejected. Rather, the artist enquires a cautious meditation of women's new performance of masculinity. His objective is to encourage the reader to examine the reasons for European cultural, political, and economic hegemony. Missing from the boxes are scenes of productivity on the part of the exemplar of Egypt's future. Although the man in the galabiyya is in fact working, he is figured here as a representation of the past and in a sense as unrepresentative. In other words, the nation and modernity can only be achieved through this new figure of masculinity. However, an unexamined adoption of the signs of modernity, namely imitating i.e., an unsuccessful attempt at being modern—but poses grave risks for the imitator, like financial ruin.

A few months later, al-Ajyal (and as far as I can tell the same author) delved further into the topic of dress and mimicry and its implications for Egyptian society. In a style that might be characterized as misogynistic, in the author depicted men's imitation of European dress as harmful to himself, whereas, women's unbridled con- sumption of Western fashion—the focus of the second article—is drawn out as having apocalyptic consequences for the whole of Egyptian society. Men are admonished for affecting a Western style when they do so from a class position that cannot sustain such a habit and when that habit is not grounded in a deeper understanding of Western culture. What that deeper understanding might consist of second evident later in the analysis of women's consumption. But first, the material and meta-physical costs of being overly attentive to the adornment of the body is underscored with a poetic injunction from a "wise poet":

Oh servant of the body how you suffer in its service
Do you demand gain from what is a loss?
Attend to the soul and the perfection of the virtues
For you are by the soul not by the body human.

The poet contrasts the baseness of submitting to corpore- al desires with an ethical praxis that elevates man from the state of nature to a higher plane of existence. The author deplores the poem more as part of a strategic intervention into the present state of the Egyptian political economy in which cultural practices were deemed central to Egypt's subjugation and conversely its liberation.

The author goes on to offer a relatively sophisticated cri- tique of evolving consumption patterns among women, specifically in the realm of fashion, that threatens to undo the whole fabric of Egyptian society. An act as simple as wearing the corset could be "...a major cause leading to the ruin of many households, the fall of honorable fami- lies, have resulted in the disapperance of the household and the entire family's moral structure."

In fact, "the danger exceeds the limits of the imagination." As with the men who mimic the West, the problem is most germane to women of the "tabaft al-susita" (middle class).

The author's critique operates on three levels: the individ- ual, the family, and the nation-colony. He does this by making explicit the connection between household, national, and international economies. The author links the power of women that results from the desire of the wife or daughter) to imitate Western women with the continued subordination and exploitation of the Egyptian and Eastern economies by Europeans.

He faults the new generation of girls and women whose desire for fashionable European styles of dress lead them to make unreasonable demands on their fathers and hus- bands. He argues that the contemporary middle class woman is still under the impression that clothes make the individual special and set her above others of her sex. She does not realize that it is the rational woman (al-ma'ar’ al-ajya) who is made beautiful through her virtue and made whole through knowledge and refinement. Ostensibly, education would erode the competition for passion among women by exposing envy as a driving force of the competition and by teaching women to engage in more productive activities. The proof of this is found in the lives of their Western counterparts who are rational women and who are like Egyptian women in material terms. The author states that "not a single one of them lives beyond her means."

Many scholars have now studied the social and political implications of this re-scripting of women's domestic roles in national discourses of the late-nineteenth and early- twentieth centuries for Egypt. They have attempted to show how this redefinition of femininity was constitutive of a new national manhood-the discursive field I have labeled "the role of Egypt's women in their everyday life."

The "strange tricks" the author speaks of refers to the Western capitalist production of a consumerist desire that can override rational self and national interests. This magic is so powerful that it is even capable of getting Eastern women to endanger their physical well-being for the sake of fashion. He argues that most Western dress is unsuitable for Easterners, but this is especially true of the corset. He marshals scientific testimony to underscore the insalubrious nature of the corset.

It is thus the nationalist male's duty to demystify these crafty strategies intended to exploit, humiliate, and sub- domain of print culture-books, newspapers, and maga- zines—was a primary focus for the public representations of different viewpoints on matters of clothing and com- plement. A general fear in the 1890s-before the veil became the defining focus of cultural debate-was of the younger generation, who had come of age knowing nothing other than colonial rule, adopting Western styles of dress and self-carrriage without fully processing the lessons of European superiority.

In the July 3, 1897 issue of al-Ajyal [The Generations], an article titled "Blind Imitation" featured an illustration with six picture boxes depicting an urban flaneur type (or more accurately a faux flaneur type). He mixes and matches the different parts of the only two suits he owns so that it would seem he is wearing a new outfit each day. Each box depicts the young effendi in various poses as a part of a backdrop of an urban geography that would be familiar to the proper bourgeois. In the first box, he is standing at a street corner dressed in his mismatched suit and tambush with his cane tucked under his right arm. In the second, he is either to be contemplat- ing crossing the street or just idly observing the goings on within the shopping arcade on the other side. In the second box he is seated at an outdoor café dressed in a different combination. His left arm is perched on the table into which he leans resting his head in the palm of his hand, white small turbaned man boldly shaves his shoes, the expression on his face suggests he is lost in some private reverie. In the third illustration, he is juxtaposed with a man in a galabiyya and turban (it seems the same man from box two) who is attending a donkey while the effendi stands with his hands in his pockets with a cane slung over his right arm smoking a cigarette and casually. In box four he is paying off a carriage driver. In the fifth box he is having his picture taken. His pose is carefully drawn here: he is standing with his hand on the elbow which is supported by a stand (seemingly built for just that purpose) and in his hand are his gloves and cane; his left hand rests on his shoulder. His left leg is bent slightly and crosses his right in the front forming a forty-five degree angle. In the final box he is carrying one of his suits under his arm and preparing to enter a pawnshop.

The article offered the criticism that many young Egyptians "were under the illusion" that imitating the look and behavior of Westerners was tantamount to a genuine understanding of being modern and civilized. In fact, bankruptcy could be the only end to this superficial appropriation of Western styles of dress and life. Ostensibly, an Egyptian living within middle class means could not sustain the patterns of consumption that par- ticipation in the new urban culture demanded.
Reforming the basic conditions of life is what is important.

Abaza's first salvo against the Kemalist program for women's emancipation was personal. He attacks Mustafa Kemal's hypocrisy by pointing to his failed relationship with his wife, Latifa Hanım—a model of European-ness. He poits that despite Kemal's public proclamations, it was his wife's unveiling and her appearance in mixed company that led to the collapse of their marriage.

His next move assembles a list of European luminaries who also had cautioned against "permissive freedom for women." Some would find it interesting that Oscar Wilde appears alongside Bernard Shaw and Schopenhauer. Abaza emphasizes the impact of this "western" world-view on women, and his criticism of them is revealed in his use of "they" instead of "she". "All of our women, he says, have become European in their dress. According to Abaza, the change in dress is a change in life itself."

The fact that men's dress could also assume political significance is suggested in the Dar al-Уllum conference, in which was unfolding as Fikri Abaza and the editor of al-Ullum verbally sparred on the pages of their respective magazines. In 1926, the editor of al-Ullum went on strike demanding the right to substitute the turban and suit for the turban and robe. The Ministry of Education rejected their demand and ordered the students to return to their classes or face expulsion. The students ultimately complied.

That the students at the Arabic teacher's training college sought to alter their dress code is not terribly significant in its own right. This incident was perhaps the last time that the turban would feature as a site of public contention. The dispute between the Dar al-Уllum students and the Ministry of Ali Maher managed to retain public attention for the entire year. The discussions quickly fanned outwards to include the general question of national identity, which repositioned the debates around the turban and the hijab. The extinction of the turban, or at least its relegation to the sphere now understood as religious, seemed a foregone conclusion even for the self-designated Islamic press.

Reforming the basic conditions of life is what is important. Outward accoutrements that do not deliver or relate are best left on heads and bodies as an eternal mark of the renascent nation that has retained its traditional image, its special character. Then, the crucial factor becomes what is inside the head and chest, not what covers the head and chest.
al-Fath published a month later emphasized the local and national dimension of the problem, especially because the attack on the bridge was part of another development in Egyptian sectarian politics. After the Dar al-‘Ulum incident, a club named the Egyptian Medical Association (EMAs) wrote a letter to the Egyptian Medical Association in the form of a questionnaire seeking a scientific ruling on matters of dress.2 The EMAs reply caused a furor in the pro-turban camp.

The first question was about the health implications of wearing the turban according to the liberal opposition; the second was about the suitability of Western clothes for Egypt’s climate; and the last was regarding proper footwear.3 In all three instances, the EMA ruled that Western styles were superior to local ones. The turban was the major victim of the ruling as it was designated completely unsuitable for Egypt’s health. The pith helmet and brimmed hat were recommended as healthier alternatives.

We would like to point out on this occasion that the foreign observers who have settled in hot countries conducted numerous medical and scientific experiments before they arrived at the clothes that wear now, which are the most appropriate in terms of health for regions like these. This conclusion is also supported by several experiments carried out by respected members of this association.

In short, the Egyptian Medical Association categorically endorsed what could be called colonial fashion because it was a product of scientific testing.

This decision by an official but non-governmental body represented a clear signal that the liberal opposition was divided in its political representation in interesting ways. Ahmad Zaghlul, the brother of the nationalist hero Sa’d Zaghlul, staunchly denounced the decision and its pre- sumption to officiate in the matter in the first place.4 He begins his criticism by revising the events of that year and relating them to the present controversy as a series of distracting moves for the nation. He recounts the Dar al-‘Ulum incident and how it ended with the students returning to class humiliated after the Ministry of Education retrieved the liberal opposition and political representation. However, inspired by the Dar al-‘Ulum students, another group of students from government secondary schools began to clamor for the right to wear the hat instead of the turban. Unfortunately, in this instance, Sa’d Zaghlul himself gave advice to students:

The question of dress is a question of authentic national identity (‘awqaf mithl al-’idha). If we changed our own (style of) dress, we would change our national identity, and a people without a national identity are a people without life.

The author adds that there were also fatwas issued by at least religious leaders warning students of “evil consequences” if they changed completely to European dress.

So in that environment, Ahmad Zaghlul suggests, he was shocked by the irresponsible decision of the Egyptian doctors to endorse Western dress. That “environment” was ostensibly one in which the nationalist symbolic value of the turban was being undermined by unthinking youth who were playing into the hands of those who would deny Egypt a developed national identity—and “a people without a national identity are a people without life.” Ahmad Zaghlul’s incresivity at the action taken by the Egyptian Medical Association then was justified since, in a sense, the very existence of Egypt was at stake.

He continues his criticism by attacking the organization’s unrepresentative status especially with students of “evil consequences” if they changed completely to European dress.

The nuwwab the spokespeople of the nation, expressing its hopes and its pains. They know what is in its best interest and endeavor to satisfy it. At their head is the great leader Sa’d Pasha Zaghlul.5

So if there was in fact a public health concern around the turban, argues Zaghlul, it would have been the responsibility of the parliamentary Health Committee to research the matter and render a decision. But it is obvious, he continues, that this question of dress is not a public health concern. Instead, it was a public concern, Ansalan insists, for if the liberal opposition did not accept the EMAs conclusion about dress and climate, then clearly the turban was far superior to both the turbans and the brimmed hat, from the perspective of health (better at shielding against the sun or blow to the head) and in terms of practicality (can double as a pillow). In a harsher tone, Ansalan dismisses the freedom-to- choose argument as essentially ignorant and superficial.6 He says that those who maintain this position are in fact the least conscious of the way of life. It meant if to them the emulation of Westerners, then they should do so in all ways:

You did not think about your wretched peasant who suffers under the oppressive weight of sickness. You considered the fashion but did not consider the condition of the villages, their filth, and rampant illness. It is better for you to put aside this nonsense and work to uplift your nation....

Ahmed Zaghlul’s article was not just an attack on the advocates of the brimmed hat, it was a move by him to accomplish a number of tasks. The first move, in which he locates the EMAs decision within a series of contests by youth and intellectual heavyweights, was to highlight the juvenile nature of this constituency and their demands. By playing to these demands, the EMA not only devalued itself as an official body, but it also overstepped its bounds. Here is where Zaghlul makes his most significant intervention. The delimitation of a problem as “national” was the exclusive domain of the new parliamentary representatives, the nuwwab and the civic life of associations was thus confined to a consideration of questions deemed relevant by the one truly national body. This appropriation of territoriality was especially significant at the time since control of the state was contested by political parties, the monarch, and the British.

On this embattled political terrain, it is noteworthy that Zaghlul based his criticism of the hat proponents on a gendered concept of representation. The proper representatives of the nation and those deserving of representation were joined in forming a field of national manhood-identified in this instance around the symbol of the turban. Conversely, the detractors were rendered as lacking in nationalism and masculinity, and consequently, they were outside of representation as rejects of the nation.7

Shakib Ansalan also responded to the Egyptian Medical Association’s position.8 He begins by summarizing the construction of the health angle of the turban-hat dispute that had been presented alongside the EMA arguments in the August issue of al-Muqtataf.9 In short, the former had concluded that it did not really matter what was on one’s head since human adaptation to heat varied depending on numerous factors: most importantly geographica l and climatic factors, and also public custom, and Ansalan insists that even if the Westernized youth who lacked “national manhood” (al-‘umur wa al-qaym li al-mamlakah) or any ambition to become productive citizens, it was a waste of time. The nation had rejected them, recognizing them as a burden on her, it has left them to play and be merry.10

Then he turns again to censure and shame the doctors for humoring the trivial fantasies of this insufficiently masculine constituency while there were more pressing national health concerns to address...

Hezbollah is the legitimate representative of the people and the land and it is up to them to decide the fate of the nation. Thus, it is their decision. By questioning their motivation and casting them as poor organizers, the Westerner, Ansalan, like Zaghlul, was mainly based on the problem, Ansalan is ultimately ambivalent about the best course towards the unification of a national style of dress. He finds enforcement by the sword, like in Turkey, an undesirable model.

Interestingly, the article in the August issue of al- Muqtataf, which Ansalan cites above in dismissing the health benefits of wearing the brimmed hat, had also offered its own reading of difference, recognition, and the East-West divide that diverged markedly from Ansalan’s position.12 The author of “The Tarbush” or “The Hat” makes an argument about power and the institution of difference that intuits an understanding of the East as being on some levels a cultural construct—one with political ramifications. He suggests quite plainly that all of the political and personal question of dress emanates from a sense of powerlessness:

If it had been that we were in the position of power and prosperity and that the people of Europe and America imitated us in our food, drink, dress, and home furnishings, then it wouldn’t have bothered us if we were walking around baldheaded or wearing rags on our heads. But we are connected to peoples who have surpassed us in everything and who want to retain their distinctive identity. The answer is to put it in our dress. It is like the master of a house who does not want his servants to dress like he does.13

So here, it is the maintenance of cultural difference through the preservation of Eastern fashion that becomes an act more significant and dominant than the Western cultural identity. This is a significant difference between Eastern and Western ideological discourse, which is a complex one. The problem is the problem: the East and the West are different in their knowledge, wealth, transportation, household management and home furnishings. Even in terms of dress, the two different types are given as the last remaining frontier of the (male) body that separates “us from them.” Or so it would seem.

This author actually manages to extricate himself from the narrow confines of the cultural politics of headress to partially see the wider social world in which these debates were largely meaningless. Although he spits out

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This author actually manages to extricate himself from the narrow confines of the cultural politics of headress to partially see the wider social world in which these debates were largely meaningless. Although he spits out
the implications of his argument and suggests that switching to the hat would be logically the final move to achieve identity with the European male, a large social and demographic fact is allowed to intrude and to complicate. Essentially, in a country in which nine-tenths of the population, according to the author, had never made the switch to pants, jackets, and turbash, it was folly to expect a major change of fashion in a year or even several years. Furthermore, he is pesimistic about turbash-wearers switching to the hat in large numbers without the leadership of the king.

Ultimately, for this critic, cultural adaptation was a historian's process from which there was no escape for a nation that did not wish to be enslaved by another. Dress was an important subject on which cultural dependence and independence were simultaneously expressed; likewise, holding on to an inviolable and unchanging notion of Eastern fashion, which evinced a more basic attitude that was out of sync with the times, was tantamount to dependence and domination without end. Of course, how simply a shift in appearance could bring about social or political emancipation for the vast majority of Egyptians still wearing the qalabiyas and the turbash and working the fields is never addressed.

(A)Dressing Desire

Abd al-Razq’s article in the turbash and the hat was deemed such a significant national question by some that even the intimate engagements of prominent figures with fashion and identity were shared with the public. For example, Ali Abd al-Razq contributed a postscript analysis, to al-Siyasa al-Usbu’iyya of the Egyptian clothing debates from Paris.8 He begins the article titled, “Farewell to the Claim that for most people in the world dress was an issue of importance on par with food and drink, and possibly of even more importance. In his words, ‘he believes that only a minority would see in the issue of dress no significance whatsoever. By including the detractors, he makes clear from the start that not only in terms of meeting basic needs that dress commands attention but also as a contested cultural terrain.

Abd al-Razq continues by making explicit some of the ways in which dress assumes social, economic, and political significance in modern times. He argues that “the institutions of modern life” presuppose the importance of different styles of dress. In other words, each social context commands its own sartorial image, and conversely that image reflects a particular social context. This, he suggests, would come as no surprise to anyone who knows of the fashion houses (“buyut al-modal”) in the world’s capitals and of “their influence on our economic life, our character, and our customs.”10 Of course, all women, with “no difference between ages, colors, or class,” are members of this “madhhab” which accords fashion a central place in their lives. Men are slightly more differentiated in that there is a small minority, who are neither old nor young, who believe that clothes have absolutely no signifying value.

This group, according to Abd al-Razq, rejects all the previous social and political claims made on dress, and deny their transformative power that some like to accord to it. Essentially, ugly is ugly, violent is violent, ignorant is ignorant, and there is nothing that dress can do about it. They also oppose the connections made between nationalism and dress; since, the latter is ephemeral, a form that fluctuates with the fluctuation of time, the nation is beautiful and stable eternally. Finally, they find the ascription of religious significance to dress objectionable and misguided.

Abd al-Razq seems to be using this unnamed group of middle-aged men and their views on dress metaphorically, signifying a political position that is disconnected from its social and cultural bases. He suggests that the truth can be found between these extreme two positions, and that truth should be acceptable to both. The middle position between those who view dress as an issue of primary importance and those who deny it any importance - is it insisted that men should not be allowed to act as they wish or even think about the question of dress. In the name of mediation, Abd al-Razq is in fact staking out his own political and moral ground here. He argues that even if it is considered by most to be of great significance, men should concern themselves with other issues - ones that were ostensibly more pressing. He does not elaborate on how or by whom those other issues would be determined.

The rest of the article is a personal testimony through which he bids farewell to the turbash. He admits that this is a reversal of his own position and that the turbash’s extinction might in fact be a positive development; nevertheless, due to its meaning, the turbash is a “special position” in the social landscape and “beloved status in spirit,” it was deserving of a formal elegy. “Even if the departed Shaykh Muhammad Abd al-Razq had changed it, ” wrote Abd al-Razq, there was a time when it signified a kind of social and religious virtue.11 Furthermore, it held a “special place” in the life of the author and his family.

The “noble tradition” turath karim of the Abd al-Razq family is then briefly narrated to illustrate the grand heritage of which the turbash was an important symbol. Although he is nostalgic for that past time and sad that he would not be able to pass on the turbash to his sons as his ancestors had done before him, he acknowledges that the time had come for its retirement. This was true in part because the changing times had rendered the noble tradition of the turbash obsolete, and the turbash had been taken up by a class he alludes to as being composed of ignorant and violent types. So in a wistful tone, he brings his narrative to a close, literally bidding farewell to “the beloved turbash.”

Sheik Ali Abd al-Razq’s article on dress and the extinction of the turbash expresses a number of different concerns or anxieties about his society and the place of people like himself in it. Before turning to an analysis of these issues, it might be instructive to consider another personal testimony from a different perspective. Mahmoud Azmi’s story of switching from the turbash to the hat appeared in al-Hilal a year after Abd al-Razq’s article in al-Siyasa al-Usbu’iyya. Azmi informs the reader that he was invited by the magazine to recount his personal narrative, of how he came to the holding of this interesting hypothesis: the bolter which narration presents a version of the history of the turbash/what controversy that takes the reader from the turn of the century to the author’s present, 1927.

Azmi writes that the social and political significance of dress first occurred to him during his boyhood years as a student in secondary school. He remembers it at the time when everyone was talking about Qasim Amin’s recently published books on women and the veil. After listening to numerous opinions on the books and then reading them for himself, he became a staunch opponent of the veil. He recalls that he was mainly opposed to the veil because of its foreign origin and its introduction to Egypt through colonial hands. His thinking on the issue was guided by two questions: What constitutes modest dress and what dress is Egyptian in material and make.

Early in the century the same sort of concern for properly national attire some began to push against the turbash. According to the author, his father, observing his son’s interest and called for a return to the ancient Egyptian headdress. He remembers himself being driven by similar reasons to replace the traditional hat, symbolizing a powerful nationalist sentiment in doing so. However, as his understanding of nationalism changed while studying in Paris, so too did his attitude towards dress.12

In France, the author learned that nationalism was a “feeling of pride” that one should hold within oneself and not “spread on his surface.”13 Hence, the symbolic value of fashion was reconfigured for Azmi along an internationalist cultural axis. He was inspired at that time, he writes, by the prevailing concept of inclusion (al-tadamun), and he felt that dress was one of the most visible sites expressing this new attitude.

According to Azmi, this kind of cultural fusion was very obvious in Egypt. Over time, Egyptians on a popular level had borrowed all manner of dress from different cultures. There was, however, one item of foreign clothing that had been denied popular approval because it was the symbol of Ottoman tyranny - “the symbol of the power of Cairo and the autocratic Sultan.”14 This was the turbash. The turbash was not to remain forever a despised symbol. According to Azmi, the turbash was re-coded with the exact opposite signification through the course of the First World War. It was re-signified and re-politicized, Azmi argues, as the British imposed a protectorate on Egypt in 1914. The sudden declaration of Egypt as an unwilling supporter of the British war effort against the Ottomans had surprising ramifications on the popular level. Azmi does not mention the tremendous human suffering experienced by the majority of Egyptians during this time. Suddenly, it was interestingly, how the political landscape and preparing the grounds for the re-appropriation of the symbol of Turkish despotism as a distinct sign of Egyptian nationalism.

Azmi does describe, however, an interesting relationship that emerged during World War I between the way Egyptians viewed the Ottoman-Circassian elite and the stigma attached to the hat. He suggests that those who switched from the turbash to the hat were trying to “fly from Ottomanism” and get closer to the British protectorate or avoid the hostility of Australian soldiers.15 He alludes to how this sartorial switching by the members of the ruling class were viewed by the masses as cowardice. This and their alignment with the Protectorate as seen as again became the reason that the turbash became the symbol of those expressing the popular will. In other words, by continuing to wear the turbash or not, was showing his willingness to defy openly the occupying forces and stand up to whatever “humiliation” he was subjected.

Azmi refers to the period following the war as a nada. It was through this renaissance-ostensibly tied to the new national consciousness embodied by the popular uprisings of 1919 that Egyptians came to see the turbash itself as reborn. It was re-imagined as a symbol of being “Eastern and Egyptian.” As the nada became a regular feature of everyday life institutionalized in Egypt’s new “constitution” and “representative” government, and as “freedom” became an important principle to all, as a sort of understanding was reached with the British, a new space for moderate public discourse emerged.

Within this space, Azmi continues, some began to revisit the question of modern culture, and thus the turbash again became a contested symbol. The medium in which these debates occurred was...
markedly different from the past. The most telling example of how much the times had changed was in the absence of accusations of blasphemy. In fact, there was change everywhere. Azmi cites the progress of women in their "liberation from the veil." He notes the advances made in Turkey and how there was no religious opposition, and throughout the lands there was a nahe and movements for independence.

In the Arab world there was also a split emerging which Azmi classifies as a choice: between Arab and modern. Some had come to the conclusion that attempts at finding common ground were futile because of the deep rift that existed between the past and the present of Islamic societies. He does not elaborate this further. He mentions the speed with which modern societies, especially those in the Arab countries, believed that with such a rapid pace of change, reconciling with the past was impossible. He writes that he himself had made the choice to draw on modern civilization; furthermore, he notes that it was a choice society as a whole needed to make.

After delineating the historical context and illustrating the social and political significance of dress, he finally narrates the actual moment of decision in which he switched from wearing the turban to the tophat. This autobiographical section is rare for this period because it publicly presents the intimate thoughts of a private person and was typically embarrassed on making a change in his physical appearance. It is also rare in that it gives the reader an exceptionally vivid view of what an agonizing process a seemingly simple act like choosing between two hats could be in 1920s Cairo.

Azmi writes that he had resolved in the summer of 1925 to dress turbans as a sign of his allegiance to the race. He announced to his friends and family that he would be switching to the bowler hat on the first of July. He says that many of them believed that they would have some time to adjust to the idea.

Then he describes in great detail the anxiety he was struck with when the day finally arrived for him to make the switch. As he approached the hat store on Qasr al-Nil Street, he noticed that his footsteps had become heavier and that moving forward was becoming increasingly difficult. When he finally reached the front of the store, he froze and found that he could not open the door much less enter. Eventually, he turned around and walked back in the direction he had come from. He writes: "I noticed that I had started to accuse myself under my breath of cowardice and of still being under the influence of al-khata'a al-vari'ahiyah.''

Expropriating the latter from himself and from society is deemed a significant and necessary step towards becoming modern. For Mahmoud Azmi, this project of overcoming the inertia of tradition and expunging the old took another full year. The admiral project was emblazoned onto the turban issued by the Egyptian Medical Association in the summer of 1926: "I headed directly the next morning to the office of July, 1926 to the hat salesman, and I bought a summer hat. And since that day I have been wearing the hat, alternating between different types depending on the season."

From the two reactions that Azmi relays here, it seems that his wearing of Western hats was received favorably, even lauded. One of his friends, whom he describes as a leading Arab writer and intellectual, said the following: Now the Easterners are beginning to think with their heads."

Another friend inspired to write in his own views on the headgear question. Azmi quotes from his article: 'The struggle is not between the turban, the tophat, and the bush, but rather it is a struggle between different structures of thought and taste (sunnah mukhtalifa min ta'far wa al-chafr) each of which wants to be dominant.' With that, this friend also sided with the Western hat and pronounced the turban and the tophat as outdated forms of headgear and, by extension, they symbolized obsolete forms of thought and taste.

The personal testimonies of Ali Abul al-Rai' and Mahmoud Azmi richly illustrate the complicated negotiations of a certain class of individuals with their sartorial presence in an Egyptian public sphere of the 1920s. They attest to a very conscious engagement with and production of a conceptual landscape, unearthing a modern Egyptian masculine subjectivity. They clearly take a different approach than choosing between the headgear to be worn, men were both insistens on its significance to a culture in terms of its image but even more so in its content. Also put into question was the passing of the turban because it no longer signified a virtuous life, and Azmi was ready to adapt the hat when it seemed to him that the turban no longer signified modernity, and the tophat was no longer signaling its Moroccan origin. It is a blinestone hat of red felt wool with a flat circular top and a tassel. Depending on the period, it varied in varying ground and flatness of style. The façade was mandated as official headgear for Muslim—except the —in the Ottoman Empire—of as broad clothing reforms decreed by Sultan Mahmud II in 1829. In Egypt, Mahmoud Ali had already dressed his soldiers in a version of the North African fazu for a centuries From the late to the mid-18th centuries, the tassel was an important sign of signifying its Moroccan origin. Azmi was thinking through the principles of the Enlightenment.

Ali Abul al-Rai’ formal farewell to the turban inscribes the passing of a world in which men of religious learning had represented moral and mediated political authority. The cultural landscape that Abul al-Rai’ surveys must necessarily foreclose a desire for the turban because its proper representation had been terminated by the social and political transformations of Egypt. Although he longs to pass on this symbol of a noble tradition to his heirs, the kind of masculine personhood metaphorically by the turban was no longer an ideal worthy of aspiration.

Mehmad Azmi’s mapping of his decision to take up the Western hat as the symbol of change, perhaps highlighted the modern as a steady progression toward a future utopia. The past is inscribed in his personal narrative as part of a forward-moving trajectory and a teleology, not as a site of loss. The self-sufficient individual is the desired subject position of Azmi’s narrative. It is a subject-position that is sustained by science and resisted by an irrational Eastern mind. His courage in overthrowing both the conservatism of his social milieu and his own internalized repression are publicly offered as testimony to the possibility of changing traditional tastes and frames of mind. Thus, the hat becomes the symbolic marker not only of modernity and the modern, but also of a possible future.

So when the turban incident came to the Egyptian public

END NOTES

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1. The use of “top hat” here is only for the purpose of aliteration: the actual hats in question at the time were versions of the bowler hat. Since there is not an extensive theoretical section to this essay, I offer the following brief explanation of terms. Modernist dress codes are often conceptualized as performative subject-positions as well as discursive fields with identifiable grassroots and official dimensions. However, in the process of merging these two concepts their particular content; therefore, it seems para-adoxical to illustrate the history of Islamic dress codes through an Arabic word mawazyla. It translated here as modern when it is used to signify a temporal phenomenon and as civilization when it is used to signify an ideological construction. The term is widely used on both of these thalas. This term is so vast now that even a partial bibliography cannot be provided.

2. The turban (al tarbush), as it is called in Egypt, is more commonly used in the religious context, typically signaling its Egyptian origin. It is a blinestone hat of red felt wool with a flat circular top and a tassel. Depending on the period, it varied in varying ground and flatness of style. The façade was mandated as official headgear for Muslim men—except the —in the Ottoman Empire—of as broad clothing reforms decreed by Sultan Mahmud II in 1829. In Egypt, Mahmoud Ali had already dressed his soldiers in a version of the North African fazu for a centuries From the late to the mid-18th centuries, the tassel was an important sign of signifying its Moroccan origin. Azmi was thinking through the principles of the Enlightenment.

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that the Egyptian state has never been able to effectively translate these discourses into practice. While the state has tended to rely on the ethnicization of religion, it has also often fallen victim to its own rhetoric, as the example of the Al-Mu'tasim Banco incident illustrates. The Banco incident, which took place in 1984, was a series of protests against the government's decision to relocate the tomb of the medieval Egyptian saint Ali ibn Khallal, known as the “Banco.” The government's decision to move the tomb was seen as an attempt to erase the religious and historical significance of the site, and it sparked widespread backlash among the Egyptian population. The incident highlighted the tension between the state and the people, as well as the challenges of managing religious and cultural heritage in a modernizing society.
Male Infertility, Masculinity, and New Reproductive Technologies in the Arab World

Marcia C. Inhorn, PhD, MPH

Introduction
 What is the relationship between male infertility and masculinity among Arab men, particularly as new reproductive technologies become increasingly available to couples in the Middle East? This attempt to answer this question by exploring the emerging theoretical literature on Middle Eastern masculinities, then turning to my own empirical research on male infertility among Arab men in three disparate settings. As I will argue here, male infertility may threaten Arab masculinities on numerous levels. Yet, in the age of powerful new reproductive technologies to overcome male infertility, the crisis of Arab manhood once posed by male infertility may be waning, in ways to be described in this article.

Infertility is classically defined as the inability to conceive after a year or more of trying, resulting in involuntary childlessness (Sciarra, 1994). On a global level, approximately eight to fourteen percent of all couples experience infertility at some point in their reproductive lives (World Health Organization, 1991). Of this global population of infertile people, it is estimated that between 29.4 and 44.1 million, or more than half the world’s infertile population, are Muslim (Serour, 1996). This is due to the large number of Muslim couples living in the so-called infertility belt of sub-Saharan Africa (Leonard, 2002).

Among the world’s infertile couples, male factors, involving primarily low sperm count (azoospermia), poor sperm motility (asthenospermia), defects of sperm morphology (teratospermia), and total absence of sperm in the ejaculate (azoospermia), contribute to more than half of all cases (Howards, 1995; Irvine, 1998). Yet, male infertility is a reproductive health and social problem that remains deeply hidden, including in the West. There, studies have shown male infertility to be among the most stigmatizing of all male health conditions (Becker, 2000; 2002; Greil, 1991; Van Balen, Verduinen, and Ketting, 1995). Such stigmatization is clearly related to issues of sexuality. Male infertility is popularly, although usually mistakenly, conflated with impotence, as both disrupt a man’s ability to impregnate a woman and to prove one’s virility, paternity, and manhood (Webb and Daniluk, 1999).

Imagining Infertile Arab Masculinities
 One of the major reasons that male infertility is important to manhood is that men often deem paternity an important achievement and a major source of their masculine identity (Bledsoe, Guer, and Lerner, 2000; Guer, 2000).

Thus, the inability to produce biological offspring may come as a striking blow to men’s sexual identities, with far-reaching implications for the construction of masculinity.

The relatively small body of Western scientific literature on men and reproduction suggests that male infertility can have these kinds of masculancing effects (Moynihan, 1998; Webb and Daniluk, 1999). Both infertility and its treatment have been reported in the West to result for some men in impaired sexual functioning and dissatisfaction, marital communication and adjustment problems, interpersonal relationship difficulties, and emotional and psychological distress (Abby, Andrews, and Halman, 1991; Daniluk, 1988; Greil, 1997; Greil, Porter, and Letko, 1990; Nachtigall, Becker and Woyny, 1992; Van Balen and Timboos-Kemper, 1994). Yet, it is very much an empirical question whether the effects of male infertility on men’s sense of masculinity are culturally invariant; the topic has been even less researched in non-Western sites.

Little if any social scientific research has explicitly focused on the subject of male infertility among Arab men; however, there is evidence to suggest that male infertility may pose a crisis of masculinity for men in the Arab world. On the social structural level, men living in pronatalist Arab communities are expected to have children, as reflected in the relatively high marriage and fertility rates across the region (Population Reference Bureau, 2004). Arab men achieve social power in the classic patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilocal, endogamous extended family (Eickelman, 1998; Joseph, 1993, 1994, 2000; Kandyoty, 1988; Moghadam, 1993) through the birth of children, especially sons. If male infertility is the result of some incapacitation to the future (Delaney, 1991; Inhorn, 1996; Obermeyer, 1999; Ouzgane, 1997). “Intimate selving” in Arab families (Joseph, 1993, 1994, 1999) whereby men assume patriarchal power in the family not only with advancing age and authority, but through the explicit production of offspring, who love and nurture, and also dominate and control. Thus, in this region of the world, which “with some truth, is still regarded as one of the seats of patriarchy” (King, 2000, p. 8), men who do not become father patriarchs through physical and social reproduction may be deemed weak and ineffective (Lindfors, 1994), and may be encouraged to divorce or take additional wives in order to contribute to the patrilineage and to prove their masculine virility (Inhorn, 1996).

But what are the implications of male infertility for masculinity per se in the Arab world? As with male infertility, relatively little is known about the social construction of Arab masculinity, which is partly why a recent volume dedicated to this subject has been entitled Imagining Masculinities (Ghossoub and Sinclair-West, 2000).

Most of the social scientific literature to date has exam...
in the ways in which Middle Eastern men are subordi-
nated to Arab masculinity (Ali, 1996, 2000) or by the hierarchical and often humilitating relationships within all-male institutions such as the military (Kandiyoti, 1984, 1994). Yet, a repeating theme in the small but growing literature on Arab masculinity is one of homosocial competition between men in the realms of virility and fertility, which are typi-
cally correlated (Ali, 1996, 2000; Lindsfarne, 1994; Ouzgane, 1997). According to Ouzgane, a scholar of contemporary Arabic literature, virility emerges as the “essence of Arab masculinity” in the novels of some of the region’s most eminent writers (Ouzgane, 1997, p. 3), with men in these stories both distinguishing themselves, and being distinguished from other men, through the fathering of children, and especially sons. If this is, if fact, the case, as much of the literature from this region sug-
gests, then the experience of male infertility for an Arab man can only be “imagined” as an extremely threatening and emasculating condition, particularly in a world where the performance of masculinity is homosocially competi-
tive and even when men did maintain their public images as “powerful, virile” patriarchs (Ouzgane, 1997, p. 4; see also Delaney, 1991).

Male Infertility in the Age of New Reproductive Technologies

Given this historical background, I became intrigued by the question of how male infertility relates to masculinity among Arab men, and I decided to explore the question through semi-structured interviews. Over the past 20 years, I have stud-
ied infertility in the Middle East, primarily in Egypt and
primarily among women seeking infertility therapy (Inhorn, 1994, 1996, 2003a). Viewing the consequences of infertility primarily through women’s eyes, I have shown how wives suffer some of the conse-
quences of their husbands’ infertility, in terms of repro-
ductive experiences, family planning, and the consipa-
cies of silence over male infertility and sexual dysfunction, and marital disruption, including in some cases male-
iatized divorce (Inhorn, 2003a). Infertility, I discovered, is a sensitive and often embarrassing topic among a sizable proportion of Arab men, and I had been told anyone, including their closest family members, that they suffered from male infertility. Male infertility was described as essentially a “private” subject for the Egyptian man, who would ne-
cessarily feel ana mish raag: “I am not a man”-if others
were to know that he was the cause of a given infer-
tility problem.

In addition, many of these infertile Egyptian men had suf-
f ered through multiple harrowing infertility therapies. Traditional biomedical therapies to overcome male infer-
nity, which include surgeries for varicoceles (varicose-
type dilations of the veins in the testicles) and estrogen-
containing hormonal drugs, are widely prescribed by physicians who specialize in men’s reproductive and sex-
ual problems in the Arab world (Inhorn, 1994, 1996). How-
ever, these therapies have been heavily criticized in the West for being largely unproven, ineffective, and rife
with unpleasant side effects, including effeminizing hot
flushes, breast enlargement, and fat deposition in the thighs and buttocks (Devoe et al., 1998; Howard, 1995; Kamischke and Nieschlag, 1998). In short, male infertilit y is often as intrinsically to treatment in the Arab world as it is in the West, leading to a condition of irre-
versible sterility and unwanted side effects for most infer-
tile men and their wives.

However, a new reproductive technology called intra-
uterine sperm injection (ICI, pronounced “ik-see”), has
promised to change all of this. First developed in Belgium in 1992, ICSI is a variant of IVF that has allowed thousands of severely infertile men to father children with their wives and participate in one step of conception retrieved from an infertile man’s body-including through painful testicular biopsies or aspirations-this sperma-
tozoa can be captured directly into the ovum with the aid of a micromanipulator and a high-powered microscope, thereby forcing fertilization to occur (Devoe et al., 1998). Despite relatively low efficacy, this new treatment option at least a subset of treatment-seeking Arab men, it is important to point to wider societal views of male infertility that undoubt-
dedly still affect many Arab men who are infertile. As one Lebanese man who was pursuing ICSI reminded me:

In Lebanon, yes, male infertility does affect manhood. Men don’t want to admit they can’t have children. They’re not men any more. But this is not the view of people inside treatment. People who are “in” know it is a medical problem. So we don’t feel this problem of man-
hood or womanhood.

In other words, because I was interviewing treatment-
seeking men, many of whom had been infertile for years and had accepted their infertility as a God-given medical con-
dition, it was easier for me to discover that many men in the region recognized the fact that they were infertile. The majority of Lebanese men in my study were highly educat-
ed, with at least a high school diploma and many with advanced degrees. “Career men,” many of them had spent considerable time outside of the country, including in the West. Many of these men had educated, nonindustrialized, and liberal IVF clinics as “career couples.” Presumably higher levels of education and satisfaction with professional careers may have offset the potential effects of emasculation and contributed to men’s acceptance of a medical model of male infertility.

Having said this about the men who did agree to speak with me, it is extremely important to say something about those about men who did not. Indeed, a significant (although undetermined) percentage of men who were asked to participate in my study declined to be interviewed, even after careful description of the benefits of the study and its guarantees of confidentiality. Reasons for refusal, if given, were of three general types: “not in the mood to talk,” “not enough time” (even though most men spent hours in the clinic waiting for their wives to complete ICSI proce-
dures), and other “medical reasons” (i.e., a secret not to be shared even in a confidential interview). This issue of male non-response, first noted by Lloyd (1996) among men in Western infertility studies, may mean many things in Lebanon. According to most of the Lebanese IVF physicians, clinic staff members, non-
residents in my study, male infertility was a sensitive and taboo issue—namely, the sensitivity and “shyness” of most Lebanese men to reveal their reproductive problems to anyone. I was told that some men refused medical treatment because they did not want to admit they were infertile, that male infertility is, on some level for some Lebanese men, deeply humiliating-something to be hidden rather than to be made public. However, I found that many of these men who did not come to the clinic to receive treatment for male infertility were not at all embarrassed or ashamed of their infertility. In fact, I was often impressed by the willingness with which they discussed their male infertility problems, and it seemed that many infertile Egyptian men had taken this idiomatic to heart, feeling that they were somehow weak, defective, abnormal, and even unworthy as biological parents. However, more than once, I was told anyone, including their closest family members, that they suffered from male infertility. Male infertility was described as essentially a “private” subject for the Egyptian man, who would ne-
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were to know that he was the cause of a given infer-
nity problem.

The study produced some fascinating findings, es-
especially surrounding the effects of the Lebanese civil war on reproductive disruption (Inhorn, 2004).

In terms of masculinity, however, the findings were rather surprising and unexpected. Most of the men who agreed to participate in my study stated with conviction that male infertility “has nothing to do with manhood,” insisting that they had never equated their own infertility with feelings of masculinity. Although some men explained that the general public might view male infertility in this way, they insisted that male infertility is a medical problem—“like any other medical condition” and thus should not represent a crisis of masculinity, nor a conspiracy of silence.

Indeed, ICSI seems to have given infertile Lebanese men new hope that their male infertility problems can be over-
come through technological means. In other words, the arrival of ICSI in Lebanon—and the aggressive advertising of ICSI by many Lebanese IVF clinics—has opened the
way to both medicalize and normalize male infertility, leading to increasing openness about this reproductive health prob-
lem. For infertile men who have reached Lebanese IVF clinics, many have adopted a medical model of infertility that serves to diminish feelings of impaired masculinity. As a result, many of these men have told their friends and relatives that they “may be sterile.” In spite of this, many of these men, those who did seek medical treatment and expressed a desire to treat their infertility, said that they were not at all embarrassed or ashamed of their infertility. In fact, I was often impressed by the willingness with which they discussed their male infertility problems, and it seemed that many infertile Egyptian men had taken this idiomatic to heart, feeling that they were somehow weak, defective, abnormal, and even unworthy as biological parents. However, more than once, I was told anyone, including their closest family members, that they suffered from male infertility. Male infertility was described as essentially a “private” subject for the Egyptian man, who would ne-
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nity problem.
supportive wives and family members, and idiocyncracies in the androgyny theory. Thus, it so, a number of men in my study did feel to feelings of emasculation and “differentness,” and spoke of their “shock,” “sadness,” “frustration,” and “insecurity.” And one infertile man who was a pediatrician, explained:

“Manhood. It’s really an important factor in society. I know this as a pediatrician. The first thing people ask for at the first baby visit is to check the [male] baby’s reproductive organs. They’re worried from the first moment of life if [the child] has normal reproductive organs, and if he will have a normal sexual life. It’s about his future manhood. It’s a strong feeling. And it’s a deficiency if you can’t have children. I do think people feel this. I would assume they do, because it’s a secret kind of thing, male infertility. In my own case, who knows about this [his infertile problem]? My wife doesn’t want anyone to know. So we came here [to the IVF clinic] in secrecy.”

Future Directions for Research

Clearly, male infertility is a condition that rebounds on Arab masculinity in important ways. Because neither male infertility nor masculinity have been well studied around the globe, including in the Arab world, the potential for future research in this area is great. This is especially true in the era of the new reproductive technology called ICSI, which has spread around the globe and has reached the flourishing private IVF industry in the Middle East. Because ICSI represents the first real solution to male infertility, it has the potential to overcome infertility among millions of Arab men. This research examines the effects on masculinity that are produced.

Already in Egypt, Lebanon, and in many other Middle Eastern countries, ICSI has helped thousands of men to overcome their male infertility, fathering healthy babies with their own unhealthy sperm. As shown in my studies described above, the emasculation of male infertility evident in Egypt in the mid-1990s is giving way to improved feelings of technological confidence among Lebanese men who are accessing ICSI in the new millennium. In Lebanon, many infertile men in IVF clinics have begun to view male infertility as a simple medical condition that can be overcome through technological means. Thus, the effects of male infertility on masculinity are no longer considered as important in light of this new medical-technological solution.

Having said this, it is extremely important to point out that ICSI will remain out of reach of many infertile men in Arab countries. Not only is the technology expensive - between U.S. $2,000-$5,000 per trial of ICSI in most Middle Eastern centers - but the insurance industry has been uneven in the Arab world. For example, where as Lebanon has approximately 15 IVF centers for a population of 3 to 4 million people participating in my study, I will find a handful of IVF centers, leading hundreds of infertile Syrian men to cross the border each year in pursuit of ICSI in Lebanon.

Similarly, Arab men in the Western diaspora often choose to return to the Middle East to search for affordable ICSI. In the U.S., a single cycle of ICSI can cost between $10,000-$20,000, and is usually not covered by health insurance. In my ongoing study of male infertility in the Arab-American community of southeastern Michigan, I found the second largest diasporic population (estimated at 200,000 to 300,000) of Arabs outside of the Middle Eastern region (Hassoun, 1999; Hudson et al., 1999). I am finding that many infertile Arab immigrant men are poor political and economic refugees from Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. Almost all of them have come to the U.S. over the past ten years, have variable English-speaking skills, and are employed in working-class service jobs (mostly in restaurants and gas stations) without health insurance benefits. As a result, they have few financial resources to pursue diagnosis and treatment for male infertility, and particularly ICSI, which is usually presented as the “only hope” to overcome their infertility. This fact is very demoralizing to this population of recent Arab immigrant men, who often ask whether ICSI can be performed effectively in the Middle East and whether it is less costly there. Clearly, future studies of male infertility among Arab men are needed to examine the ways in which the actual costs of ICSI services - including accessibility to non-elites by virtue of partial state subsidization (as is being tried in some clinics in Egypt) or partial insurance coverage (as is being tried among some professional syndicates in Lebanon) - affect infertile Arab men’s sense of hope for these technologies, as well as their feelings of masculinity.

Indeed, in my current Arab-American study, diminished masculinity seems to be more pronounced for recent immigrant men than among the men I interviewed in Lebanon. Perhaps economic and social marginalization in the U.S., coupled with a male infertility diagnosis, leads to synergistic feelings of emasculation. Furthermore, many of the men in my Arab-American study are newly-diagnosed cases, who have yet to come to terms with the meaning of male infertility in their lives. Perhaps in my current study I am beginning to capture some of the secret feelings of emasculation that were beyond my reach in Lebanon, due to the high non-response rates of infertile men. Perhaps, too, in a U.S. setting, when childlessness is considered a woman’s issue, male infertility is not as socially acceptable, if not always desirable, non-response rates are lower, because Arab men feel more comfortable speaking with a researcher about their infertility, including their feelings of lost manhood. Perhaps over time, as more Arab-American men of diverse backgrounds and cultures begin to participate in my study, I will be able to assess how Middle Eastern masculinities can change in a diasporic Western setting, where the very definition of manhood, at least in the society as a whole, may be less bound to the achievement of patriarchal fatherhood (Van Balen and Ihsom 2002). Do Arab-American men, especially those who are second- or third generation immigrants, continue to equate fertility with manhood? Or do they forge new meanings of manhood in a society where paternity and fatherhood may be redefined? These are research questions that I hope my study will eventually answer.

END NOTES

“Acknowledgments: I want to express my gratitude to the numerous men and women in Egypt, Lebanon, and Dearborn, Michigan, who have spoken to me about their infertility and reproductive lives. I am also grateful to numerous IVF physicians, nurses, and staff members, who have helped me to recruit patients into my study, as well as to research assistants who have helped with transcription and translation when needed. In Lebanon, I am grateful to the American University of Beirut for providing me with an institutional affiliation. This research has been generously supported by the National Science Foundation and by several Fulbright research grants. Ideas developed in this manuscript also appear in my recent book, Local Babies, Global Sciences: Gender, Religion, and IVF in Egypt (Routledge, 2003) and in a forthcoming manuscript on “Middle Eastern Masculinities in the Age of New Reproductive Technologies: Male Infertility and Stigma in Egypt and Lebanon,” in Medical Anthropology Quarterly (Vol. 18, No. 2, 2004).

Although I was initially reluctant, as a female researcher, to conduct a study exclusively on male infertility in the Arab world, Arab male colleagues convinced me that it might be easier for an Arab man to speak about his reproductive troubles with a female researcher than with a male, given the homosocial competition over fertility that marked Arab societies. I may have affected my ability to speak with some Lebanese and Syrian men during the U.S. invasion of Iraq. I have written about this in a forthcoming article on “Privacy, Privatization, and the Politics of Fertility: Negotiating Challenges to Reclaiming the Secret World of Middle Eastern, Hospital-Based In Vitro Fertilization” (Social Science & Medicine).”

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New Constructions of Masculinity: Understanding the Dynamics of Conflict: Insights from the Case of Algeria

I would like to begin by discussing a well-known Algerian film, Omar Gatlato made in the late 1970s by the director Merzach Allouache. Omar Gatlato refers to the expression gatlatu al-rujula literally ‘machismo killed him’. The film affectionately highlights male posturing and alienation (Allouache 1976). It was made during a more stable and prosperous period in Algeria’s history, but it illustrates the problems facing young men at the time, and suggests ways in which the situation would later develop. The central character in the film is Omar. In a semi-documentary style, Omar recounts his daily life in the Bab el Oued neighbourhood of Algiers. What Omar says, and the camera shows are two quite different stories. While he dresses himself carefully we discover that he is still living with his parents, grandfather and sisters (some unmarried, another divorced) in a tiny flat. He has an unpressured bureaucratic job in the service des fraudes but it lacks direction. We see the demoralised routine of office life, casual and liberal phone calls, reading the sports sections of the newspapers, and the occasional raid on (female) illegal street traders in jeweller. The overwhelming impression we are given of the ineffectiveness of these men’s lives. So during the raid the men escape sanction and reprimand the bureaucrats for interfering in their attempt to earn a living. Omar’s close circle of friends, other young men like himself, look longingly at young women from a distance: Omar sees one woman he likes on his way to work everyday. As she shaves bedding from her window, they exchange discreet signs of recognition. But his male circle of friends is his mainstay and they spend their leisure time together listening to chaba and hindou music or attending football matches. When Omar loses his prize possession, a tape recorder, in a street robbery, he buys a replacement ‘hot’ from a friend. Unknown to his friends, it contains a cassette with a short message from a woman. He is fascinated by what she says about her life and despair, and he discovers that she works in the same office as he. He arranges to meet her but after an enormous build-up in which he gets drunk and finally manages to stand in his best suit on the other side of the busy street watching her waiting for him. Omar is torn between his friends who are simultaneously cheering him and calling him back because they don’t want to lose him. Across the road, divided by the stream of traffic which would normally provide no obstacle, Omar is powerless to approach her and soon gives up. To save three important themes emerge from this film. First it shows the gender segregation of Algerian society and men’s hidden fear of women - a theme which is frequently evoked in other works (Alle 2001). Second it exposes men’s relative powerlessness, alienation and aimlessness. Third, it draws attention to divisions between men and women who are living in overcrowded conditions and who scrutinise one another closely. Although Omar lives with his sisters, he has a very limited number of interactions with them. He doesn’t know why his sister was divorced. He is uneasy about the physical proximity with her, but is powerless to change it. Events take place under the watchful eye of his friends and the camera is constantly watching him and cheering when he stands poised to cross the road. In retrospect the times of Omar Gatlato, the 1970s, were relatively untroubled years in Algeria. But the 1980s saw considerable turbulence, the beginnings of structural adjustment, a rushed and incomplete process of democratisation and the emergence of the fundamentalist FIS (Lloyd 2003). The 1990s were years of terrible conflict and pressure on socio-economic structures. This has resulted in a social crisis, which has acutely affected many young men who form an active and vociferous minority especially significant in the volatile contemporary situation. The Changing Status of Men in Algeria As a whole, the world changing structures of production and reproduction, shifts in education, and the labour market and family organisation have weakened the ‘traditional’ roles associated with male dominance such as the role of breadwinner and head of the family and have given rise to the idea of masculinity in crisis or at risk (Bourdieu 2001; Chant 2000). Young lower income males are especially vulnerable to insecurity and marginalisation (Cornwall 1998). There is evidence that men’s anger and confusion arising from this crisis may be expressed in increased violence and alcohol/drug abuse so their position is clearly an essential part of any analysis of conflict (Chant 2000). In the next section I look briefly at the legal and socio-economic position of men in Algeria to reveal how this crisis is played out there. Family relations and the legal position of men and women in relation to household members is determined in Algeria by the Family Code (1984) which is based on an interpretation of the shari’a. Since the recent changes to the Moroccan Family Code, the Algerian law is the most restrictive in the Maghreb. It established man’s dominance over women, the husband as the head of the family, men’s right to repudiate their wives, and institutionalised sexual inequality in marriage. A woman’s consent to her first marriage is mediated by a male guardian who can deny her choice of husband, and the code legalises polygamy although this is quite rare in practice (Saadi 1991). A great deal has been written and debated about the impact of the Family Code on women, but we should also be looking at its distorting consequences on gender relations in general (Marouane 1998). Despite this pre-eminent legal status, men’s position in the household is undermined both by extreme difficulties and by difficult social conditions. A look at demographics and family/household conditions reveals the extent of the pressure of change. In the 1980s demographic boom, population grew at over 3% a year. In 1997 38% of the population was under 15.2. Life expectancy in Algeria is similar to Morocco and Tunisia at 66 for men and 69 for women. Since the launch of the National Programme for the Control of Demographic Growth in 1983 there has been a gradual acceptance of contraception, and fertility rates are slightly higher than in neighbouring countries but falling (UNDP 1998). Recent studies such as that recently published by Kamel Kateb suggest that there have been
In Algeria girls have traditionally been pressured to drop out of secondary school leaving the terrain open to their brothers... 

Living circumstances can be extremely difficult: the building of new housing stock has failed to keep up with population growth. Even in 1977 housing occupancy was going beyond the level of 6.7 persons per unit. Despite the mushrooming of buildings since the 1980s, state initiatives lack coherence and the earthquake of 2003 exposed the failure to apply proper building controls.

The conflict of the 1990s has accelerated, and the flight from the countryside to the cities exacerbated overcrowding (Boumdine 1996). So the overcrowded conditions in which the fictional Omar was living in the 1970s have worsened.

Analysis of the crisis of masculinity also draws on evidence of male failure in education and employment (Chart and Millaivane 1998; Hern 1998). Algerian girls have traditionally been pressured to drop out of secondary school leaving the terrain open to their brothers, but recent figures show that more girls complete their education and do better than boys at their studies. Boys are more likely to drop out or have to repeat school years. Although girls are younger than boys in the final year of secondary education, they represented 55.3% of successful candidates in the baccalaureate exams in 1996.

In many countries men’s falling integration into the family is associated with women entering the labour force in significant numbers (Moore 1994). But this is not really true of Algeria. Women only constitute about 10% of the population in pursuit of employment. There are also higher levels of unemployment running at about thirty percent and surveys show soaring levels of urban poverty. Thousands of unemployed businessmen have closed involving the loss of many previously stable jobs. The growth areas are too frequently insecure and informal.

Recently the Algerian press highlighted the growth of the informal economy. Young men can earn well by selling places in the queue for visas in front of the French consulate in Algiers. Their clients are mainly women, older people and people living outside the city. Labour is divided between those who queue and those who find customers. Work starts with the queue at four in the morning. They charge about 300 dinars (about 5 Euros) for a place near the front but when the queue is longer it can rise to as much as 4000 dinars (about 60 Euros). This compares favourably with the minimum wage of 8000 dinars, or the daily wage of a building worker at 400 dinars. Those who work like this can earn 16,000 dinar (about 242 Euros), which is the equivalent wage of a secondary school teacher.

The catastrophic floods in November 2001 drew attention to the growing numbers of people in insecure employment. Two examples published in the daily newspaper El Watan give the example of 17-year old Samir who sells second hand clothing in the Belcourt area of Algiers. His elder brother is a hawker who at the age of 26 asks him for money to buy cigarettes. Samir gets up every morning at 7 and goes to work where he earns about 7000 dinars a month (about 105 Euros) and has the right to take one or two items of clothing for himself and his family at no time to do anything else.

Another young man, Mohammed left school in the 4th year of primary education when his father abandoned his wife and children. He began running errands at the Triolet market in Bab El Oued, then selling and carrying crates of fruit. He then got a job in a shoe factory as a protoeur, earning 1,200 dinars a month as a subcontractor in the informal sector.

In this novel, Khadra shows how the Afghan’s command of their communities arises partly from their challenge to the Algerian authorities and partly from prestige attached to their experience of hardship either in prison or in travelling (or both). Their experiences outside the country set them apart from those who remained in the village. The novel opens with the return of the son of Chekk Abbas who brings Islamist ideas to the village. Although he did not go to Afghanistan he is portrayed as someone who has had exceptional experiences, and therefore, is worthy of respect. But Kada Hild, a schoolteacher, gives up his love for Sara who marries a policeman and sets off to Afghanistan. Kada is then a rape victim and wins authority, based on experience. Another form of authority comes from social status. In some instances (as with Ilsa Omame known as la Ilsa from a story) authority is determined by his role under colonialism or during the war of independence in the 1950s.

We can trace the history of the eruption of religious zealotry in post-independence Algeria to the early 1980s when for a short time a group captured the town of Laghouat on the edge of the Sahara and forbade women to work outside the home, and insisted that people should only eat dates and milk and walk barefoot. They were eventually chased away by the police. But in the next decade groups such as these launched other attacks (especially towards the border town Tindouf). Significantly, such men grew up in the urban slums where their tides against government corruption found an audience among young people who were aware of social inequalities (Islamic Fundamentalist) groups aided by the Saoud and others rapidly responded to social crises such as the earthquake in the autumn of 1989, and began building a popular base. 

Many of them, especially those from Afghanistan (Mahfoud Nahim, current leader of the MSP and member of the present government, has recently recognized that he sent some thirty young Afghans to fight in Afghanistan in the early 1980s). As they returned in the early 1990s from Afghanistan the first references to Afghans began to surface.

One of the militias, the QAA (Groupe Islamique Arme) was founded in the summer of 1992 by a young Tunisian, Tayeb al-Mahjouli who was one of its early leaders. Al-Mahjouli was the former guerrier of an Afghan War veteran and former smuggler who had commanded an Arab group in Afghanistan. The QAA and its Afghans were active around Algiers in the mid 1990s. While the RIS military wing, and the AIS largely confine their attacks to military and government targets, the QAA concentrated its death squads on foreign and Algerian intellectuals in and around the capital. For some time, it was viewed as the champion of young, uneducated and generally unemployed Afghans who were turning to militant Islam.
People’s position towards the Islamists was expressed in the killing of civilian and military personnel who were given and shaved off depending on the political climate. Men wearing ties and collars were accused of working for the government and thus were targets for assassination.

Following the Concorde Civilie of autumn 1999, the Algerian authorities have been involved in a controversial attempt to end the conflict by offering an amnesty to members of the Islamist militia who were prepared to lay down the arms. The rebels, following the so-called referents to their communities in the early months of 2000 have given rise to prominent crimes against humanity in the ranks of the hitmen, and the under/unemployed. There is enormous unrealised potential which comes to the surface when we study accounts of survival strategies, and responses to disasters. Accounts of the way the population of Bab el Oued responded to the November floods or how young men worked to save victims of the earthquake of 2003 shows a capacity to show goodwill and contribute socially.

The Family Code was introduced in an attempt to re-establish what was seen as Algerian, particularly Islamic values. But what many women experience as intolerable oppression also involves a distortion of gender relations which has presented young men with the possibility of wielding power, inside the home having been denied outside because of unemployment.

In the 1980s another set of options opened up, re-presented by the growth of Islamic Fundamentalism and the adventure of the war in Afghanistan. This had a brutalising impact, but we should not lose sight of the positive values of experience, knowledge, travel, action, which require to be harnessed in a less destructive manner. Alongside the valorising of sensational and violent exploits, there is also respect for the attempt to take control of one’s life. It is striking that young men’s main alternatives to the tedium of their lives at home lies outside the country either joining foreign wars or migrating.

Conclusion

The idea of a crisis of masculinity is present in the case of Algeria for several reasons. Firstly, we are talking about a crisis of identity which goes back many years, to massive social dislocation during the colonial period and which persisted even after independence. This identity crisis was underscored by problems in housing, education and employment which have given rise to massive migrations in the ranks of the hitmen, and the under/unemployed. There is enormous unrealised potential which comes to the surface when we study accounts of survival strategies, and responses to disaster. Accounts of the way the population of Bab el Oued responded to the November floods or how young men worked to save victims of the earthquake of 2003 shows a capacity to show goodwill and contribute socially.

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5. More than 786,000 building permits have been issued in the last ten years. Often plans are not realised: ‘and it is being privatised, the cost of raw materials increases, and building standards lax.’

8. If Watan 5 january 2002.
11. Fellag says about the sources of his compassionate humour: ‘While I was writing Un bateau pour l’Australie, I was in a café in Algiers in 1989 and I heard a dialogue between two youths: “Yesterday one of my cousins came from back home. He slept in my bed. And you? Under the cupboard. It’s a good job my cousin is in temporary transit” When I got home, I write twenty pages in one go. “That my cousin is in temporary transit” was all truth!”

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END NOTES

* Thanks to the EIRC for funding this research The role of migrants in sustaining or resolving conflict Grant no. RO0323 97/7. 1. They are young, but they don’t move around, they are just there, always in the same place, their backs against the wall, a blank gaze, they watch the time go by, they are called hitmen. Definition: Hitman: a masculine name derived from the word “Hit” which in Algerian means “wall”. Deeper Definition: All young people who can find nothing better to do with their life than to practice hitmen is a hitman. Intellectual Definition: A youth leaning against a wall, because he has no personal space at home or particular activity in society. Hitmen speech: young people speak of “deleguage” the key word of the 1990s. They also say “Lebaq” to express a con fused feeling, a mixture of distress and disturbance. Hitmen joke: instead of breaking down the Berlin wall the Germans should have sent it to us! This typically Algerian humour enables us to pose the question: “Given the brutalising nature of the conflict what are there enough walls for the hitmen?” http://www.isoeuk.org/nar hitmen.html (accessed 2 January 2001).
3. ASM/RA/PAPCHILD survey conducted by the Office national des statistiques among 6,684 households.
4. A report published in 1963 emphasised the need to build 100,000 housing units a year in order to replace housing destroyed by the war. The allocation of land was necessary because of the illusion of abundance created by the departure of Europeans who left empty accommodation behind them. Between 1973-4 an initiative to build 1,000 socialist villages, realised only 350. The Ministry of Housing. Urbanism and Construction was established in 1977.


7. He became a symbol of the Afghan and Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria when he was captured after an attack on a police station at al-Gummar in south-eastern Algeria near the Tunisian border in November 1992. That triggered a wider conflict between the fundamentalists and the Algerian army. Other splinter groups, hard-line, and/or fundamentalist, emerged, such as the Organization of Free Islamic Youth, held responsible for the murder of several moderate politicians who advocated dialogue between the IRS and the government, and the Movement of the Islamic Sura (Compass).

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Female Genital Mutilation and Constructions of Masculinity in Twentieth Century Egypt

Both sex and gender can influence an individual’s role in society. Sex is the biological identity that describes the presence of the X and Y chromosomes during conception, resulting in the formation of a male, female, or indifferent sex. Gender, on the other hand, is an individual’s identity based on society’s expectations and treatment of an individual. Gender is what creates the idea of masculinity and femininity as expectations to which males and females must adhere. These expectations are better defined as gender stereotypes – behavior considered the norm or ideal, which creates a shared gender identity. Such stereotypes are defined as “socially shared beliefs that certain qualities can be assigned to individuals based on their membership in the female or male half of the human race.”

The definition of masculinity and femininity changes depending on cultural norms. Such constructs are best understood as ones that are in a constant state of flux within particular cultures, and all cultures develop their own patterns of gender construction. Nevertheless, the differences in gender that emerge across cultures often construct women and men as gender opposites – a man is what a woman is not, and a woman is what a man is not. Often, stereotypes define men as strong, aggressive, and intelligent, while labeling women as weak, submissive, and ruled by emotion. One common manifestation of masculinity has historically been control of women; in the traditional view, “humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being.” This control by men of women has taken many different forms in various cultures and across time periods, including attempts to control female sexuality. Yet at the same time, many of the practices that have evolved to support and demonstrate masculinity within a society also, by extension, support the society’s notions of femininity. As one scholar has argued, “men often attempt to police the mobility and conduct of their sisters, daughters, companions and comrades, sometimes – quite often in fact – with the complicity of their mothers and other senior women.” For women, as for men, upholding the expected roles of each gender is something that supports the social order and guarantees the individual a place within the society, whereas “violating sex roles [gender expectations] has the most negative consequences amongst those who believe that conformity to sex roles is important.”

In many African countries, including Egypt, FGM has historically been one of means of enforcing control of women’s sexuality, and hence of reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations within society. In Egypt, women are seen as sexual beings, whose innate, intense sexuality must be controlled and regulated as a necessity for society, and the family, which is seen as the basis of society, to function properly. Here, “according to dominant gender constructs, men and women each have a different part to play – women’s inherent sexuality is believed to be constantly endangering the social harmony of society (by tempting men) and is, therefore, best controlled through various means, including regulations aimed at modifying their remaining as much as possible within the private sphere of the family.” FGM is part of this process, as it is believed to be crucial to proper socialization and to universal norms. Although there are many procedures that fall under the general category of FGM (e.g. clitoridectomy, excision, female circumcision, female genital cutting), in Egypt, the procedure generally entails removal of part or all of the clitoris and sometimes the labia minora as well, in the belief that circumcised women will not be sexually aggressive.

Fatima Mernissi has argued that there are two contradictory yet coexisting concepts of female sexuality in Islamic culture – what she refers to as the explicit theory of women’s passive sexuality and the implicit theory of women’s active sexuality. The passive sexuality theory holds that women are best, and perhaps solely, fulfilled in passive roles and in their submission to men. According to this view, men are and must be the sexual aggressors and women the passive recipients of their attentions. The key to a woman’s femininity, according to this view, is the experience of pleasure through suffering and subjugation – a masochistic view of pleasure that is deemed quintessentially female. According to the active sexuality theory, women naturally possess significant power through their sexual appetites and desires and through their attractiveness to men. Women therefore need to be controlled and their sexuality restrained so that men can fulfill their social and religious obligations without distraction – women and female sexuality must be restrained for the good of society. FGM conveniently fits both these theories of sexuality. In terms of the passive sexuality theory, in removing the anatomical locus of sexual pleasure, the practice confirms the woman’s passive role in intercourse and the man’s role as sexual aggressor. The procedure itself, likewise, causes physical pain and suffering, which this theory holds actually is a source of feminine pleasure. In terms of the active sexuality theory, FGM removes the anatomical source of sexual pleasure, which serves to control female sexuality, enabling men to go about their business without facing constant temptations by women or constant demands for sexual services from highly sexualized women.

The physiological basis of these beliefs is open to question, indeed, many medical professionals and psychologists argue that even women who undergo forms of FGM more severe than those practiced in Egypt are quite capable of experiencing sexual desire and achieving orgasm. Others take the view that the absence or mutilation of the clitoris makes orgasm impossible to achieve, and the psychological effects of the procedure coupled with real and potential medical complications ensure that the practice is designed to achieve – physical control of female sexuality. Nevertheless, the fact that in the popular imagination, it is the clitoris that must be so thoroughly removed to be excessively focused on sex and sexual gratification and hence the removal or reduction of that organ is believed to be synonymous with a woman’s sexuality is what is crucial in analyzing the practice.

Another reason FGM has been practiced is the belief that it cleanses, purifies, and beautifies the female genitals, thus making them appear more feminine. This belief stems from two sources: first, the understanding of sexual pleasure as a male prerogative and second, the understanding of the clitoris as a sort of small penis, an unnecessary and de-feminizing appendage that ought to be removed. The first of these beliefs is tied to a dualistic view of the sexual act itself; the male role in intercourse is to achieve pleasure; the female role is to receive the biological matter necessary for reproduction. Thus, “the most effective method of preserving a girl’s chastity and of guaranteeing her fidelity after marriage is, purely and simply, to amputate the organ capable of providing her any erotic pleasure. Removing the clitoris, an organ

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Mutilation in Egypt has traditionally been in part a function of control of female sexuality. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is one instance of this. Likewise notions of femininity have served to encourage FGM among men, as the societies in which it occurs are essentially removing or reducing a portion of the female anatomy that is popularly considered more properly male in terms of both structure and function; this has been considered a necessary precondition for marriage. In recent years, as anti-FGM educational campaigns have become more common in Egypt, anecdotal evidence indicates there has been some shifting of these ideas, as educated men sometimes show a preference for “uncircumcised” girls as marriage partners, believing that they will be more sexually responsive. Yet this too is tied to notions of femininity and masculinity – in this case, enforcing female sexuality in the service of male sexual pleasure and prowess. FGM is to be combated effectively, social space for unmarried women must be created, anti-FGM campaigns must broaden the scope of their activities to include male audiences, and men must be educated about the biological and psychological components of sexuality.

FGM as an Essential Component of Masculine and Feminine Identity

The key to a woman’s femininity, according to this view, is the experience of pleasure through suffering and subjugation – a masochistic view of pleasure that is deemed quintessentially female. According to the active sexuality theory, women naturally possess significant power through their sexual appetites and desires and through their attractiveness to men. Women therefore need to be controlled and their sexuality restrained so that men can fulfill their social and religious obligations without distraction – women and female sexuality must be restrained for the good of society. FGM conveniently fits both these theories of sexuality. In terms of the passive sexuality theory, in removing the anatomical locus of sexual pleasure, the practice confirms the woman’s passive role in intercourse and the man’s role as sexual aggressor. The procedure itself, likewise, causes physical pain and suffering, which this theory holds actually is a source of feminine pleasure. In terms of the active sexuality theory, FGM removes the anatomical source of sexual pleasure, which serves to control female sexuality, enabling men to go about their business without facing constant temptations by women or constant demands for sexual services from highly sexualized women.

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Another reason FGM has been practiced is the belief that it cleanses, purifies, and beautifies the female genitals, thus making them appear more feminine. This belief stems from two sources: first, the understanding of sexual pleasure as a male prerogative and second, the understanding of the clitoris as a sort of small penis, an unnecessary and de-feminizing appendage that ought to be removed. The first of these beliefs is tied to a dualistic view of the sexual act itself; the male role in intercourse is to achieve pleasure; the female role is to receive the biological matter necessary for reproduction. Thus, “the most effective method of preserving a girl’s chastity and of guaranteeing her fidelity after marriage is, purely and simply, to amputate the organ capable of providing her any erotic pleasure. Removing the clitoris, an organ...
unnecessary for fertilization, also means reducing a woman’s reproductive potential.” The second of these beliefs stems from cultural ideas about masculinity, femininity, and the body. In Egypt, there is a "believe the presence of a penis is a characteristic of the other sex. In women, this presence is thought to take the form of the clitoris, hence the need to remove it. Dissection of the clitoris—this is the clitoris—the woman can now assume her true feminine nature and the capacity to bear children... It is only by undergoing excision that a girl becomes a complete, separate woman and is then ripe for marriage.”

The social importance of marriage reinforces the practice of FGM in Egypt, according to many experts. In Egypt, as in many other Arab and African countries, women as a group have comparatively fewer opportunities than men for education and career; even those who do become educated and seek a career outside the home are faced with a dilemma. As Nahid Toubia has argued...

The centrality of FGM to gender identity in Egypt, and although FGM seems to have been practiced in Egypt to some extent for thousands of years, the public debate over the topic has only recently developed. The next section reviews anti-FGM campaigns in Egypt and their connection to gender construction.

FGM and Masculinity in 20th Century Egypt

In 1954, prominent activist Aziza Hussein was serving on the fact believed FGM to be illegal. Hussein, speaking of her experiences in the 1950s, related her surprise, (we were challenged) to produce the text, but it was not to be found. Only a ministerial decree had been passed assigning a committee to study female circumcision in Egypt and to give its recommendations. The terms of these recommendations were so ambiguous as to be shocking. The doctors, if they take any head of it at all, can find an official backing for their performance of the superfluous excision. Traditional midwives, it is true, are forbidden to perform surgical procedures including female circumcision, but they do practice it. However, contrary to Egypt, Hussein decided that the Cairo Family Planning Association should become more actively involved in the emerging international discussions on FGM. Egyptian women’s organizations and NGOs were, in Hussein’s words, “suddenly bombarded with questions about female circumcision in Egypt prompted by the writings of Egyptian doctors, particularly Dr. Nawal Sa’adawi, although we were under the impression that the practice was illegal. In fact, the only legal prohibition extended to traditional midwives, who were forbidden to perform surgical procedures including female circumcision, but continued to do so.”

By October 1979, the CPA had organized the first public seminar on the topic, entitled “Body Mutilation of Young Females,” held as part of the International Year of the Child. It explored the religious, medical, social, and legal aspects of FGM, thus breaking the taboo on discussing the practice. In Hussein’s view, it was “a course in sex education for the public at large, the likes of which had never been experienced before. The question dealt with basically the way with taboos can perpetuate ignorance and violate the female child’s body in the name of chastity and hygiene”. The outcome of the seminar was the formulation of a plan of action, which included urging the media to begin an educational campaign about the dangers of FGM, encouraging women’s groups and existing groups to become more active in urban and rural areas to undertake educational campaigns, and pushing for inclusion of information about FGM in school and university curricula. The argument that FGM should be included in educational materials was a new one, which included male audiences and held the potential for linking the practice not only to the reproductive health of women, but also to notions of masculinity, sexuality, and power.

Nevertheless, the seminar was a landmark event, and in addition to the recommendations already noted, the seminar also concluded that the holy books of all religions of Egypt did not mention the practice and that there were serious health consequences to it. The ministerial decree resulted in more supervised operations and a need for educational work and research; and since numerous misconceptions existed about the benefits of the practice, FGM should be criminalized. As the result of this seminar, the CPA decided to launch its Female Circumcision Project. Hussein described why this was done: “We decided to make it our task to break the silence surrounding this taboo and not to just talk to women or experts with family planning, turning it into a taboo into a national movement.” The FCP then began issuing numerous pamphlets, seminars, and workshops to teach the practice to the public through its family planning clinics. Hussein’s focus on an educational, rather than legal approach, stemmed from an awareness of the fundamental role that FGM plays in gender construction.

In 1992, the FCP broke from the CPA and became its own organization, with a more intense, politically correct name of the Egyptian Society for the Prevention of Traditional Practices Harmful to Women and Children” (hereinafter referred to as the Society) and undertook an aggressive educational campaign aimed at public health officials, media figures, social workers, and students. The Society was particularly proud of its television campaign, presenting them in the following light: “One of the major achievements was our full-scale access to the media, particularly broadcasting and TV. After a total blackout on the subject, they [made] female circumcision one of their priority subjects... which resulted in an unprecedented public debate on the subject.” Hussein recollected that the Society then limited TV involvement for fear of a pro-FGM backlash against such efforts. Despite this, since the early 1990s, the campaign has increased in its momentum, with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994. One significant change since 1994 is that anti-FGM messages are not only provided by NGOs, but government agencies have embraced and begun communicating the message as well. Egyptian television has also been more open to discussions on FGM in recent developments, with the general proliferation of talk-shows and news that have occurred in the wake of the expansion of satellite channels broadcast from other Arab countries.

In 1994, during the ICPD, a CNN program featuring a young woman being circumcised. While the Cairo weightlifter President Hosni Mubarak, facing strong international criticism, agreed to ban the practice of FGM. Due to opposition from religious groups, the Minister of Health then clarified his position in 1995: “We have no plans to ban this operation... but we are looking at ways for it to be carried out by qualified doctors and under proper medical supervision.” Since this was a restatement of the 1959 decree, it did not silence international criticism. Therefore, in 1996, the government issued a ban on FGM which applied to all practitioners, including doctors, at all locations, whether in or out of a hospital.” In June 1997, an Egyptian court struck down the ministerial ban on FGM in state and private clinics, while preserving the ban on FGM by those who...
The fact that the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is illegal in Egypt, the country with the largest population of girls subjected to FGM, has been a significant factor in motivating the Egyptian government to take action against FGM. This has been reflected in the government’s commitment to ending FGM through the passage of numerous laws and the establishment of various initiatives. However, the implementation of these laws and initiatives has been slow and uneven, and the effectiveness of the government’s efforts has been limited by a range of factors, including cultural resistance, lack of resources, and political interference. As a result, FGM remains a significant problem in Egypt, and there is a need for continued efforts to address this issue.

The government’s commitment to ending FGM has been reflected in the appointment of a Minister of Health and Population, Dr. Hala Zayed, who has been given the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the government’s policies and programs aimed at ending FGM. In addition, the government has established a National Council for Children’s Affairs, which has been tasked with coordinating the efforts of various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, to end FGM.

Despite these efforts, however, the prevalence of FGM among Egyptian women continues to be high, with estimates suggesting that up to 90% of girls aged 10 to 14 have undergone the procedure. This high prevalence is due to a combination of cultural factors, including the belief that FGM is necessary for the maintenance of women’s modesty and marriageability, and the lack of alternative cultural practices that could serve the same purpose.

To address this issue, a number of government initiatives have been launched, including the establishment of awareness-raising campaigns, the provision of alternative cultural practices, and the enforcement of laws and regulations aimed at preventing FGM. These initiatives have been complemented by the work of a range of NGOs and international organizations, which have been instrumental in raising awareness, providing alternative cultural practices, and advocating for the rights of girls and women.

Despite these efforts, however, FGM remains a significant human rights issue in Egypt, and there is a need for continued efforts to address this issue. This includes the need for greater awareness-raising, the provision of alternative cultural practices, and the enforcement of laws and regulations aimed at preventing FGM. It is clear that a comprehensive approach is needed to address this issue, and this will require the involvement of all stakeholders, including the government, NGOs, and the private sector, as well as the active participation of women and girls themselves.

In conclusion, the government’s commitment to ending FGM is a significant step forward, but much more needs to be done to achieve this goal. This includes the need for greater awareness-raising, the provision of alternative cultural practices, and the enforcement of laws and regulations aimed at preventing FGM. It is clear that a comprehensive approach is needed to address this issue, and this will require the involvement of all stakeholders, including the government, NGOs, and the private sector, as well as the active participation of women and girls themselves.

References:

be continually proven, lest it be lost or taken away. Such attitudes are particularly strong among younger men, and only one of fifty articulated the view that sexual intercourse was a means of emotional expression; the other 93% saw their role as that of enforcing their dominance over their wives. Likewise, men’s answers revealed a great deal of inaccuracy towards uncircumcised women. Some men were convinced that uncircumcised women would make excessive sexual demands, which they would not be able to fulfill … All the men now regarded masculinity, identity, and their perceptions of women clarified their positions on FGM. “Something about FGM made men feel more secure in their sexuality,” suggested the study. FGM, the man indicated, was a way of keeping women’s sexuality in check. This is an important consideration, when women’s orgasms are viewed as ‘masculine’ and men’s ‘feminine’. In a sense, their ultimate fear was of not being able to satisfy a woman because of being weak. FGM can be seen as a function in the reverse mode. FGM weakens the man so that a man can satisfy her.”

In addition to the shortcomings of current educational campaigns, legal campaigns against FGM are also inadequate. Legal prohibitions on FGM are not enforced, and there is no financial incentive to perform FGM as long as there is a demand. A related problem is ignorance about legal rulings concerning FGM. The death of a young girl undergoing FGM in a northern suburb of Cairo in the early twentieth century increased the public’s fear of FGM. Yet, the girl’s family was unaware that the practice was illegal or harmful, and the police investigated it not aware “that in order by the State Council, the highest administrative court, had banned the performance of the operation in public and private hospitals and clinics.”

Conclusion
It is difficult to find reliable statistics on the prevalence of FGM or assess the effectiveness of anti-FGM campaigns. Some studies indicate a reduction in FGM, while others do not, and the same statistics are often interpreted differently.

The Population Council (in 1999) points to a decline in FGM … A survey carried out on Adolescence and Social Change in Egypt (ASC) indicates that circumcision rates among single girls are now 86 per cent, 10 percentage points lower than the almost universal prevalence found in the 1995 Egyptian Demographic Health Survey (EDHS) of ever-married women aged 15-49. The ASC notes that “there is evidence of a delay and possible reduction in female circumcision following the 1994 International Conference on Population.” This optimism, belies the numbers. El-Sayed El-Enany, one of the principal investigators of the EDHS, is unfounded. “Bear in mind that the almost universal rate of 97 per cent referred to married women. When they were asked whether they would circumcise their girls, 86 per cent said yes. So the ASCE had only confirmed the EDHS’s findings. There is no reduction in percentage because we are talking about women in different age groups, unmarried girls and mothers,” explains El-Enany. She estimates that it will take 10 years before we can observe any significant decline in the practice of female circumcision – even if only because the process of informing people, changing their attitude and the reflection of this change in their practice is a lengthy one. “This does not mean that there is none in the population’s sexual and masculinity. As a result, their ultimate fear was of not being able to satisfy a woman because of being weak. FGM can be seen as a function in the reverse mode. FGM weakens the man so that a man can satisfy her.”

In the conclusion of the study, the researchers stated: “Our findings indicate that there is a significant reduction in the rate of female circumcision in Egypt. This is due to the efforts of various organizations, including the UNFPA, the World Health Organization, and the Egyptian Ministry of Health. However, the reduction is not significant enough to achieve a complete elimination of the practice.”

The study also highlighted the importance of involving men in the prevention of female circumcision. “Engaging men in the prevention of female circumcision is crucial. They are often the main instigators of the practice and can influence the behavior of their wives and daughters. Furthermore, involving men in the prevention of female circumcision can help to challenge the traditional gender roles and promote gender equality.”

The study recommended the following measures to prevent female circumcision:

1. Increasing awareness among men about the harmful effects of female circumcision.
2. Providing education and training to healthcare professionals on the prevention and treatment of female circumcision.
3. Developing community-based programs to promote the acceptance of female genital integrity.
4. Enforcing laws and regulations to prohibit female circumcision.
5. Supporting research and surveillance to monitor the prevalence of female circumcision.

These recommendations are in line with the findings of the study, which showed that involving men in the prevention of female circumcision has a significant impact on reducing the practice. However, it is important to note that the prevention of female circumcision is not only a matter of changing behavior but also a matter of changing attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, it is crucial to address the underlying cultural and social factors that support the practice of female circumcision.
The binary definition of sex as male and female is being questioned. Perspectives on Sex and Gender have been shifting, and the idea of a third gender is being explored. This has led to a reevaluation of the traditional roles and expectations placed on individuals based on their assigned sex at birth. Many people are challenging the binary view and seeking more fluid and diverse models of gender identity. This shift is not just a matter of personal expression; it has implications for law, medicine, and society at large. The implications for policy and the implications for health care are significant. The way we think about sex and gender is changing, and with it, our understanding of human sexuality and identity. This is leading to a more nuanced and compassionate approach to the way we interact with others and ourselves.
pamphlet, even if the health care were reliable, it would mean that only the most minimal amount could be cut from a girl's throat, and then only “if the child is abnormally protruding and causes harm to the girl, and the practice will be discontinued,” Zahir. The pamphlet also reviews the differing positions of legal scholars of all four Sunni law schools in Egypt. It notes that while many consider the legal classification varies from one school of thought to another. The pamphlet also considers the legal classifications from the point of view of the Shafi'i school, and says that even so, modern legal scholars such as Shafie Al Sami have also considered consider the legal classification from the point of view of the Shafi'i school, and says that even so, modern legal scholars such as Shafie Al Sami have also considered.


Adolescent Boys’ Response to Gender Equitable Programming in Rural Upper Egyptian Villages: Between ‘Ayb’ and Haram

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In the Middle East, as elsewhere, gender roles are transformed in response to a number of influences. The changing socioeconomic conditions in much of the Arab world have created economic disparities, and, at the same time, have meant an increased participation of women in the labor force in many countries. These changes, along with the overall increase in female education, have threatened the “traditional” organization of households and are beginning to redefine female space and boundaries (Al 1996).

Changing patterns of production and reproduction are also indicative of changes in gender relations which challenge traditional images and expectations associated with men’s as well as women’s roles, such as those of breadwinner, care giver, or head of household. These developments increasingly call for a re-assessment of the roles and responsibilities of women and men, of stereotypical and traditional gender roles, and of existing power relations between women and men.

Inequality in gender relations is often considered a given of society and culture, and rarely questioned as to how it is maintained, perpetuated, or changed. Kandiyoti (1994) attempts to provide greater depth to the homogenous representation of male behavior and masculinity and discusses the notion of dominant (hegemonic) and subordinate masculinities in Muslim and Middle East societies. She places the production of masculine identity in generational and institutional terms, and shows how masculinities are produced and altered as men move through their life cycles. For example, when the older men of the household are absent, the mother and sisters of a young man may jokingly treat him as the “man of the house”. While in the presence of his father and older brothers, a young boy retains a position inferior to the older women of the family. Accordingly, masculinity is continuously negotiated in Egyptian society.

In patriarchal systems, such as those of rural Egyptian villages, boys begin to enjoy status and privileges afforded to adult men; they gain more autonomy, mobility, and opportunity for engagement in public life than do girls. With these expanding privileges comes a taken for granted assumption that men have authority over women and children. Despite this, we posit that these gender norms are increasingly dysfunctional for young men, given new social and economic realities in Arab and Muslim societies.

Moreover, as development organizations increase their attraction to girls, through awareness-raising, empowerment, and opportunities to engage outside their homes, how do boys respond to such developments in their communities? Does it change boys’ perspective on girls’ roles, and if so, in what direction? Despite the global proliferation of development activities targeting and enabling youth, a review of the international literature yields little information about how adolescent boys respond to emerging opportunities for girls. Mainstream literature has largely concentrated on the health and development of adolescent boys, and on the construction of masculinity among adult men, and we find no published articles on adolescent boys’ notions of masculinity in the Middle East. Our contribution may be to extend the insights of the literature to account for the unique challenges facing adolescent boys and their lived reality as they are socialized into becoming young men.

The Setting

An experimental social development program aimed at improving life choices for out-of-school adolescent girls in Upper Egypt1 provides an interesting lens through which we can begin to explore these questions. The IHSRAQ program based in four rural villages of Al Miroya governorate of Upper Egypt piloted a holistic package of education, skills building, and sports activities aimed at 13-15-year-old girls. Program implementers realized that building girls’ skills and sense of agency will go only so far if girls find themselves in the same restrictive environments - that is, in which the institutions of patriarchy remove young women from direct public participation. Boys are particularly important in this regard, as their behavior in public spaces and in the home bears strongly on girls’ mobility and participation in public life, and because boys are the future husbands and partners of the girls in the program. Thus, recognizing the gate keeping role boys and parents play vis-a-vis girls, interventions with both groups have also been piloted.

Through this comprehensive approach, the program hopes to begin to change norms surrounding what is acceptable for adolescent girls while at the same time redressing gender inequity. To do so, the engagement of men and boys in achieving gender equality requires greater attention to gender stereotypes and expectations about men’s roles and responsibilities, and how these expectations influence male behavior.

Data Sources

This paper analyses the experiences of adolescent boys and young men aged 13-19 living in rural communities in which the IHSRAQ empowerment program for girls was launched. Qualitative research was conducted to explore boys’ notions of masculinity and male roles, as well as their perception of girls’ evolving roles in their communities. Through the use of focus group discussion (FGD) methodology we sought to understand boys’ views of girls’ place in community and home life, and their opinions of the IHSRAQ program itself and the girls who participate in it. A total of twelve two FGDs were carried out in six villages with 170 (6) boys and young men aged 13-19 in six villages. The discussion groups were held at local_yarding centers. Trained moderators conducted FGDs which were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed, using standard research techniques. There were very few groups comprised of younger out-of-school boys as most boys between 13-15 years of age were in school. We anticipated differences in responses between groups of in school versus out-of-school boys - hypothesizing that better-educated boys may hold more progressive views towards girls - but we did not find this to be the case. We did find, not surprisingly, that focus group discussions with younger boys were more challenging to conduct and revealed a less sophisticated understanding of the topics compared with older boys.

Boys’ Notions of Manhood and Masculinity

In this section, we explore notions of masculinity amongst rural Egyptian adolescent boys. Although this did not form an explicit aspect of the original research, the opportunity to explore these concepts within a broader research and program context presented itself.

In order to develop effective intervention programs and policies to empower rural girls, it is vital to study the attitudes and behaviors of adolescent males: and to understand how boys’ notions of masculinity affect girls and young women. There is ample international evidence suggesting that versions of masculinity or manhood that boys adhere to, or are socialized into, have important implications for their health and that of other young men, as well as for the young women around them.

In an effort to identify norms and behaviors deemed critical for boys and young men to function in communities characterized by distinct and segregated roles for men and women, we must first understand the meanings, perceptions, attributes and factors influencing boys’ notions of masculinity.

Almost unanimously, boys’ definition of manhood is described as “someone who works, earns, and spends.”

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Boys’ Understanding of Masculinity

The field of masculinities is beginning to shed light on how boys are socialized into prevailing norms about what is socially acceptable “masculine” behavior in a given setting. How boys adhere to these prevailing norms can sometimes have negative consequences for their health and development. As in many societies, families and schools promote a type of masculinity that is achievement- and action-oriented, and outwardly directed with the explicit or implicit goal that boys should become providers and protectors. Thus the understanding of masculinity involves a range of important characteristics and roles such as provider and protector which are linked to the constructs of power and control. We found this to be the case within this group of boys. At a young age, boys are socialized to be aggressive and competitive - qualities which are deemed necessary for their future roles as providers and protectors. Our data illuminated how notions of masculinity and gendered division of roles and responsibilities are constructed. We explore the various connotations of masculinity and how boys perceive themselves in relation to their own notions of masculinity.

Masculine Roles and Responsibilities: Providers and Protectors

To understand how boys think about male roles as currently prescribed, it is important to identify the markers of masculinity which are deemed important for boys and men such as conduct, responsibility, and privilege. Almost universally, boys’ definition of manhood is described as “someone who works, earns, and spends.” According to many respondents, this is not particularly among the educated boys, a man is “the head of the household who spends money”; “someone who shoulders responsibilities”; “can work in the field or any other job.” Further they added, “husbands must provide for their families” and “boys are responsible financially for the house”; “I can bring money but not girls.” The role of the being provider - which was universally understood as being a hard worker, resulting in earning money - emerged as critical to boys’ understanding of masculinity.

According to most respondents, the essential task in performing the provider role is to ensure that girls and women do not have to go out to work. “A man is someone who earns and provides,” stated an interviewee. The con- ception of masculinity results in a clear division of gender roles, and is then linked to girls’ education. Most boys felt that boys need to be educated because they must fulfill their role as providers while girls, whose primary role is to perform domestic work, are in less need of education. Thus, boys endorsed the restriction on girls’ education which they felt was justified because of the domestic responsibilities girls carry: “girls are used to staying at home so that they can do the house work”, “girls help their mothers at home and boys go to the club”, “the girl can look after her younger siblings”; “if there is something she (a girl) does not want to do, she has to do it by force”.

In the domestic sphere, adolescent boys’ perception of the man’s role as protector is strongly expressed. In this regard, boys define a man as essentially someone who makes decisions and takes care of the family. Concerning men as protectors, boys’ definition is someone who “has a word in marriage matters”; “the oldest in the family”; and about taking care of the family someone who “takes over responsibility when the father is away”; “someone who helps his parents and siblings financially”.

In the public sphere and as brothers, their conception of masculinity is related to that of parents. Among the most frequently mentioned characteristics attributed to malesness were the “ability to endure physically”, followed by “having freedom”. When asked their opinion of a popular saying: “This woman is worth 100 men”, boys’ responses demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of strong women: “she can fill in for the man and spend money on everything”, “she can care for the home”, “works better”, “they (people) will say that she is a loose girl (meaning with no parents)”. Therefore, girls are not supposed to leave their homes alone.

Another important aspect of masculinity which emerged was that of control. A major role of boys or young men to exercise control over his sister. When asking ado- lescents boys about their responsibilities towards their female siblings, boys repeatedly express how closely linked to controlling their sisters and fulfilling their roles as gatekeepers. As such, brothers have the responsibility to control their sisters by “bringing her (my sister) from wherever she is”; “taking her (my sister) out with me with the permission granted from my parents”; “helping her choose her friends”; “controlling her”; “protecting her”; “not beating her”; “watching out to ensure that she (my sister) does not go out with a boy.” In addition, and in reference to their sisters boys spoke of “allowing her to be educated” and “finishing her studies.” Kandiyoti argues that for most men in the Middle East, the construction of masculine ideals is based on power. Power is closely related to political, economic, and social factors. Boys’ control over women in “public” and “private” domains thus masculinities created on this are likely to be on increasing- inherently unstable. In many settings notions of mascu- linity for adult men often rely on sexual power and relationships are intrinsically linked to a proactive role. Having children, marriage, starting a family are taken as universal signs of masculinity. However in our study, the role of protector as a marker of masculinity was not mentioned by the boys. This is due in part to their youth and the fact that they were unmarried. Moreover issues of sexuality were too sensitive to be discussed.

From the boys’ perspective, the understanding of femin- inine vis-a-vis the masculine, usually, if not always, emerges with a negative connotation. For instance, all boys consider girls to have less thinking capacity, and view them as soft, fragile by nature, weak and incapable of venturing out alone. The following quotes expressed by the adolescent boys illustrate these negative aspects: “A girl is weaker”, “girls can be secretaries, sit in a pharma- cy, or be teachers”; “girls cannot carry heavy stuff”; “a girl cannot defend herself”; “when one gets tired at work (heavy physically), one wishes one were a girl”.

For these boys, masculinity is perceived as the positive opposite in the manner in which it is most frequently constructed. Among the most frequently mentioned characteristics attributed to malesness were the “ability to endure physically”, followed by “having freedom”. When asked their opinion of a popular saying: “This woman is worth 100 men”, boys’ responses demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of strong women: “she can fill in for the man and spend money on everything”, “she can care for the home”, “works better”, “they (people) will say that she is a loose girl (meaning with no parents)”. Therefore, girls are not supposed to leave their homes alone.

Physical and verbal harassment towards girls is a wide- spread phenomenon in Egypt even in rural conservative communities. It is linked to the exercise of power and is an outward sign of male dominance. It is an important area where boys and young men can “feel” their masq- culine entitlement. They are also entitled to having household tasks performed for them. Most boys felt that if girls get them food, they are not supposed to listen to their brothers, it is appropriate and right to pun- ish them accordingly. Domestic violence related to women that cooking food properly is linked to men’s sense of entitlement to food that is cooked by his wife in the time and manner that he wants.

Boys’ Role in Controlling Sister and Family Honor

The notion of family honor and girls’ reputation is very much entrenched in these rural communities. As broth- ers, boys unintentionally exercised very strong concerns and worries about their sisters’ reputations which is one reason cited for why rural girls usually have very limited physical mobility and social life when reaching puberty. A brother’s role as gatekeeper is thus to keep constant surveillance on their sisters. The following narratives illustrate how brothers control their sisters’ “We (as brothers) are very strict about girls because we fear men’s
behavior”, “girls should not go out in order for us (boys) not to lose our reputation and the boys share information among themselves about whose sisters are going where”. The extent of restrictions and surveillance of their movement, which uneducated girls as compared to educated girls, who are assumed to be better prepared, and able to handle the world beyond the homes more competently.

For Egyptian youth, falling in love with a girl and winning the girl’s heart is also an essential component of a successful masculinity. For uneducated boys, enticing, falling in love and marrying educated girls is perceived as a major challenge and a testament of their manhood. The likelihood of this happening seems remote as most marriages are arranged by families, and bride and groom tend to be paired along socio-economic and class lines.

Between ‘ayb and Haram

Perhaps what was most striking about our conversations with boys was the ways in which they spoke about girls’ roles and opportunities. According to the majority of boys, there is a clear male-female dichotomy in terms of roles and responsibilities. In their minds, this gendered division of roles and responsibilities justifies the division of public and private spaces, the public space being the domain of males. Further when boys talked about what girls could and could not do, the responses were frequently couched in terms of ‘ayb or Haram. For example, when boys were asked if they played sports, there was an almost unanimous affirmative response. What about girls, we asked? To that question, we received a very strong chorus of “No, that is ‘ayb”. What about girls going to school (preparatory) with boys? “No, that is Haram”. About schooling, boys further added that they cannot sit beside girls in a classroom even if they happen to be their “temporal female”. This is ‘Haram”. While it is not possible to say how strongly individual boys agree with these rigid notions, they certainly have internalized them to a strong degree which shapes the way in which they articulate their views on girls’ rights and roles.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Our claims are modest. We have attempted to map the meanings of masculinity among adolescent boys in a changing socio-economic context. According to boys, masculinity is strictly defined in relation to gender roles which are linked to social duties and obligations. Even though the results suggest that notions of masculinity are divergent, there are some very basic notions commonly held. According to most boys, the essential difference between a boy and a girl is biological and physical, and physical attributes are essential characteristics of masculinity. Another commonly held notion is that boys are courageous and strong, as compared to girls, who are viewed as weak, vulnerable, and submissive. Moreover, conduct was considered an essential component of masculinity and was judged by standards that were viewed as heroic. Boys who were considered to be the most courageous, independent, powerful, and control - all of which were considered important markers of conduct. Another prominent characteristic of masculinity according to the boys, particularly vis-a-vis their role as brothers, was related to maintaining girls’ reputations.

In rural Egypt, adolescence appears to be a period in which “intensification” of gender roles leads to an exaggerated preference for role segregation. Boys’ opinions seem to be deeply entrenched, and very few boys seem to want to challenge normative ideas about gender-segregated roles. Due to their socialization, boys internalize certain notions, which are very hard to give up. Peer pressure, socialization processes and belief systems influence boys’ adherence to gender-specific stereotypes. Ideas of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes, and of stereotyped roles for men and women limit progress in achieving gender equality.

Increasingly, young men receive contradictory messages about masculine roles and their ability to fulfill them. While boys expect to be future breadwinners, they also recognize the difficulty in achieving that idealistic goal. Notions of hegemonic masculinity to which many boys aspire are undercut by their socio-economic constraints.

Most boys in this study believe that boys should be better educated than girls, yet they also recognize that an educated girl can be an asset to the family. Boys have mixed emotional responses to many of the issues surrounding them and hold conflicting opinions on a number of issues; many boys express concern and empathy for girls, alongside admiration. While many boys acknowledge gender inequities in education, mobility, paid work, and other domains of life, they do not express interest in changing these practices.

Globalization is altering the conditions under which young people prepare for adult roles. The fissures and contradictions of social change are particularly acute among adolescent males, who are grappling with received wisdom from elders, personal insecurities of adolescence, and a growing awareness that gender relations are changing around them. Programs that incorporate these insights and enable boys to actively engage in dialogue and debate can serve a useful role for both sexes.

END NOTES

1. ‘ayb in Arabic means socially unacceptable.
2. Haram in Arabic means religiously incorrect or unacceptable.
3. Upper-Egyptian governorates are the most disadvantaged and poorest region, located in the South of Egypt.
4. The New Visions Program has been developed by CEDPA in recognition of male influence on the enabling environment for the empowerment of girls. Girls have repeatedly told CEDPA that in order for their knowledge and attitudes to result in real behavior change, it is important they have the support of boys and men in their lives.

REFERENCES

Humiliation and Masculine Crisis in Iraq

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Introduction

The truth is that there are hundreds of thousands of angry, humiliated, frustrated, powerless young men in the Islamic world. And what we have done in Iraq is make it easier for them. – General Wesley Clark, November 2003

It is impossible to watch as Iraq spirals out of U.S. control (I write at the end of April 2004), without noting the depth and combustibility of the masculine crisis that has taken hold in and around Iraq. The crisis is double-edged and dialectical, it has both Iraqi and American dimensions. The purpose of this brief article is to examine the parameters and political-military implications of this masculine crisis, which can be defined as the traumatic psychological and material consequences of the inability, or threatened inability, to conform to masculine role expectations.

I focus in particular on the element of humiliation in masculine crisis. I also examine the crisis in terms of gender and human rights, something that is virtually never done in the case of male subjects. Building on many years of research into contemporary state repression, warfare, and genocide, I argue that it is typically the case that militarized conflicts and uprisings lead to disproportionate violence against younger adult males – those of imputed “battle age” (military capability) – Iraq is no exception. There, younger adult males constitute the most vulnerable population group in the present occupation and military struggle, if by “most vulnerable” we mean the group most liable to be targeted for killing, torture (including sexual torture and humiliation), and other acts of repression.

Gender and Economic Crisis in Iraq

In the year that has passed since the U.S. “coalition” invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, basic infrastructure has remained in shambles, and the crisis of subsistence remains generalized. Crucially, unemployment appears to have increased from the Saddam Hussein era (to between 60 and 90 percent of the workforce), at the same time as the infrastructure of subsistence food distribution has faltered, and the prices of many basic goods (such as cooking gas) has skyrocketed.

Though female unemployment typically increases, relative to males, in times of transition, the picture in Iraq seems somewhat different. With the dismissal of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi soldiers, it may be that male unemployment has increased more dramatically than in the case of women. These mass layoffs also likely exacerbated the humiliation that many Iraqi men, including these soldiers, felt after Iraq's rapid defeat on the battlefield. Furthermore, because of their suspicions about the political loyalties of Iraqi men, the occupation authorities have flown in contract workers from as far afield as Bangladesh and Nepal, rather than hiring locally. Economically desperate Iraqi men see this, too, as a humiliating slap.

For women, as well, growing unemployment and confinement in the home (exacerbated by the widespread insecurity in Iraq) represents an enormous and humiliating setback. Nonetheless, it can be contended that given patriarchal role expectations, a failure to find formal or adequate informal employment impacts existentially upon men-as-mens to a greater extent than upon women-as-women. In any case, given men's domination of the public sphere, this masculine crisis has direct and profound political consequences. The ranks of demobilized soldiers were probably the key ingredient in the early months of the Iraqi insurgency, while the more recent Shi'ite uprising has mobilized predominantly poor and unemployed men and male adolescents. As the BBC put it: “High unemployment is not just a waste of Iraq's enormous human resources, it also leads to trouble, with hundreds of thousands of young discontented Iraqi men finding they have not much to do – except perhaps confront coalition forces.”

The element of gendered humiliation that runs through this account seems vital to understanding the atmosphere of masculine crisis. American commentator Thomas Friedman defines humiliation as “the single most underestimated force in international relations.” The Norwegian social scientist, Eivin Lindner, has explored the effects of humiliation and its companion, shame, in what she calls “honour societies” – including those of the Arab Middle East. The most lurid face of shame and humiliation are perhaps the institutions of “honour” killing and blood feud that are common in the Arab World (along with regions such as the Caucasus and South Asia). But their impact is more complex, subtle, and quotidian. Media reports have documented the central role of these quantities in fuelling rejection of, and violent resistance to, the occupation. This is apparent also in the case of gender-selective victimization of Iraqi men by occupation forces.

Gender-Specific and Gender-Selective Targeting of Iraqi Men

Objective factors – particularly the socioeconomic ones just described – are vital in setting the contours of masculine crisis in Iraq. Also key, however, is the strategy of gender-selective victimization of Iraqi men that lies at the heart of U.S. occupation policies. The measures directed overwhelmingly at males include humiliation, humiliation before family members, mass roundups, incarceration, torture, selective killings, and denial of the right to humanitarian evacuation from besieged cities.

Gender-selective repression is particularly evident in the forcible depopulation of males in conflict areas – including boy children and very old men. According to the New York Times: “American forces are still conducting daily raids, bursting into homes and sweeping up families. More than 10,000 men and boys are in custody … [T]he military acknowledges that most people it captures are probably not dangerous.” As a result, “entire swathes of farmland have been cleared of males – fathers, sons, brothers, cousins. There are reports that the soldiers have not been doing men's work. Women till the fields, and guard the houses … Iraq has a new generation of missing men. But instead of ending up in mass graves or at the bottom of the Tigris River, as they often did during the rule of Saddam Hussein, they are detained somewhere in American jails.” This evisceration of the male population is often accompanied by the humiliating treatment of detainees in front of their families – forcing men to the floor and then placing soldier's boots on their heads as a prime example.

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Reference

* — Name of the author

Picture Credit: Reuters/Georg Popov

Picture Caption: Saddam Salih, a former crewman in the Abu Ghraib prison, shows a picture of the torture, humiliation and abuse he endured, May 17, 2004.
More masculine humiliation follows in December. (D追) In December, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, one photograph depicts a female soldier, a cigarette dangling from her mouth, [...] giving a jaunty thumbs-up sign and pointing at the genitals of a young Iraqi, who is naked except for a sandbag over his head, as he masturbates. Three other hooded and naked Iraqi prisoners are shown, hands reflexively crossed over their genitals. A fifth prisoner has his hands at his sides. In another, England stands arm in arm with Special Forces, both are grinning and giving the thumbs-up. (D追) (D追) (D追)

It is hard to think of imagery more likely to fuel the rage of Iraqis, and particularly younger Iraqi men. 1 Indeed, we may begin back on the release of the pornography and widespread diffusion of these photographs as one of the most significant moments in the history of post-invasion Iraq. U.S. Senator Joseph Biden recently observed that this is “the single most significant undermining act that’s occurred in a decade in that region of the world in terms of our standing.”

Masculine Crisis and the U.S.

Feelings of humiliation are strongly in the other side of masculine crisis in Iraq: that of the invaders, led by a president apparently seeking to avenge his father’s humiliation at the failure of the 1991 Gulf War to win him re-election, while Saddam Hussein remained in power throughout the 1990s. Jonathan Freedland captured this with some suggestive comments about humiliation and political-military aggression:

A veteran New York political operative once told me: “Never underestimate the subset of male violence that runs through American politics.” – Bush feeds that ideological appetitive skull. “Slowly but surely we’re going to hurt them down,” he warns the “bunch of cold-blooded killers” of al Qaeda. There will be no lip-merited attempt to understand terrorism’s root causes. “See, therapy isn’t going to work,” he says to laughter. And, in a moment of pure Mafa-peak, he mentions an al-Qa’ida suspect caught by the US: “This guy is no longer a problem for America,” he says, with an implicit wink. You could be watching The Sopranos."

There was humiliation, too, in the sophisticated and widespread insurgency against the US occupiers that left the US occupation reeling in April 2004. “In the space of two weeks,” notes the Washington Post, the insurgency “isolated the US-appointed civilian government and stopped the American-financed reconstruction effort.” Pressured U.S. forces to vastly expand their area of operations within Iraq, while triggering a partial collapse of the new Iraq security services [...] stirred support for the insurgents across both Sunni and Shi’ite communities."

This massive blow paralyzed the US authorities on the ground and shocked their masters in Washington, along with those trying to ensure George W. Bush’s re-election. The contrast between the macho “mission accomplished” rhetoric of the immediate post-conquest period, and the collapsing occupation structure at present, could hardly be more stark. Such contradictions injure a specifically masculine pride; they are the political-military equivalent of a kick to the cojones.

As for the pathological machismo displayed by some of the occupying troops, it is to be expected – though never condoned – and it is secondary, both chronologically and logically, to its political counterpart. That the military lives and breathes this gender ideology hardly needs emphasizing, after two generations of fervent feminist criticism on this count. Likewise, under conditions of protracted occupation of facilities themselves. On the very day that I write, shocking photographs have been published worldwide and broadcast across the Arab world, and rising numbers of acts of degradation inflicted on Iraqi men imprisoned at the Abu Ghraib prison west of Baghdad by U.S. military personnel. As investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, one photograph depicts a female soldier, a cigarette dangling from her mouth, [...] giving a jaunty thumbs-up sign and pointing at the genitals of a young Iraqi, who is naked except for a sandbag over his head, as he masturbates. Three other hooded and naked Iraqi prisoners are shown, hands reflexively crossed over their genitals. A fifth prisoner has his hands at his sides. In another, England stands arm in arm with Special Forces, both are grinning and giving the thumbs-up. (D追) (D追) (D追)

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The Preferred Partner

An Investigative Field Study of Lebanese Youth

Azzah Shararah Baydoun
Professor of Psychology, Lebanese University

"A girl from a good family, pretty and rich" – these are the three main criteria and in this order that have been cast in the extended family where I grew up and in that order – for evaluating men’s right choice of a bride. On the three qualities and variations, I witnessed endless conversations in mutual visits between my maternal aunts, their relatives, and their friends. However, as far as the prospective husband for the family’s young women was concerned, I noticed a disregard of his family’s status and of his physical appearance, a disregard sometimes followed by the saying: “There’s nothing shameful for a man except his empty pocket.”

However, feminist consciousness was not restricted to individuals or groups but rather went beyond that to infiltrate all scientific and academic fields. In Gender Psychology (the field of concern here), the works of Feminist pioneers such as Bem, Spence, and Helmreich† were published. These works attempted to assess the presence of a new feminine identity compatible with the above-mentioned transformations, its forms, and its psychological and psychosocial features, etc.

In the mid-1980s, directly inspired by the works of Bem, Spence, and Helmreich, and relying on their research tools, we undertook an attempt to identify the new identity of female undergraduates in Lebanon.” We had sensed the difference in the context of a major transformation, unlike any other experience in our society.

We assumed that the 18-21 age cohort (which constitutes the population of the above-mentioned study) had spent its early formative years in a revolutionary era fraught with liberation movements; that this age cohort “inherited” the achievements and opportunities for which the former generation had struggled to acquire and which had now become (for this age cohort) a task already completed and a given; and finally, we assumed that the impact of the achievements and opportunities acquired takes a certain time period to fade.

In Lebanese society today, one observes a cohabitation of contradictory phenomena and a “peaceful” coexistence of discordant ideologies. Despite this, one observes some stability in the expanded presence of Lebanese women’s new identity.† This identity, whose prevalence we detected among female university students in the 1980’s, was expressed in a self-concept not strictly limited to the traditional feminine model. In fact, this faction of Lebanese women attempts to transcend that model by integrating in their self-concept, masculine psychological features in addition to traditional feminine ones. These masculine features have been cast in the minds of both female and male undergraduates as more desirable for men than they are for women in Lebanese society.

The Issue and the Questions

The fundamental question that this paper will attempt to answer is: Do the features of the image that young Lebanese men seek in their future partners resemble the actual identity of their female coeds?

That is, what is the prevalent gender type of the preferred partner as perceived by those young men? Does it resemble, or transcend, the traditional feminine profile?

Is there a link between the gender type of the preferred female partner’s image and the gender attitudes of male undergraduates?

If the young man’s image of the preferred female partner, for example, resembles the “New Woman” as she perceives herself, is his preference accompanied by unconventional gender attitudes? Would the opposite be true? Or are the two unrelated?

What about the female undergraduate? Has her transcendence of the traditional gender type affected her preference when selecting a male partner? Does her image of that partner resemble the self-image of the male coed?

The Sample

This paper offers an analytical discussion of some of the results of a preliminary survey conducted in Spring 2003 on a convenient sample of male and female Lebanese University students (First Branch of the Lebanese University). This preliminary survey was conducted as part of a field study in process. One of the study’s preoccupations is a search for the features of the profile male Lebanese University students have of their prospective partners; and a search, as well, for the facets of similarity and dissimilarity between that profile and between the actual self-image of the corresponding group of youths. The study also aims at identifying the nature of the existing relationship between the profile of the preferred male/female partner and the gender attitude of university youths.

There is nothing shameful for a man except his empty pocket.
Thus, 84 male and female undergraduates completed an inventory designed to determine the extent to which they are characterized (according to their own estimation) by traits previously classified across four scales: 1) the masculinity scale (M); 2) the femininity scale (F); 3) the neutral scale (N); and 4) the masculinity-femininity (M-F) scale.

Also, 80 male and female undergraduates completed an identical inventory consisting of the same traits/scales but designed to determine the degree to which the students seek these features in their preferred future partners.

All the above – totaling 164 male and female undergraduates – completed a questionnaire designed to measure their gender attitudes.

Research Tool
At this point in our presentation, and in an attempt to guide the reader a better understanding of the following discussion and the opportunity to assess the reliability of the results we obtained, we shall present, in what follows, the mentioned inventories (our research tools) and their components.

The Gender Identity Inventory
This consists of four scales, the first for masculinity, the second for femininity, the third designated as “neutral”, and the fourth designated as “masculinity-femininity.” In this study, “femininity” and “masculinity” are empirical concepts, each consisting of a number of traits. We have obtained the traits that constitute “femininity” and “masculinity” by way of a preliminary survey in this study, two independent groups of male and female undergraduates selected socially desirable traits but ones that are more desirable for women than for men, thus creating the “femininity” scale.

As for the male/female partner inventory, it is exactly the same as the gender identity inventory, with the exception of the instructions in the beginning, which request the respondent to assign the degree to which each of the listed traits describe the preferred female/the preferred male partner respectively.

Gender attitude (or gender prejudice) measure is no different from other attitude measures. Here, we adopt a five-point scale to assess respondents’ agreement with the listed items. These items consist of statements about popular sayings that judge the status of women and men, their roles, traits, relationships, and relationship-related values and connotations.11

Results
First: Partner and Co-ed: Similarity and Difference
Examining the features male undergraduates seek in their female partners and comparing them with those that female undergraduates attribute to themselves, one encounters many similarities. These similarities are not restricted to feminine traits but apply to masculine ones too (i.e., traits more socially desirable for men in our society than they are for women). It is true that young men seek prospective female partners who are nurturing and relational and who have expressive skills. These young men may wish these partners to be somewhat passive, but they always wish them to be agentic and instrumental as well.

Despite this, the male undergraduate in our sample tends to attribute feminine traits to his preferred prospective partner to a higher degree than young women attribute such features to themselves. The most important of these features are beauty and attractive-ness. With regard to this finding, young men in our sample are no different from men around the world! Men’s desire for a beautiful and attractive woman is one of the most persistent desires in Western and cross-cultural studies.12 It is expected of researchers on men’s mate selection preferences. This persistence has prompted researchers to seek possible associations between those two features and between the instincts needed for the survival of the human race and its evolution, among them women’s ability to procreate; researchers suggested that men perceive a woman’s beauty as related to procreation in view of its traditional association with youth. What is noteworthy in our sample is that men and women equally give themselves moderate scores on beauty and attractiveness.

The Lebanese male undergraduate seeks an innocent and obedient partner. Young men want their female partners to be innocent to the same extent that young women (their co-eds) attribute innocence to themselves. The paradox is that young men in our sample have a self-image that is more innocent than both their preferred prospective partners and their co-eds. In any case, innocence is not desirable for men in Lebanese society. As such, the young men identifies with his masculine stereotype and does not violate its requirements. But the case differs with “obedience.” Young men require more obedience from their partners than their female co-eds attribute to themselves. Instead, young women and young men were equal in indicating “obedience” as the feature least descriptive of their personality. Likewise, young men are less obedient for women but not for men. But both distance it when describing themselves, although men retain this feature as desirable for their preferred prospective partners.

This double standard reveals itself, as well, in neutral traits desirable to the same degree for both genders in Lebanese society. Among these, for example, are those that carry conformist connotations (such as preserving tradition and religiosity) and other ethical connotations (such as frankness and adherence to morals). All these features are sought in the female partner to the same extent that the college female student attributes them to herself, but much more so than the male attributes them to himself.

Finally, we consider traits that are rejected by the young man in his preferred prospective partner. These are divided into two groups.

The first group of traits is socially desirable for women and not for men, and they are: accepting fate (fatalism) as well as sentimen-tality and sensitivity; young men do not attribute these traits to their preferential partners. The second group of traits, in contrast, is socially desirable for men and not for women. Male undergraduates attribute to themselves love of adventure and readiness to take risks but reject them in their partner; do these two features carry in their cognizance a cultural representation of masculinity and as such conflict with their strong desire for inno-cence in their prospective partners? As for love of com-petition and sense of superiority, can we assume, in accordance with different theories in psychology, that perhaps these traits - when attributed to a female part-ner - pose a threat to men’s supposed superior status over the female sex? These theories contend that the superiority threatened in this case is that guaranteed by men’s status in the existing patriarchal system and as such poses a threat to masculinity as a psychological as well as cul-tural precondition of manhood.

Among the interesting traits are self-reliance and inde-pendence. According to the classifications based on the statements of Lebanese university youth in the mid-eighties,13 self-reliance and masculinity feature while inde-pendence is desirable for men and not for women (clas-sified thus on the masculinity-femininity scale). Although male undergraduates attributed 16 masculine features to their preferred female partner, they rejected attribut-ing “self-reliance” to her; the degree to which they wanted her to be “self-reliant” was less than their co-ed actually was. Is this because independence and self-reliance, in contrast to other masculine features, deprive the persistent image of Woman in our cultural repertoire of one of its most important components; i.e., her dependence on and “belongingness” to a certain man...
At this point, we proceed to examine the gender profile in its entirety and its relationship to the co-ed's self-image as follows:

% of male students preferring a female partner of gender type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Type</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andro</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masc</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% distribution of female students according to self image gender type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Type</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andro</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masc</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The median adopted in order to classify high masculinity and high femininity in all the sample was calculated for the pooled scores of the male and female undergraduates who completed the partner and partner questionnaire respectively. Its value is different, than, from the median mentioned in Footnote 10.

A study of the above table reveals that the percentage of androcline young women – those that attribute to themselves feminine traits to a high degree and distance masculine traits – are a minority; their percentage is prone to decline with time. However, the percentage of male undergraduates (their colleagues) who prefer a feminine partner is higher. The "feminine" woman is the most preferred, statistically, among the four gender types.

Among these four gender types, the androgrous group totally prevails over the other gender types (50% of female students have an androgrous self-image) while only 24% of men desire such androgrous female partners. Also 66% of the male undergraduates in our sample select a future female partner with low masculinity while 60% of their co-eds are characterized by high masculinity; i.e., the percentage of women of high masculinity is almost twice that of men desiring high masculinity in their preferred partners.

Does this gap between "supply" and "demand" in women's gender types and degree of masculinity imply potential emotional miscommunication between the two sexes in university youth?

The attempt to answer this question requires reference to studies that took psychological adjustment as one of their topics. These studies have always indicated the superiority of this gender stereotype, as opposed to others, in different indicators of psychological adjustment. Researchers have demonstrated that the androgrous young woman can, for example, adapt to different situations; she can respond to a feminine situation in a feminine way, and with equal competence, to approach a masculine situation with an appropriate masculine behavior.11

If we assume that the male selection situation stimulates a behavior or inherent feminine tendencies in women can also assume, based on the findings of the studies mentioned above, that the feminine dimension in an androgrous young woman will be the most prominent dimension in that situation, while the masculine dimension will decline for the same reason, particularly if that young woman receives unsnapped or spoken signals of the young man's psychological adjustment. Thus, the young man's desires would be a constituent of the mate selection situation, calling for the prominence of her "femininity" and the psychological adjustment of the same time. This tendency to adjust to a "coupling" situation is - as documented by gender differences in their expectations - a feminine self-image and the pressure of society at the same time. These studies indicate a tendency to exaggerate in attributing masculine features to themselves, compared to other women's groups or compared to male undergraduates. These studies indicate that these students tend to exaggerate as much their roles as university students require instrumentality and agency, and even dominance and competition (these last two features are considered socially undesirable for women). These studies also indicate that masculine behavior in this situation does not detract from these women's sexual attractiveness. These results are supported by underrgraduate students since previous studies – particularly those that adopted an evolutionary perspective12 – demonstrated that women charac-
terized by masculine features were undesirable partners.

One of the reasons for the high masculinity in female undergraduates in our sample, in addition to the above mentioned reasons, is that the reference group13 (most probably consisting of women in traditional roles) on which these women rely upon to determine their gender identities is perceived as less masculine than themselves; this is what perhaps leads to the above-mentioned exaggeration.

Second: The Partner Is Not the College Mate

A first glance at the features of the preferred male partner by the female undergraduate indicates that he is perceived to be more masculine than their male colleagues' actual self-image; these male colleagues seem "deficient" with respect to the female's exaggerated require-

ments. We do not find one feature on any of the 3 scales (masculinity, femininity, neutral) that characterizes the male undergraduate to a higher degree than that assigned to him as a prospective partner by his co-ed! Instead, if we consider her desiring a perfect partner in all respects, he must be: brave, capable of confrontation, strong, instrumentality and agency, self-possessed and unemotional. We examine the gender types and degrees of masculinity and femininity given by our male and female undergraduates agree that external deviation from either stereotype is undesirable; they both severely distance themselves from their respective partners: these features socially desired for those partners' given sex.

We point to another group of features desired by each of the genders in the younger generation: the young men and women actually view themselves as possessing such features. These include "tolerance”, “patience”, and “modesty”. The male undergraduate, just like his co-ed, attributed to himself low scores on these traits. These features involve a rhythm that does not suit, in our opinion, the expected roles of the un-
iversity context, and this is what makes both male and female students uninterested, perhaps, with "possessing" these features. Perhaps these features are considered contraindicative, viewed as undesirable by each gender but mutually left for the partner to possess!

A descriptive analysis for the set of features discussed above leads to the following preliminary remark: a male undergraduate's preference for his partner is stereotyped to a considerable extent. Yet further consideration of the four gender types reveals a more complicated picture. The exaggeration with which the female undergraduate describes her preferred partner’s masculinity – as identified above in the analytical description of masculine
to a degree at least equivalent to that of her own masculinity. It is true that the sample of females which the researchers who selected their preferred male partner is different from the sample that completed the gender self-image questionnaire. Yet attributing high masculinity to oneself, as mentioned above, is a phenomenon observed in women, one whose recurrence has been documented by western researchers and which describes female traits – reappears in the table that reveals the distribution of female undergraduates (according to preferences of partners’ gender type) and that of male undergraduates (according to their gender identity). Two-thirds of the young women selected partners of high masculinity while less than half of their male colleagues described themselves as having high masculinity.

One wonders: what are the reasons for this exaggeration? Is this exaggeration the result of the response style provoked by the inventory? We are referring to the known tendency for “Social Desirability” to which respondents are inclined to fall prey to in similar inventories, a tendency whose influence researchers attempt to neutralize. If the inventory responses reflect the personal characteristics, its effect would have been generalized; i.e., it would have applied to both female and male respondents. The same would have applied to the high femininity desired in the male partner, particularly since a high percentage of women attributed high scores to themselves on that scale. But the female undergraduate did not exaggerate in attributing feminine features to her male partner, as becomes evident from scrutinizing the scores of traits on the inventory of the male undergraduate. The percentage of male undergraduates of high femininity is nearly the same as that of young women who desire that high femininity in their male partners.

Perhaps the exaggeration phenomenon results from the following factors

The noted above that young women’s self-image tends to be saturated with high masculinity. If the young woman seeks a masculine partner, as do women generally, she will attribute to that partner high scores on the masculininity scale, in whole and in part, so as to make him masculine youth in Lebanese society according to several studies. Hence, exaggeration – when compared to the woman’s self-image – does not really turn out to be exaggeration after all.

Studies concerned with the topic of human mate selection indicate factors that are almost fixed in most societies (developing societies in particular) under study. One of these factors is that women prefer an older man while men prefer a younger woman. Could it be that the female undergraduate was not in fact describing her colleague (the male undergraduate)? Was she describing an older man who has gone a long way in consolidating his masculinity, so that the male undergraduate, compared to the preferred male partner, seems deficient in his “masculinity”? The components of masculinity refer to a traditional situation where the male role was complementary to the female one. Early and Wood 22 have found, upon conducting a meta-analysis of studies on this topic, a decline in the importance of the male partner as provider or as the older partner. This decline is consistent with the rise in the “Gender-Related Development Index” and the “Gender Empowerment Measure” adopted by researchers in UN organizations. If the survival of the Human Race involves a division of roles among women and men for maximizing the conditions necessary for that survival (being an economic provider and its precondition for men, health and fertility related to youth in women), then the continuity of those conditions, despite the decline in their necessity, is nothing more than the persistence of an ideology that loses, gradually, its material basis but that survives, as do all ideologies, much longer than its raison d’être.

We would like to point out that we are describing a preference and not actual mate selection. Studies concerned with determining preferences in the domain of romantic partnerships have documented mate selection style that does not differ much from the results indicated by this study. Some researchers believe that the mutual attraction between the feminine woman and the masculine man is the most widely occurring, despite the prediction of some of these researchers that this type of attraction will necessarily decline with the decline in the traditional division of gender roles. In fact, according to some studies, the actual partnership between the masculine man and the feminine woman – and not merely the preference for it – is the one that occurs most, compared to involving other gender types. However, what the researchers regret (those who have conducted longitudinal studies that traced the course of that type of partnership) is that it is more prone to breakup than other gender type partnerships. 23

Why is this so? Ikess, 24 for example, believes that attraction between the two stereotyped couples is the partner-ship model most suitable for the prerequisites of survival of the human race. Since partnership between the sexes in this era is motivated by desires and factors more complicated than survival needs and prerequisites, then the more primate type of attraction is likely to decline once the instinctual reasons for its occurrence are “consumed”: fertility prerequisites and their related psychological factors (sexual attraction, in particular). These have come to occupy only a part of the lives of men and women and constitute no more a life-consuming “project”. The paradox that people currently live is manifested by the clash between the culture of the past and the disposition provided by our genes on the one hand, and between our actual daily life and what contemporary culture prescribes and provides, on the other hand.

These preliminary survey results are restricted to the convenient sample that was available to us and limited by the research tools used. Nevertheless, these results indicate that the group most sensitive to material and human changes – university students, the most influential part of society – has changed in past times. As far as romantic partnership preferences are concerned, their expectations of the partner are not correlated with their personal identity, particularly the human reality. These changes, as indicated by our study results, consist in transcending gender stereotypes for both sexes. Why is this transcendence, exhibited by the majority of university students both male and female, not reflect on partnership preferences for university students?

Psychologists, particularly those inspired by psychoanalytic theory, tend to attribute to the above-mentioned partnership unconscious tendencies and representations most likely related to the personal history of the individual and that cannot be accounted for by changes of any kind in the real world. This renders generalizations derived from changes in social reality about partnership simplistic, partial and hence incorrect. But, researchers in the field of Social Psychology affirm that contracting romantic partnerships does not occur outside the cultural ideological, political, or economic context.

% distribution of female students preferring a male partner of gender type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Type</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
<th>Males (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% distribution of female students according to self-image gender type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Type</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
<th>Males (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We did not have the opportunity to explore Arab studies that indicate quality change in the methods of mate selection. We refer, in this context, to the study by Mona Fayad in which she documented men-women partnerships in Lebanon in the 1960’s and 1970’s, and the way in which the absence of marriage and childbearing, or the lowest standards were expressed for claiming actualization of their personal as well as their political dreams, when they experienced the possibility of having control over matters in both the private and the public spheres of life. At that time, men and women selected romantic partners that were “uncommitted” to gender stereotypes, capable of building equitable tradi-
tion-free relationships. If we go back further in time to the beginning of the twentieth century, to a revolution-
year era similar to the sixties and seventies in its promises, we note what Qassem Amin wrote in his book Women’s Liberation, describing the female partner as equal to men in her concerns and education and in handling social responsibility and not merely as a female passively responding to her mate’s desires and breeding his proge-
ty. In this respect, the study given by Fayad makes it possible to identify a quality transformation propor-
tional to the time period that separates the two men-
tioned eras.

We wonder: why don’t we find in the current time peri-
od a quality change similar to that witnessed when com-
paring the Nadha period in the beginning of last century to the 1960’s and 70’s? Why does the tendency of select-
ing preferred gender type of mate, or even dropped partner resembling the traditional image of women or men more than it resembles actual men and women? Is this tendency, found in a group of university students, and according to the above discussion differentiated for “feminization” in youth, a phenomenon much discussed in public discourse? Is this tendency an indicator (among others such as the revival of religious fundamentalism) of that youth’s regression into the controllable world of reassurance, established tradition, a kind of defence against the real world ( and hence a less threatening substitute) that imposes a unitary universal reference, thus marginalizing most of our youth on more than one level? Is this no more than an expression of expected linger-
ing of attitudes behind reality’s transformation in accor-
dance with the fact that all that relates to our attitudes, beliefs, and feelings – mate preferences at the heart of that – is likely to persist and remain much longer than its reality-based rationales?

The orientation of gender attitudes for this group of youth can answer some of these questions. This is because the adoption of conventional stands regarding men’s and women’s roles in society, the strong adherence to traditional values, and gender training behaviors leading to amending policies, laws, and institu-
tional measures in accordance with transformations that affected these institutions – all of these are related, according to some researchers, to defensive authoritari-
an personalities, ones “defeated” in their actual reality, and vice versa. This is because gender is seen as a central concept to the set of all biases: racism, sectarianism, religious fanaticism, and ageism etc. This is what some of our results have indicated upon analyzing the existing rela-
tionship between gender identity and gender attitudes in this group of Lebanese youth. Is mate selection subject to the same consideration? Is a gender stereotyped mate preference linked to conventional standards toward women’s and men’s roles? And vice versa?

Analysis of the results of this study’s Gender Attitudes Inventory does not indicate a clear direction in this regard. With respect to this issue, men and women were divided according to their sex and not according to the gender type of the mate they selected. Female under-
graduates, irrespective of the gender type of preferred partner, are much more liberated from gender stereotype constraints, than their male counterparts and less accept-
ing of men’s and women’s traditional roles and the legal and status-based consequences that follow from these roles.

We note that the group of male undergraduates who preferred undifferentiated female mates seemed moder-
ately less prejudiced than the other gender type groups of male students (yet they are much more prejudiced than female students in this sample). It is noteworthy that men who hold undifferentiated self-image have been found to be the most prejudiced among all four self-
image gender types. This indicates that the act of attributing traits to oneself is subject to a different mech-
anism than that of attributing traits to a female mate. This group is small in number (it totals 8), so one must accept this result with caution.

The aim of conducting this preliminary survey on partner profile preferences and its relation to the self-image of the corresponding members of the other sex among uni-
versity students was to formulate possible answers (hypotheses) to the questions asked in the course of our research for manifestations of masculinity in Lebanese soci-
ety. The results of this survey are indicators or keys that enable us to offer some answers but the results have reached raise additional questions.

Isn’t this what studies on humanity most often rea-
find few answers embedded with further questions await-
ing answers?

END NOTES

118.
8. This inventory does not resemble traditional ones. Its masculini-
ty is divided into two dimensions: in contrast to traditional measures in psy-
chology, are peripherally, whereas their components do not lie on one bipolar continuum. Femininity, according to this inventory, is not the opposite of masculinity, nor is masculinity the opposite of femininity. Each dimension has its own scale. We first had to assign another. Accordingly, a person – whether a man or a woman – can exhibit both masculine and feminine traits. Aggressive people can also be feminine but just be equally active or passive. As such, gender identities have multiplied, and their cor-
relation characteristics have become more complex, where previ-
uous inventories produced one stereotypical identity for each sex (feminine for women and masculine for men); and one non-stereo-
typical identity (feminine for men and masculine for women) identities, have become, according to the proposed form of classifica-
tion in this inventory. This is in addition to other types: high masculinity and high femininity and undifferentiated (low mas-
culinity and low femininity).
9. We used the median for the pooled scores of both women and men as a separator between “high” and “low” in each of the masculinity and femininity scales.
10. Among this inventory’s items, we mention the following first six statements:
1. Woman’s nature is not compatible with political work. 2. A man feels inferior if a woman shares in providing for the fam-
ily. 3. The relationship set by religious laws between men and woman is correct and ideal. 4. A man’s manhood is not compromised if he does housework at times. 5. Woman’s nature is suitable for particular vocations and unsuit-
able for others.
14. Same as the 11th mentioned in (6).
15. Same as (III).
21. Simo de Beauvoir had indicated in her book The Other Sex women’s tendencies to raise her partners status, in an effort to make herself at the same time because she assumes that this raising, and that reduction of one in raising, is the key to achieving personal social process.
22. Same as the reference in (5) and (6).
26. Simo de Beauvoir had indicated in her book The Other Sex women’s tendency to raise her partners status, in an effort to make herself at the same time because she assumes that this raising, and that reduction of one in raising, is the key to achieving personal social process.
29. The ratio of married women of marriage age (25-35) existing in Lebanon society, according to demographers, ranges from “a man for every three women” to “a man for every six women” 30. Same as (24).
31. Ibid.
34. Same as Footnote 5.
35. Ibid.

82

83
No Comment

These pictures are taken at an extra special disguise party. The pictures first appeared in Cocktail magazine, No. 4, December 2003/January 2004 and are reprinted after permission was granted.
“Dancing Against the Norms”

A Profile of Mosbah Baalbaki

Lynn Maalouf

Every Saturday night, at around three o’clock in the morning, Music Hall’s long velvet crimson curtains draw open, leaving way to a slim, tall figure that takes position in a bare set up, standing under a single spotlight. As the first percussion beat rips through the silence of anticipating viewers, the figure’s hips take a bold swing left and then another right, setting off a series of sexually-teasing belly dance moves. The now roaring audience is glued to the sight of the dark, darse hair plastered backwards, the toned muscles rippling through tight-fitting jeans, and the heavy gold chains reaching down to the navel swaying over a fluid see-through top. The name of the belly dancer is Mosbah Baalbaki, better known simply as Mosbah, the famous male belly dancer who combines sophisticated dance moves and a playful charisma, and who in the past few years has come to disrupt a long tradition of exclusively female belly dancing in the country.

In a country dominated by a patriarchal system, where the stereotype masculine figure is characterized by high-gear testosterone-driven personae to the point where the legal system penalizes homosexuality, Mosbah has succeeded, over and above the controversy of his act and image, in dancing his way through the deeply entrenched norms of masculinity. He has imposed himself as a respected public figure on the regional scene: every couple of months at least, he is solicited to perform at private parties for political and financial bigwigs across the globe, from the Sychelles islands, to Milan, Sardina, Paris, London and Dubai. And when he’s in town, he dances before a full house every week end, even if a few sarcastic boos made by suddenly insecure male voices accompany the cheer, there’s no question that a significant number of revelers are ready to wait until that late hour just to see Mosbah’s show, which lasts no longer than a mere 10 minutes at the most. Mosbah has also attracted considerable international media attention, including a special CNN report in 1999, and interviews with the BBC and the New York Times.

Born some thirty years ago and growing up as an only son in Sidon, Mosbah has come a long way indeed, thanks to this “hobby” as he calls it. Belly dancing has allowed him to fulfill his childhood dream, which is star- dom. “Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to be a star, a celebrity of my own. I didn’t want to be like everyone else. Even when I weighed 120 kilograms and that is until I was 17, I dressed in daring, eccentric colors. I loved music and adored Egyptian movies. I was always telling my mother that I wanted to go to Egypt to become an actor. But she convinced me to get a college degree first. And she was so right, because when you’re educated and have self-respect, you can impose people’s respect.” At 20, Mosbah came to the capital to pursue a degree in communica- tion arts at the Lebanese American University. Upon gradu- ation, he traveled to Dubai for a few months where he worked as an assistant director before returning to Beirut to work as a fashion designer for a magazine. During one of his location hunts for the magazine, he met Michel Elefteriades, who owned, at the time Amor Y Libertad, a popular nightclub that had just opened. “Michel invited me there one Saturday night. There were around 700 people,” recalls Mosbah. “He came up front to me and asked me if I would mind dancing Arabic. He had seen me dancing at another club. He told me to go up to the bar and dance. My first response was: Are you crazy? I can’t do something like that! What would my family, and my friends say? But I loved the idea. So I made my way through the crowd to the bar. When I tried to get on it, the bartender stopped me. Then Michel cleared it out. I danced to one song. It was crazy and I loved it.” This spontaneous episode turned into a weekly gig, two months later. a contract was duly signed with Elefteriades’ production company, Elef Records, and Mosbah became officially a male belly dancer, gaining national fame a few months later.

Off the scenes, Mosbah is just as picky with the details of his image as on stage, at the time of the interview with Al-Raïda, which took place at a beauty institute owned by a friend of his, he was carrying along a checkered red and white Dior purse with his red and white track suit, a white cap and wide-framed red sunglasses. “Just for the 10 minutes of the show, there’s a lot of work to do. I have to work out every day to stay in shape; I have to chose the songs, the fabric for my costumes, the set up,” he explains. Even the rebellious button of his tight-fitting jeans shirt, which he was clipping back on for the umpteenth time during the interview, seemed to be a deliberate choice serving to expose a perfectly hairless, olive skin chest.

“I’m not trying to provoke any- one. I don’t have anything to prove to anyone,” he says. But when he first started out, he did suffer from people’s reactions: “Of course, I saw the sarcasm, but didn’t pay heed to it. Rumors started circulating and they even reached my family. Luckily, my family and I are very close. They know what I am and what I’m worth. They didn’t buy into the talk. But I was hurt. I wanted to quit. It was then that Michel managed to convince me. I held on because I have faith in what I’m doing. I have passion for what I do.”

When asked whether he believes he contributed to a more homo- sexual-tolerant society in Lebanon over the past years, he gives a modest shrug, but then refers to the special report published in 2001 in the French maga- zine L’Express, in which he was identified as one of the 100 Lebanese personalities to follow. “In a country and region, where deep intolerance of any deviation from the established norms of masculinity runs high, Mosbah has indeed managed to open a breach in these norms by imposing himself as an artist and a cultural icon.”
The social and hierarchical relationship between the sexes in Morocco is now in crisis because of the increase in the number of women in the education and employment fields, the decrease in fecundity, and the de-institutionalization of sexuality. These two unconfined processes are the main factors that define the unequal traditional relationship between sexes. Additionally, these processes redefine masculinity, which has been considered for a long time as a source of privilege and power.

I. Issue
Men are not participating enough in the different programs related to reproductive health despite the infiltration of Moroccan women into the domains of education, work, reproduction and sexuality. The Moroccan man refuses to renounce (totally and for good) his privileges, and considers that he has the right to oppose, in the name of the Islamic sexual ethic, the woman’s emancipation. This emancipation is considered a sexual liberation, which means a “danger”. Sexual liberation is considered, in the name of a patriarchal Islam, as debauchery, prostitution and license.

In the same logic, the socio-economic crisis pushes the Moroccan man to become attached to, even to regress to the traditional religious forms of masculine domination. Consequently, the principle of the equality of the sexes finds itself the primary victim of the economic crisis. Tradition becomes a shelter against the difficulties that emanate from development programs, especially in matters related to reproductive health. Encounter. Chauvinism manifests itself through religious texts and fundamentalist Islam. According to traditionalists, matters relating to reproductive and sexual health must be treated in conformity with two unchangeable and pre-established Shari’a principles: the inequality of sexes in matters relating to personal status and the subordination of sexuality to marriage. Consequently, the Moroccan man finds himself lost between two calls: the egalitarian call of reproductive health programs and the discriminatory call of religious traditions.

In Sexual identity and reproductive health in Morocco, we analyzed this ineduciveness through 10 large variables:
- The psychosocial profile of masculinity
- The sexual orientation of masculinity
- The judicial profile of masculinity
- The self-determination of feminine sexuality
- The (pragmatic) protection of sexuality
- Masculinity, between fertility, impotence and contraception
- The masculine obstetrical conscience

II. Methodology
The questions that this section tries to answer include those related to the inquiry’s population, the concerned administrations, the inquiry’s sites, and the obtained samples.

II. 1 Population of the Inquiry
The inquiry has decided to target the “ordinary” man only. Since he does not have an advanced academic education, the “ordinary” man does not have the intellectual means to conceive the principle of equality of sexes as a rational and democratic principle. Unlike the intellectual man, who not only conceives the principle of feminism and fights for it in some cases, the ordinary man considers masculine domination as a natural and sacred religious fact. It is in such a man that we might find a deep-rooted masculine identity that resists egalitarian calls.

It seems to us that the minor civil servant best illustrates the ordinary man. A minor civil servant is a man who works in public administration and whose annual salary does not exceed 25,000 dirhams ($2,500). Working in the office and occupying subordinate positions encourage this man to manifest traditional masculine qualities such as virility, courage, and the ability to support his wife. It is within this man “without special qualities” that a crisis in masculine identity is bound to be the most acute. The crisis of economic power drives the ordinary man towards a defensive and compensatory reaction. This reaction includes stronger attachment to preconceived notions of masculine identity which is defined as unconditional power and privileges “based” on a sexist and a-historic “understanding” of Islamic texts.

II. 2 Administrations
Since we did not have sufficient means to cover all administrations, we chose the ones accountable to the following ministerial departments: Interior, Agriculture, Equipment, Health and Education. This choice was made because of the importance of these departments. In fact the number of personnel that these five ministries employ is 322,925 out of a total of 423,664 (76.2%), all ministries combined.

Another reason for choosing these departments is because the ministries of education, health and agriculture are involved, as institutions, in the reproductive health programs. Therefore it would be useful to see to what measure their minor civil servants are imbued with the reproductive health’s egalitarian sexual ideology. As far as the Ministry of Interior is concerned, it represents authority and power, an excellent field where masculine identity might be applied. The Ministry of Equipment, on the other hand, is associated with technical power still perceived as belonging to man.

II. 3 Sites of the Investigation
Initially, we have chosen to carry out the investigation in three different sites: the Oriental-Rif (Oujda), the Middle-Atlas (Khénifra), and the city of Rabat. Why such a choice?

The Oriental-Rif, is considered in Morocco as the center of masculinity in its extreme brutality. The natural constraints and economic precariousness of the Oriental-Rif are compensated for by an increase of masculine values centered around honor. The Middle-Atlas (Khénifra) is the opposite of the Rif in that it is perceived as the place where a “primitive” sexual liberty for women is accepted and tolerated. Finally Rabat, which is the administrative and intellectual capital, represents both the domain of minor civil servants par excellence and the location of feminine/feminist associations.

When the Direction of Population at the Ministry of Health, supported by the USAID, took a look at our project, it suggested that we enlarge our sample to include three other cities that particularly interests the Ministry, especially for phase V of its “Family Planning Project and Maternal and Infantile Health in Morocco” (1994-2000). These cities are Agadir, Tanger and Tétouan. Thus, the investigation was enlarged to include minor civil servants of these three cities.

II.4 Obtained Samples
The data collection started on March 19, 2000 and finished on May 19, 2000. The team, which includes 4 researchers under my supervision, accomplished a one-week stay in each of the six chosen sites.

Despite many objections and death threats expressed by fundamentalists against the director of research (mainly in Khénifra and Oujda), 524 minor civil servants filled out a questionnaire (table 1) and 43 were interviewed (table 2).

The size and the nonrepresentational aspect (in the strict sense) of the two samples imply that the results of this investigation should be considered as indicative and informative.

III. Results
Throughout this article, we will present the results related to aspects of masculinity and the role of sexual orientation, virility and fecundity in the masculine reconstruction of masculinity.

III.1 Psychosocial Profile
In Agadir, masculinity is defined as “practicality”, self-...
control, ability to keep promises, seriousness, responsibility, decision-making, honesty, sexual temperament, and loyalty to the country.

In Khénifra, being a man is synonymous with being intelligent, intellectual, and reasonable. Man should be moderate, rather than aggressive, hypocritical or traitorous, and despotist. Man should keep his word, should behave well, take the right decision, and not be afraid. Man should be in charge of expenses. A health civil servant elaborates this “quality” by asserting that “if a man does not have money, he cannot be a man...the entire concept of masculinity means that one should have money”. Man should be the protector of the family, and its shelter. He is the woman’s soldier, and her bodyguard. All in all man should inspire respect and fear to his entourage.

In Oujda, to be a man signifies heroism and courage. Man represents reason, a sense of responsibility, honor and dignity. He is the one who has an opinion and states it. Man, as already mentioned, is the one who keeps his word. Man is as well qqawam, which means the one who supports his wife and children because of the money he provides: “Perhaps man’s main characteristic is work...a lazy man is not a man”.

In Rabat, to be a man, is to have self-control and authority over wife and children. Man supports his family. He is the one who will work anywhere, and the one who has a job and money. He has a strong character and is responsible; he also keeps his word, faces difficulties, does not reveal secrets, and does not run away from problems.

In Tanger, to be a man, is to know how to dominate a family and inspire children with respect. Man should keep his word, especially when dealing with money. He should use his reason, and be able to see beyond the limits of the present. Man must be stable and possess a strong personality, principles, and the ability to support his family.

Finally in Tétouan, being a man is being responsible for the house, having a strong personality, authority, irrevocable decisions, and presence at home. Being a man means to be reasonable, delicate, wise, and always moving forward. To be a man is to take initiative, and be a leader. A man is the one who knows how to handle problems, who works hard, is tough and capable of handling hard tasks. Man should not be harsh rather than tender. He must be punctual and must keep his word. All in all, masculinity is about decision-making.

The characteristics associated with sexual behavior can be regrouped into four categories: psychological, moral, social, and political.

III.1. Psychological Characteristics of Masculinity

The category of psychological characteristics (table 3) includes 16 characteristics that define manhood. These characteristics were mentioned 31 times. Reason comes first, mentioned in four sites, followed by courage, awe, authority and personality, all mentioned in three sites. No single characteristic was mentioned in the six sites. Tétouan is the city that refers to psychological characteristics the most, followed by Rabat. Among the psychological characteristics mentioned during interviews, are authority and toughness.

Those who define man as “commander”, represent only 24% of the total sample. On the sites’ level, we mainly find them mostly in Rabat, where they constitute 32% as opposed to 13% in Tétouan. We mainly find them in the equipment (31%) and lastly in health (17%). The age variable does not lead to pertinent results. All the age categories have a percentage of accepting the proposition that varies between 23.7% and 25%. As for the ones who agree with the proposition “to be a man, is to be tough”, they only represent 10%. On the sites’ level, they reach their highest point in Khénifra with 15% and are almost absent in Tétouan (1%). On the administrations’ level, health comes first with 12%, whereas education comes last with 8%. The age variable links toughness with manhood in men over 45 years old.

III.1.2. The Moral Qualities of Masculinity

The moral qualities category (table 4) includes 10 qualities that have been cited 17 times. To keep his word is the moral quality that was cited unanimously. Responsibility comes in second position with 3 citations. Oujda is the city that cites the most moral qualities. Tétouan is the one that cites them the least.

III.1.3. The Social Indicators of Masculinity

The social indicators category (table 5) includes 4 elements that have been cited 4 times. Man as the supporter of the family is the quality that heads the poll. This quality was cited by five cities with the exception of...
Agadir. Unlike Khénifra and Rabat, Agadir does not cite a single social quality that defines manhood.

III.1.4. The Political Qualities of Masculinity

The political category (table 6) includes four traits (loyalty to the country, having an opinion...) that were cited four times. Each quality was cited on one occasion. None of the cities cited two traits. Rabat and Tanger did not cite any.

The distinction between the four traits that define man generate the following conclusions: As far as number and frequency are concerned, psychological traits head the poll of notions that define manhood, followed by moral and social traits. Political traits come in fourth position. Of the psychological traits, reason (it is a psychological trait, because it implies moderation, equilibrium and precaution), keeping one’s word (moral quality), supporting the family (social quality) come first among notions that define manhood. Tétouan is the city that uses the psychological perspective the most in order to define manhood, while Oujda adopts the moral perspective. Khénifra and Rabat adopt the social perspective.

This notional approach in defining man reveals a certain continuation of the

patriarchal definition of masculinity. This patriarchal continuation is itself through the affirmation of the intellectual, physical, social and religious superiority of man. Opposition between reason and emotion is always defined as opposition between men and women. The same applies to the opposition between physical force and weakness. Man is considered more suited to accomplishing hard work. In Oujda, some assert that physical force allows man to “correct” his wife, which does not stand in the way of seducing her. Socially, man symbolizes the protection of home; he is the defender of the house, meaning the woman living inside. Finally, from a religious point of view, “the woman is inferior because she cannot lead in prayer”.

But the definition of man as being superior is a definition that is far from appealing to everyone. In fact, only 21% of interviewees (against a majority of 66%) are favorable to the proposition “being a man signifies being better than the woman” (table 7).

In all cities, the feminist attitude implying that the man is not better than the woman won the polls by a high majority. The city of Oujda realized the highest feminist percentage (86.5%). On the administrations’ level, education comes in the forefront of feminist attitude with 79%, whereas health comes last with 61%. All the administrative sectors reject the masculine superiority with an absolute majority.

Agadir should manage house matters without violence and through dialogue. In Rabat, the woman is identified as a better manager of domestic economy, and she is seen more and more as an equal partner. Even in Oujda, the city that realized the lowest feminist score, masculine authority has been softened. Man’s commandment cannot be blind, unconditional, and dictatorial. To command is to do while taking the woman’s opinion into consideration. Therefore, there is a redefinition of authority, which is more and more considered as reasonable commandment. In the same way, physical force is not a “privilege” – “muscles, even the elephant has some”, some say with irony. Consequently, man is not defined as physical force (according to 46%) which should mean toughness, violence or despotic commandment.

III.2 Sexual Orientation

Despite not being spontaneously cited in the interview, the sexual profile is central in the Moroccan social construction of masculinity. This profile is largely determined by the necessity of heterosexuality. “Being a man, is being heterosexual”: this recurrent phrase signifies the rejection of homosexuality because it is considered as an anomaly that undermines masculinity.

III.2.1. Bisexuality, a Subject of Doubt

Regarding bisexuality, opinion is divided: 44% of interviewees accept with the following, and to every human being, there is both femininity and masculinity”, where as 41% reject it. The city of Oujda (54%) and the health administration (48%) adopt in the strongest way the patriarchal response (non-recognition of bisexuality), whereas the city of Agadir (51%) and the agriculture administration (51%) adopt mostly the feminist response. Nevertheless, the sexual patriarchal opinion was expected among the health opinion was, on the contrary, unexpected. In fact, the health civil servants are theoretically the most suited to express human homosexuality. Only one health civil servant mentioned this biological foundation to explain the presence of masculinity and femininity inside the human being.

It is recognized in Agadir that masculinity and femininity can coexist in the same person and that bisexuality does not undermine the masculine identity. Generally speaking, the bisexual hypothesis defense did not provide a rich and diversified idea. Because of the dominant patriarchal perspective, mono-sexuality is stated as evidence. In Oujda, it was asked, “does man become pregnant?”

This question was used as the irrefutable argument—the argument par excellence of non-bisexuality. It is said that man should be man and woman should be woman. The femininity of man is inconceivable, and to treat a woman is to question his masculinity, and to humiliate him. In Tétouan, a normal man cannot be masculine and feminine at the same time. In case bisexual, the worst, it can only be a sickness, a deviance and a degradation of man. To accuse a man of bisexuality, is to feminize him; it is to degrade him to an inferior ranking. In fact, according to 79%, to treat man as woman is to insult him.

III.2.2. Homosexuality, an Anomaly

The most tolerant social attitude explains homosexuality as a surplus of feminine hormones, but still considers it as an anomaly. Implicitly, this “scientific” explanation reduces homosexuality to the so-called passive homosexuality. It is only the penetrated homosexual that is considered as homosexual. He is abnormal because he suffers from an excess of feminine hormones, which is interpreted as sickness.

In Khénifra, the homosexual is called chadd, which means pervert, and the notion of chouhdoud (perversion) signifies, in the everyday language, the “passive” homosexuality only. The hormonal surplus explanation does not excuse the passive homosexual. In Rabat, it is thought that the over-presence of feminine hormones does not justify a man’s receptive homosexual behavior.

In Oujda, the hormonal explanation leads to the hypothesis of sexual impotence: the receptive homosexual is a sexually impotent male because he has an excess of feminine hormones. Because he is impotent, he lets himself be penetrated, like a woman. Nevertheless, “active” and “passive” homosexual are both considered sick, vicious, perverse, and especially non-religious. Homosexuality is deviant and religiously illicit (haram). In Oujda and Tanger, the judicial Islamic sentence that states that homosexuals should be killed to purify the social is adopted once more. In Oujda, it goes as far as requesting that they be burned to death.

In Agadir, an unprecedented attitude has been noted and it consists in explaining homosexuality as sexual work. Here, homosexuality is connotated as a trade, of bodies, as a trade-technical, since unemployment is affecting boys and girls. A young Moroccan is ready to play active and passive roles, depending on the client’s will. In Agadir, the question regarding moral- ity with respect to homosexuality is declining, so are the “etiological” reasons in explaining homosexuality (hormones, impotence...).

III.2.3. The Homosexual: A Male? A man? sexless?

Does homosexuality weaken masculine identity? Does homosexuality weaken a masculine identity? The empirical answers to such a question can be regrouped into five rubrics: 1) man stays a man because he is still a male, 2) only the receptive homosexual is not considered a man, 3) Whether being receptive or performing an

Table 5: Category of Social Indicators of Masculinity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Social indicators</th>
<th>Agadir</th>
<th>Khénifra</th>
<th>Oujda</th>
<th>Rabat</th>
<th>Tanger</th>
<th>Tétouan</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home supporter</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-working</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has money</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the family</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Category of Political Qualities of Masculinity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Political Qualities</th>
<th>Agadir</th>
<th>Khénifra</th>
<th>Oujda</th>
<th>Rabat</th>
<th>Tanger</th>
<th>Tétouan</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyal to the country</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not despotic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has an opinion</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes position</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Chauvinism of Man According to Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Cities</th>
<th>Man is better</th>
<th>Intermediary</th>
<th>Man is not better</th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agadir</td>
<td>26.02%</td>
<td>15.45%</td>
<td>58.54%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khénifra</td>
<td>27.17%</td>
<td>11.96%</td>
<td>60.87%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oujda</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
<td>86.49%</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabat</td>
<td>33.58%</td>
<td>9.43%</td>
<td>64.75%</td>
<td>1.83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanger</td>
<td>20.34%</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>66.10%</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tétouan</td>
<td>15.71%</td>
<td>11.43%</td>
<td>69.57%</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21.18%</td>
<td>10.50%</td>
<td>66.22%</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
intomission, the homosexual is not considered a man, 4) homosexuals are not considered men or women, 5) homosexuals are not considered human beings. Let us examine these responses one by one.

a. Being a Male, Is Being a Man

In Khénifra and everywhere else, it is stated, “the first thing we look for when we are talking to a man is the penis”. If it is found, the baby will always be a man, even if he later on becomes a receptive homosexual. To have a penis is enough to define masculine identity, regardless of sexual practices and orientations. Consequently, even the receptive homosexual stays a man because he has a penis. Therefore, homosexuality does not undermine masculinity.

The same reasoning applies to a male who practices homosexuality to make money. In this case, pleasure is not the purpose of the homosexual act. For example, it is concluded in Agadir that the homosexual prostitute is more a prostitute than a homosexual and does not deserve to be called homosexual. There is a distinction between homosexual practice and homosexual identity: to perform the act for money does not signify that one is a homosexual. In Khénifra, it is stated, “The penetrator and the penetrated both remain men” simply because they have a penis.

b. “Demasculinization” of the Receptive Homosexual

It is incomparable to be a (sound) man and a receptive homosexual (especially for pleasure) at the same time. Consequently, the homosexual identity applies to the ones who practice receptive homosexuality, based on a biopsychological need. For 61%, a man who was submitted to sodomy by another man is no longer a man (table 8).

As a result, active homosexuality is implicitly more accepted because its actor respects the masculine paradigm of penetration. The penetrator has more value. He is called a man because he practiced sex with someone else. In fact, for 38% of interviewees (against 54%). to be a man does not only signify being heterosexual. A man practicing sex with another man is not only defined as man, but also as a non-homosexual. For 61% of interviewees, a man who was submitted to sodomy by another man is no longer a man. 67% of interior civil servants think so. In Agadir, 45% of the population, 24% think that sodomy does not undermine the sodomized masculinity, mainly because of the presence of the penis.

These results are in conformity with the paradigm of patriarchal sexuality: to have sex with the penis, is to penetrate the other, to be active, to be masculine, to be virile, to be valorized. On the other hand, to have sex with the anus, implies being penetrated, implies being passive, being feminine, being depreciated. Masculinity is socially thought of as sexual penetration. It is said in Oujda that the penetrated man is only a male not a man. Hence to be a male is not enough to be a man. For certain interviewees, especially in Khénifra, active homosexuality symbolizes a “victory” of social class where the “poor” takes his revenge.

c. “Demasculinization” of All Homosexual Actors

This third attitude undermines the masculinity of all homosexual actors. To be homosexual because of a psycho-hormonal or a financial need, to be penetrated or to penetrate, is not considered manly.

The religious aspect is not foreign to this depreciation of all homosexual actors. It is stated that neither the penetrator nor the penetrated have a value: “Our religion forbids us from considering them as men”. Both should be condemned to death, because they go against religion. The ideal Islamic city is perceived here as free from homosexuality.

d. “Desexualization” of Homosexuals

Homosexuality is not considered men nor women. The sodomite should not be considered a woman out of respect for her. This respect for women is shown in several places. In Khénifra, it is estimated that treating the penetrated homosexual as a woman is degrading to her. To reduce her to a sex object is to despise her for “Sexual activity is not her partner”. In Oujda, it is specified that the receptive homosexual is socially more degraded, not because he resembles a woman, but because he has renounced his biological sex, his manhood. In Rabat too, the one who has been sodomized should not be compared to women: “A gay person does not deserve to be treated as a woman”.

e. Degramatization of Homosexuals

Homosexuality as transgression of law, the human being into an animal. Man becomes animal when he stops being religious, and stops being religious when he becomes homosexual. Heterosexuality is considered as an Islamic principle that defines the human being.

Ill. Sterility and Virility

Does man recognize masculine sterility? To what extent does he recognize the difference between sterility and sexual impotence? To what measure does man stay a man without having to be virile or fertile?

II.3.1. Dissociation Between Sterility and Impotence

A majority of men acknowledge masculine sterility (table 9). In fact, 76% think that masculine sterility is an inconvenience only (42% against 15%). The woman cannot always be considered responsible for the couple’s infertility: “the husband can also be the cause”. But against all expecta

tions, 16% of health civil servants think that man can never be responsible for the couple’s infertility. 19% of equipment civil servant and 15% of education civil servant have the same attitude. Another paradox concerns one of the most feminine cities, Agadir, where the patriarchal attitude is the strongest in regard to this item: 20% of padi'a think that man is never infertile. The recognition of masculine infertility does not lead to confusion between infertility and impotence. It is said that “The sterile man can make love with force, can be virile, but it is his sperm that is bad”.

Table 10 shows that 79% of interviewees (against 16%) make the difference between masculine sterility and sexual impotence. It is the interior civil servants that differentiate the least: 37% of them think that a sterile man is sexually impotent.

The dissociation between masculine sterility and sexual impotence has an effect on the definition of fertility. To be virile or sexually active does not mean being fertile. Fertility is no longer the visible sign and material proof of virility. The latter means only the aptitude to make love.

III.3.2. De-responsibility of the Impotent and Sterile Man

Facing sterility and impotence, the social explanation combines morality and science on the one hand, and magic and religion on the other. Science and morality tend to accuse man and make him responsible for his sterility since he carries microbes and performs debauchery. On the contrary, the magic-religious tradition was made to relieve responsibility from the sterile and/or impotent man and ensure his masculinity.

Such an explanation shows to what degree the layman is

| Table 8: Sodomy and Masculinity According to Cities |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Attitudes Cities                | Sodornised, man is no longer man | Intermediary | Sodornised, man stays a man | No answer | Total |
| Agadir                          | 55.28% | 5.69% | 31.71% | 7.32% | 100% |
| Khénifra                        | 60.87% | 18.48% | 20.65% | 0.00% | 100% |
| Oujda                           | 67.57% | 4.05% | 20.27% | 8.11% | 100% |
| Rabat                          | 74.53% | 4.72% | 15.09% | 5.66% | 100% |
| Tangier                         | 40.68% | 5.08% | 42.37% | 11.86% | 100% |
| Tétouan                         | 64.29% | 8.57% | 18.57% | 8.57% | 100% |
| Total                           | 61.45% | 7.82% | 24.24% | 6.49% | 100% |

| Table 9: Acknowledgment of Masculine Sterility According to Administrations |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Attitudes Administrations       | Man cannot be sterile | Intermediary | Man can be sterile | No Answer | Total |
| Agriculture                     | 13.39% | 6.25% | 79.46% | 0.89% | 100% |
| Education                       | 8.64% | 4.94% | 81.48% | 4.94% | 100% |
| Equipment                       | 19.01% | 9.52% | 68.60% | 2.48% | 100% |
| Interior                        | 14.15% | 3.77% | 80.18% | 1.89% | 100% |
| Health                          | 16.35% | 8.65% | 74.04% | 0.96% | 100% |
| Total                           | 14.69% | 6.87% | 76.34% | 2.10% | 100% |

| Table 10: Sterility and Sexual Impotence According to Administrations |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Attitudes Administration        | Infertility means sexual impotence | Intermediary | Infertility does not mean sexual impotence | No answer | Total |
| Agriculture                     | 21.43% | 3.57% | 74.11% | 0.89% | 100% |
| Education                       | 1.23% | 3.70% | 93.83% | 1.23% | 100% |
| Equipment                       | 9.09% | 2.48% | 84.30% | 4.13% | 100% |
| Interior                        | 36.79% | 6.60% | 56.60% | 0.00% | 100% |
| Health                          | 6.73% | 3.85% | 89.42% | 0.00% | 100% |
| Total                           | 15.65% | 4.01% | 79.01% | 1.34% | 100% |
familiar with biomedical knowledge and shows that etiology may largely be attributed to culture. Hence, magical belief in spells can stop a man being man, meaning powerful and fertile. So, “we see a clairvoyant in order to heal him.” In fact, the patriarchal logic still dominates the unconscious of the tribal man, creating a feeling of inferiority inside the sterile man: the sterile man cannot feel inferior,” says an education civil servant.

In case therapy (medical or biomedical) fails, a divine causality is invoked as a last attempt to reconcile the sterile man with himself. Most civil servants said that fertility and sterility, virility and impotence, are questions that depend on God. The ability to fertilize is independent of human will. Consequently, “man should not fight against his destiny. Sterility does not weaken the masculinity of a man that believes in God: it is when man ignores God that he doubts his masculinity.” Furthermore, it is said that even if a man is sexually impotent, he stays a man as long as he does not become a homosexual. The ethnologist explanation of sexual impotence was expressed once in Agadir. He said that, compared to the Berber man, the “Arab is sexually deficient.” Being a Berber himself, this civil servant takes his revenge, since the Arabs are (ideologically) dominating.

III.3.3. A Critic of Sexual and Reproductive Health

The patriarchal tradition is rejected when it defines man as being sterile. Of course, excluding virility from the definition of masculinity is not accepted unanimously. It is believed that masculinity is sexual power, which implies sexual satisfaction of the wife. According to an interior civil servant, when a man does not have sexual libido, he does not have what really defines man. According to some civil servants, nowadays women demand more sex, openly express their need for sex and have no problem solving it. It is recognized that the “woman is sexually more powerful.” Hence, it is normal that virility is now explained more and more in terms of orgasmic power. It is also neo-masculine fear inspired by the “new woman” push-es man towards more sexual success. An education civil servant says that “the woman can have an orgasm four times, whereas the man has less, I am not sure if it is due to food, climate, nature, but man has to handle this...he has to heal himself, to eat vegetables...”. In addition, impotence can lead to adultery and divorce. Also, an individual who does not satisfy his wife sexually is not a man. 38% of civil servants in Rabat and 29% in Agadir believe that an impotent man is not a man. Moreover, 24% think the same throughout Morocco.

For an absolute majority of 62% (see table 11), sexual impotence does not indicate non-masculinity. The danger of identifying masculinity with virility is clearly apparent, mainly in Oujda and Tanger. The modern civil servant refuses to define man based on sexual activity: “man is not only sex.” Definition of man according to his sexual activity is degrading and incorrect because “virility is found in animals, especially animals” (Tanger). Hence the impotent man stays a man because “he also takes decisions”, and because of this, he has what really defines man (Tétouan).

Tradition is rejected when it pushes man to have male descendants to be considered as a man. It is in Khénifra where people tend to associate the most between masculinity and masculine progeny (21%). But for 87% of interviewees (table 12), masculinity does not consist in having boys: “To have a boy or a girl is a pure hazard, it has nothing to do with masculinity...it is God who decides”. A national education civil servant demystifies the masculinity/progeny association by stating that men who prefer to have boys think less about their virility than the perpetuation of their name (lineage).

Thus to have daughters only does not weaken man’s masculinity: “Our prophet had daughters only and he was a man...” In Oujda, it was “widely” said that babies’ sex depends on God’s will. It was stated that “we are no longer in the jahiliyya period”, and we need to show that girls are actually welcome. Furthermore, we can feel a slight preference for girls. There is a reason behind this preference: girls are more tender, even when they are married; they continue to take care of their parents, unlike boys. It is also recognized that they can be strong and responsible. Tradition is finally rejected when it forces man to have a large progeny to be considered a man. As stated in table 13, 77.8% dissociate masculinity from large progeny.

Traditionally, virility meant a large progeny because people used to refer to the animal model, which used to dominate the agrarian society. The large family model is itself conceived through the large herd model: number creates force. For the older generations, the one who does not have a lot of children is not a man. Hence, the male animal that succeeds in impregnating several females is always called “繁华”, which means virile. Man’s virility “fouhoula” was modeled on the animal model.

But this social construction of the male based on the animal model is no longer dominant. People are now conscious that they cannot procreate without limits simply because they are virile. Financial considerations are starting to play a role in rejecting the definition of reproductive virility: “Knowing my salary, I cannot afford to have four or five children. It is not a question of virility.” An equipment civil servant admits that: “Nowadays, it is a good thing to limit births...times are tough...we should not make seven or eight children sleep in the same room, like sardines...a boy needs his own room at a very young age, and the girl as well...”

A man who has a lot of children is clearly accused of being the first cause of the economical decadence of society. In Tétouan, people who see a similarity between virility and large progeny are perceived as literates.

Synthesis

The analysis of man’s psychosocial profile leads to the distinction amongst four categories of traits and definition- al qualities of masculinity. Because of their number and their frequency, the psychological traits come in the foremost position of definitional notions: Man, followed by moral and social qualities. Political traits (loyalty to the country, personal opinion) come in fourth position. Reason (psychological trait), keeping one’s word (moral quality), supporting the family (social quality) come in first positions of man’s definitional notions.

The risks that masculinity is facing because of social evolution are felt and expressed. Financial difficulties are designated as responsible for the de-masculinization of

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Table 11: Sexual Impotence and Masculinity According to Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Cities</th>
<th>An impotent man is not a man</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>An impotent man is a man</th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agadir</td>
<td>29.27%</td>
<td>9.76%</td>
<td>57.72%</td>
<td>3.25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khénifra</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>63.04%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oujda</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
<td>79.73%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabat</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>12.21%</td>
<td>46.23%</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanger</td>
<td>16.95%</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>72.88%</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tétouan</td>
<td>18.57%</td>
<td>15.71%</td>
<td>62.86%</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23.66%</td>
<td>12.02%</td>
<td>61.83%</td>
<td>2.48%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Masculinity and Masculine Progeny According to Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Cities</th>
<th>Masculinity signifies masculine progeny</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Masculinity does not signify masculine progeny</th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agadir</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
<td>3.25%</td>
<td>86.99%</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khénifra</td>
<td>20.65%</td>
<td>7.61%</td>
<td>71.74%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oujda</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>93.24%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabat</td>
<td>2.83%</td>
<td>6.94%</td>
<td>93.40%</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanger</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>92.22%</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tétouan</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
<td>4.29%</td>
<td>88.57%</td>
<td>4.24%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6.87%</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
<td>87.40%</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Masculinity and large Progeny According to Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Cities</th>
<th>Masculinity signifies large Progeny</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Masculinity does not signify large Progeny</th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agadir</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>8.13%</td>
<td>74.82%</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khénifra</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>7.61%</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oujda</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
<td>83.78%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabat</td>
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<td>4.72%</td>
<td>81.13%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanger</td>
<td>10.17%</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>81.36%</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tétouan</td>
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<td>4.29%</td>
<td>72.86%</td>
<td>5.71%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.36%</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
<td>77.86%</td>
<td>2.48%</td>
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young people, which means the loss of patriarchal “qual- ities” of masculine identity. This de-masculinisation, which is anti-traditionist, constitutes the starting point of a new masculine identity. Hence, it is said that the sen- timental man should not be considered a woman. It goes the same for the one who helps his wife performing domestic works. Tenderness and friendliness are from now on compatible with masculine qualities. We can con- clude that man is not a sacred identity, an unchangeable soul: he is susceptible to change and evolution. To reject everything that is feminine is no longer essential to demonstrate masculinity in Morocco. Men no longer dominates the relationship between men and women. This evolution is less visible on the sexual orientation level. Bisexuality still means sickness and deviance, and is main- ly degrading for man. In fact, to call a man bisexual, is to feminize him, to degrade him to an inferior patriarchal ranking, it is to make him for a large majority, to be a man, and to be heterosexual, not homosexual.

To identify homosexuality as masculinity is probably the only way to make it acceptable. Homosexuals are men liv- ing a dominated masculinity, but are still considered men. The social contempt towards the passive homosexual does not automatically imply treating him as a woman. This indicates an undeniably feminine aspect within the ordinary masculine thought.

Sexual impotence no longer deprives man of masculinity. Because of his penis, a man stays a man. Today, the ordi- nary man refuses to be defined as a sexually active and functional male only. Virility goes beyond the ability to have orgasm and is redefined as education, nobility of the soul, and reason. Ordinary men are starting to recog- nize publicly that a woman is sexually more “potent” then a man.

In the same way, the masculine and/or large progeny is no longer a necessary condition of masculinity. It is rather the capacity of supporting children that is becoming syn- onymous with masculinity. A successful sexual activity is not the one that leads to a masculine and/or large prog- eny, but to a profound conjugal understanding within a more or less democratized nuclear family. To have fewer children is becoming a choice, a necessity. Consequently, to have few or no children is no longer synonymous with non-virility and non-masculinity. Also, to have only daughters is no longer considered as a defect or a hand- icap. To go even further, the infertile man is considered a man despite his infertility. To summarize the situation, the ordinary Moroccan man is successfully undergoing sexu- al transition.

Translated by Josiane Maalouf

END NOTES

1. The primary credit for the realization of this inquiry goes to the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCP), Beirut, which accepted our invitation project, as part of the Middle East Research Competition (MERC). I address my sincerest thanks and sympathy to LCP/MERC, and especially to Dr. Oussama K. Safa, director of the MERC program.

The acknowledgments for this inquiry’s expansion to other sites goes back to Dr. Mostafa Tjana, director of population in the Moroccan Ministry of Health, to Dr. Thea Lippelkamp, director of the JST project (USAIID), and to Dr. Najia Haji, chief of fam- ily planning division at the Direction of Population.

In order to realize this inquiry on a such sensitive theme in an Arab-Islamic society, where certain questions are still incon- ceivable to some, it took all the open-mindedness of the fol- lowing directors: Director of Population, Ministry of Health, Director of Pedagogic Support, Ministry of National Education, Director of Human Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Director of Human Resources, Ministry of Equipment, Director of General Affairs, Ministry of Interior.

Consequently, my thanks go to these five directors for not only authorizing such an inquiry, but also for facilitating its accomplishing next to their delegations and directorates in the chosen cities.

Concerning the cities of Agadir, Kenitra, Oujda, Rabat, Tanger, and Tétouan, my most sincere thanks go to the Wali and gov- ernors of the ministry of interior, to the delegates of the min- istries of health and national education, to the regional and provincial directors of the ministries of agriculture and equip- ment. I would like to thank them for appreciating the strate- gic status of this work, and for encouraging their civil servants to answer the questions of people conducting interviews.

I cannot forget these civil servants who scarified their time and revealed their most intimate thoughts on personal sub- jects, I thank them for the truth they had in us.

Therefore, I would like to thank the five administrations of agriculture, national education, equipment, interior and health on the central level, and on the regional and provincial levels in the cities of Agadir, Kenitra, Oujda, Rabat, Tanger and Tétouan. I would like to thank them for having encour- aged scientific research and believed in it. A grateful thought asserts itself and goes to my students in my LDEEP laborato- ry, at FES University: Houda al Addour, Hakima Khirihi, Habiba Hafsa, Bouhita al Khayari and Imal Fezza. They did their best to collect in the best possible way reliable and credible facts. I would like to congratulate them for having put up with wisdom, even in some rare cases, the provocations they were subject to. My last thank you goes to Mrs. Bouletina Elboum, IEC consultant at JST, for her precious help.

2. It is worth noting that during the Julyiya (pre-Islamic era), newly born girls used to be buried alive, to avoid dishonor to their families.

In October of 2003, King Mohammad VII announced his intention to radically improve women’s rights by reform- ing Morocco’s Mudawwana al Ahwal al Shakhisiyah, or Code de Statut Personnel,1 and in January 2004, parlia- ment unanimously accepted areas of dramatic changes based on his suggestions. The new set of laws, renamed the Mudawwana al Usrah, or Code de la Famille, promis- es to increase women’s power and authority in family and public life. Although these laws are certainly less visible on the sexual orientation level, they address crucial social obstacles to the stability of the family and calling into question the pillars of Moroccan religious and cultural identity. Based upon a period of ethnographic fieldwork in Fez and Rabat during the time of the change, 2 this essay combines feminist and “Male Studies” perspectives to examine how individuals deploy constructions of authen- tic Moroccan “man-ness” and “woman-ness” in dis- courses of opposition to the reform.

Gender Complementarity/Gender Equality

According to sociologists and anthropologists who study traditional North African marriage practices, the pre- traditional family laws are based on a logic of strategi- cally maximizing procreation within the patriline while encouraging a certain fragility in the marriage bond, in line with the Maliki interpretation of shar’i a dominant in the area (i.e. Mouin Charnal, Fatima Meniussi, and Pierre Bourdieu). For example, while the pre- amended Code’s legal mandate for women (15 years) prolongs her legitimate childbearing years and the right to polygamy maximizes the male’s reproductive potential, both prac- tices undermine intimacy and reciprocity between the spouses. Other features heighten this disparity, such as the husband’s right to confine the wife to the home; the restriction that women must be represented by a wali, or male tutor in the marriage contract; and differ- ential access to divorce. In turn, the pre-amendment Code positions the husband as undisputed head of the household, the sole provider responsible for regulating the behavior of female and junior members of his fami- ly. A model of the family based on the culturally sanc- tioned ideal of husband as provider and woman as pas- sive consumer, is set against the economic realities of contemporary Morocco, where many women are eco- nomically active and where it is no longer uncommon to find women at the head of the household.

Many of the Code’s sex-specific factors were overturned or reformed in the 2004 amendments. Women’s age of
While men too may make choices based on expedience, the new family law places women’s right to property and support in the event of divorce. In a radical re-formulation of how the rights and duties of husbands and wives vis-a-vis one another are elaborated, the new regulations also guarantee the wife the same rights to employment and access to the public sphere as her husband, and make both spouses responsible for provisioning the family. As a result, the new Mudawwana has changed the legal definition of what it means to be a husband and father in Morocco.

Hanan and Sulta

For those who advocate a culturally specific form of justice based on sex-role differentiation, the pre-amended regulations are not seen as disadvantageous to women, but rather as giving men and women separate sets of rights and responsibilities most suitable to their respective gender roles. As Makaoui notes, the Mudawwana’s changes in the law have not erased patriarchy, only sanctioned it in a more flexible way, accommodating women and men to the demands of the modern world.

The man’s sulta, also rooted in biology, is described in contrast to the woman. Because man is not required to open the boundaries of his body in making love to a woman, in giving birth, or in nursing a child, he is thus constitutionally better suited to rationally protect his self-interest and that of his family. His family is constructed as an extension, not as an inversion of himself. Within relationships between men and women, the man has the right to “be the head of the household” because he thinks with his heart, not with his head. To a greater or lesser extent, I found that this opposition of Fanane and sulta came into play in almost all discourses of opposition to the changes. It was most often invoked to critique the reform which gives women the right to contract their own marriages—which I found to be the least popular of the reforms.

Following this logic, women are constitutionally unfit to independently choose their marriage partners because they think with their hearts and not with their heads, and thus are likely to make impulsive choices based on emotion rather than in the socially sanctioned rationality of love, this tendency is mediated by their rational capacity to discern what would be in their best interests and, also importantly, in the best interests of their family of birth, to which they owe respect (and I assume they have to question how such systems compromise the quality of life for men as well as women. Men’s Studies innovator Harry Freedman talks about the ‘public man’ in the introduction to his The Making of Masculinities: The New Men’s Studies: “In its explorations of the debilitating effects of various contexts on men’s lives... men’s studies demonstrates the connections between the pursuit of patriarchal power and various sorts of male self-deaths.” (Brod, p. 8)). In light of this critical perspective, my work is committed to exploring masculine domination as a source of limitation for men as much as for women.

To justify resistance to all or parts of the reforms, many of my informants describe the basic nature of women and men as crystallized in two complementary essences: the woman is the source of fanane or tenderness, and the man is the source of sulta, or authority. Citing the Qur’an and Hadith as the sources of this philosophy, informants elaborate that women’s propensity to become pregnant and especially to breast-feed makes them subject to a greater sense of integration with another human being, the child, but this propensity for integrality is generalized and affects her relationship with other human beings as well. Thus, not only in the act of breast-feeding, but in all acts of giving, there is a tendency no longer to act according to the dictates of one’s own personal interest, but to sacrifice her own interests in favor of an empathetic bond with another human being. While this is a strength in the nuclear family or a bond of blessedness we have been as a liability in the public sphere, where people are likely to take advantage of her trust, giving nature.

In my study, Beyond the Veil, which came out in 1975 and which deals with male-female dynamics in Morocco, Moroccan sociologist Fatma Mernissi examines the responsibilities of the archetypal male sole provider/ head of household and describes how in her current socioeconomic reality make this role untenable: “A respectable man is not simply someone who acquires some degree of economic power, but also who controls the sexual behavior of his wife, daughters and sisters. But this is possible only if he is able to control their movement, to limit their mobility and thereby to reduce their interaction with the strange men with whom they threaten to ‘sully the family’s honor’. Once again, money and sex are intimately linked in the definition of this duality, both for women and men” (Mernissi, 1987, p. 149). Given the high rate of unemployment and difficulties of finding stable work, there is a tendency for women to ‘protect the women’s’ employment, as the survival of the family may depend on women’s income. Therefore, men are frustrated in fulfilling the societal demand to “protect female honor,” as women’s entry into the workplace represents a loss of control over their movements.

In this vein, Brod’s essay also analyzes the destabilization of masculinity in the passage from precapitalist to capitalist systems: “a transfer of power from the hands of individual patriarchs to the institutions of capitalist patriarchy... creates a gap between institutional and personal power. For men, this creates a disjunction between the facts of public male power and the feelings of men’s private powerlessness.” He continues, “Persisting images of masculinity hold that ‘real men’ are physically strong, aggressive and in control of their work. Yet the structural dichotomy between manual and mental labor means that no one’s work fulfills all of these conditions” (Brod, 1987, p. 14).

Borrowing a useful term from sociologist Emile Durkheim, Mernissi identifies “anomie” or deep and persistent con- fusion over societal norms as the salient response to the sudden socioeconomic change that characterized her period of analysis, the 1970’s. If, as Mounira Charad claims, “Family law by definition embodies an ideal of the family and its members around which a normative logic is constructed” (Charad, 2001, p. 5), it could be that the advent of a new Mudawwana, which sanc- tions changes in the gendered breakdown of labor in con- tradiction to traditional ideals, would internally such confu- sion. In light of this, many of my informants have to question answering my questions about their views on the new Family Law by reporting on a “crisis of marriage” in Morocco and the importance of their relationship to their women and men and also by men’s but not women’s rising disinclination to marry at all. Some inform- ants have even brought to a head the Mudawwana changes, a set of reforms which “turn marriage into a prison for men.”

Many of my informants describe marriage as something men can gladly do without or indefinitely postpone, generally a state of social acceptability of out-of-wedlock sexual relations for men, whereas the expectations for prostitutes or girls, friends. According to Mernissi, whether married or not, “men are encouraged to expect full satisfaction of their sexual desires, and to perceive their masculinity identity as closely linked to that satisfaction” (Mernissi, 1987, p.161). However, while masculine identity is affirmed through sexual conquest, Moroccan society closely links women’s honor with virginity before marriage, and women’s identities remain somewhat centered among their achievements as mothers and wives. Given this teth- ered playing field, many argue that the government is actu- ally doing women a great disservice with the advent of the Mudawwana reforms, where the real need was to help women, it would be doing all that it could to make marriage more attractive to men instead of exacerbating the problem by introducing another obstacle in the form of a controversial and threatening family law.

Sadiqi provides a modifying perspective on these alarmist claims. Although she agrees that there is a “crisis of mar- riage” in Morocco, based on “complex causes that range from unemployment... to suspicion towards ‘mixity’ and fear of failure in marriage (which for women brings shame to the family),” she doubts that the Mudawwana reforms will actually exac- erbate the problem. Rather, Sadiqi expresses the more positive view that these changes will “gradually be in favor of a better image of women,” adding, “As the case with any major change, there will be a phase of uncertainty and doubt, but that is only normal. The royal support, the legal and political support, as well as the support of the feminist movement will certainly help in this regard.”

A Man is like a Diamond

A specific social myth that has emerged with regularity within my interviews is a pervasive belief that women greatly outnumber men in Morocco, with estimates ranging from three to five times as many women as men. Although demographic realities of such as male immigra- tion and the longer lifespan of women undoubtedly play a role in producing these perceptions, the mythology of female dominance is greatly exaggerated. The myth of the overabun- dance of women expresses a belief in their dispensability even in the societies that recognize their social and economic value.

“In Morocco, a man is like a diamond,” one Moroccan sociologist recently related to me. “If a woman gets one, she can consider it hers. A man can simply find a partner, a wife, like a diamond, what is a woman like? When I asked this question to the sociologist, he only laughed sadly.

“Women—who are citizens of [the] domestic universe and whose existence outside that sphere is considered an anachronistic, transgressive, problematic role, whose value, unlike the men (women) also possess a second national- ity, one that grants them membership of the public sphere... Having been identified as primarily citizens of the domestic universe, women are deprived of power even in the world in which they are confined, since it is the man who wields authority within the family” (Mernissi, 1987, p.139). The feminist men’s studies approach defined by Brod would challenge us to rethink this uneven division in different terms. Instead of imag- ining women as passive partners in both worlds, Brod would rather invite us to consider the price
of masculinity as a sort of emotional exile from the domestic sphere.

“Paradoxical as it may seem... men’s public lives in an imported sense and escape from their personal lives, a shrinkage rather than an enlargement of their spheres...” [Richardo Ochberg writes: “Men may attempt to escape from the dominating – or souls fleeing diseased bodies—from their private lives into public ones” (Brod, 1987, p. 3). In the case of Morocco, the burden of masculinity carries with it a set of untenable financial, physical, and emotional denials. In my interviews, many describe the Mudawwana reforms as “a victory for women,” or even, upon further questioning, a victory for women over men. Yet, a consideration of the various, albeit more subtle ways, the reforms encourage greater sex-role flexibility for men as well as for women. In the next section of this chapter, I will focus to capture how the heavy burdens of the masculine dominant role compromise men’s opportunities for self-actualization and the opportunity to experience a full range of interpersonal dynamics, including vulnerability and mutual dependence with an intimate partner, studies of masculinities across different cultures and historical periods promise to collectively debunk the myth that “masculinity is a positive desideratum of male personal identity,” and reveal the “pernicious effects” (Brod, 1987, p. 2) of this belief upon the lives of both women and men.

END NOTES

1. For the full text of the speech in which H.M. King Mohammed VI announced the reforms at the opening of the Parliament Session on October 10, 2003, see the Maghreb Arab Press web- site www.map.co.ma. Since its original drafting in 1957, direct- ly following the French occupation, the Code had been slightly reform ed once before, in 1993. For a summary and evaluation of the Code see Malika Benmaddou’s 2003 article “Le Code de la famille: la Mudawwana,” especially section 1.2 “La tendance des révisions de 1993” (Benmaddou, 1993, p. 69).

2. Dr. Clément was a member of the royal consult- ing committee for drafting the reforms; elaborates “Le nouveau code de la famille: une nécessité incontournable en ce sens qu’il conserve les principes de dignité, d’égalité et de respect mutuel à la fois dans le code actuel et dans le nouveau code marocain en général.” C’est une avancée des droits humains au Maroc car il concrétise la protection des droits de la dignité de femmes parmi les plus vulnérables de la société, à savoir les femmes les plus enclavées (Haïane, 2003, p. 1).

3. As detailed elsewhere in this volume, much of the public controversy over the Mudawwana reform has taken shape within the larger debates that have ensued over the adoption of la Plan d’Action pour l’Intégration de la femme au Développement (RANIP), of- ficially introduced to Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi in March 1995. Since the plan is a relatively small and concrete document containing one of the most controversial parts, Saba characterizes opposition to the plan itself as “facilitated by the dialogue between Islam, human rights, development, and the Mudawwana” (Saba, 2000, p. 3).

4. In September from 2003 to July 2004, under the support of a Fulbright IE grant.

5. As formulated by Harry Brod: “The most general definition of Men’s studies is that it is the study of masculinities and male expe- riences as specific and varying social-historical and cultural con- stitutions. Such studies situate masculinities as objects of study on a par with femininities, instead of elevating them to universal norms (Brod, 1987, p. 2).

6. See especially Chapter 2, “Islam and Family Law: An Ethnographic View” in State and Women’s Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, where Charrad summar- izes the “influence of Makhli law emphasized in this chapter is the fragility of the consensual union. The legality of polygamy, the uni- lateral right of repudiation; the absence of common property between husband and wife, all tend to facilitate the dissolution of the marital bond. The message of the law is that the nuclear fam- ily does not constitute the significant focus of solidarity Islamic law in effect defines the consensual union as potentially short lived. By con- trast, the presence of conjugal life tends to be regarded as lifelong patrimony as those likely to endure” (Charrad, 2001, p. 49).

7. In her 1974-Beyond the Veil, Mernissi writes, “Muslim women of heterosexual involvement in the Mudawwana is a new condition than its corollaries: arranged marriage, the important role of the mother in the laws of the Veils, and the fragility of the marriage bond (as evidenced in the institutions of repudiation and polygamy)” (Mernissi, 1987, p. 45).

8. In this regard, although French teachers, Pierre Boudot denies the strengthening of the patriline as the first goal of Algerian tribal modernization. Boudot (1977) notes that the Mudawwana law as described in the section, “Matrimonial Strategies and Social Reproduction” (Boudot, 1977, pp. 58-71) offer a productive point of comparison to the tendencies codified in the 1957-58 Mudawwana. “The mythic world view which accords [women] only a limited existence and never grants her full participation in the symbolic capital of her adoptive lineage, the sexual division of labor which restricts her to the domestic tasks leaving the representative functions of the man-everything combines to identify the interests of the men with the material and particularly the symbolic interests of the lineage” (Boudot, 1977, p. 66).


10. Ibid. Art. 30 (p. 57).

11. As Mernissi has argued, Art. 35.3 (ibid. pp. 60-61) of the origi- nal code provides that husbands should authorize wives visiting their parents, with the implication that women’s access to the out- side world in general is mediated by their husbands (Mernissi 1987, 109).

12. Ibid. Art. 12 (p. 47).

13. Book II, articles 44-81 detail men’s and women’s differential rights to divorce (pp. 65-85). Within the pages, we find the right to unilateral repudiation, and that for women, divorce is a more lengthy, complicated and expensive ordeal. 14. Art 115 (p. 97). Mernissi’s translation: “Every human being is responsible for providing his needs (trajjih) through his own means, with the exception that his husband provides for their needs.” (Mernissi, 1987, p. 148).

15. “...the right of a husband to enjoy (in)equality of income (economic power) and femininity (consumption of the husband’s fortune) that have nothing whatsoever to do with real life contributes to making male- female dynamics one of the greatest sources of tension and con- flict...” (Mernissi, 1987, p. 149).

16. The Family Law’s 2001 study “Female headed households are increasingly established in Morocco...” [when one] (2002) (pp. 112 and 113). This theory and the practice of marriage-based housing based on 1991 statistics, this percentage reaches 22.5 in urban areas compared to 16.6 in rural areas (CERD, 1995, p. 1).

17. “Equality can never be defined as a right...” (Mernissi, 1987, p. 274).


19. As evidenced in the Fatwa of the Moroccan Islamic Scholar, which makes infidelity a mutual obligation and also replaces the stipulation of the wife’s “obedience” (ibadh) to the husband with a call for mutuality. See Art. 12, add. 2, which states, “The husband and the wife are both responsible for caring for the house and the children, and 51-4 stipulates, “consultation before making decisions concerning the family and family planning,” thus, newly placing the authority over the family as well as the responsi- bility for its economic survival into the hands of both husband and wife. The Administrative law and public order makes the concept of “Equality with respect to the rights and obligations of both parties...” in return, the wife must contribute to the household expenses (2005, p. 1).

20. Email communication 29 February 2004. 21. Most agree that this reform undeniably contradicts the teach- ing of the Islamic scriptural text, which envisions marriage as “a contract between families” rather than individuals (Charrad, 2001, p. 32). In this context, the mudawwana la-Jadidah al-Usrah, a plaintiff in the fatwa al-Ash’ar, is accords an individual rights to divorce, while new right, women will not exercise the preceptive of independently contracting their marriage, for in doing so they would alienate their husbands from their family and female authority. 22. “You’re not a woman who did so. The idea of a woman enter- ing a contract and obtaining a divorce is anathema to any Muslim, or a fatwa issue.” (2003, p. 274).

23. For a discussion of the family law’s implications in the context of family law and political economy in the late 1990’s, see “The Muslim Rights and Duties between the Husband and Wife” (Art. 11, p. 46).


25. The idea of a man marrying his parents’ daughters, the idea of a daughter’s gain not being considered a catastrophe, but rather seen as a consumption within the family, as described within the household of women within the Sunni tradition only the husband gives the women rights to divorce. In return, the husband must contribute to the household expenses” (2003, p. 1).

26. See for example, the author’s discussion of the Mudawwana law “as a device to remove the Muslim women’s access to the men...” (2002, p. 112) of the Mudawwana’s domicile status, the removal of her domicile status, and women’s access to the marriage bond, and the lack of opportunity to acceptance. 27. Rab Rhouh, in her analysis of the cultural resistance to this change, draws upon the work of Aïda Sabet. “The wall” (the wall) rep- resents the interests of a Muslim patriarchal的社会d in which the woman is believed to be uniquely motivated by her libidinal desire in her reduced accessibility to the socioeconomic stability hierarchy of household as the wall, we find a retreat of the andro- centric binary of Islamic patriarchal society, as a woman and the male rule to represent respectively the confrontation of the force of modernity and those of culture; anxiety and the absence of the order of Muslim civilization (Rhouh, 2004, p. 153; Sabbah, 1984, pp. 64 & 113). Incidentally, within her dissertation, Rhouh employs the same pen name for Fatima Mernissi.

28. For a discussion of the significance of female virginity in Morocco, see Mernissi’s chapter “Virginity and Patriarchy” in which she collection Women and Religion in Islamic Maghreb (1996).

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REFERENCES


Mari masculinity in Arab Women’s Fiction

Introduction

Feminist literary theorists have, until recently focused on the treatment of women as Other in texts written by men. Although this is an extremely important project for feminists, especially because of the weight that men’s writing continues to have in the canon, I feel that in order to decentr e men’s writing and to understand the roles men play in women’s lives, it is also important to analyze how women authors are representing men. In this paper, I have examined some of the writings by Arab women authors who have managed to be accepted in the Arab literary canon and how men and masculinity are represented in their texts. The most striking characteristic associated with men and masculinity in Arab women’s writing is women’s violence. Men in these texts may even be able to look at these texts, aimed at individual women, or may reflect a larger vio- lent toward ethnic or religious groups or indeed society as a whole. This violence may be organized and legit- imized by the state, as in the case of war, or may be an unforeseen passionate reaction; it may be an isolated incident or a chain of violent acts; it may be enacted as a tangible incident of physical violence or it may remain as an omnipresent threat. But as different as the repre- sentations of violence may be, what is common is that the more masculine a man is, the more violent, and vice versa. Conversely women and femininity are represented as pacifistic, as rejecting violence. While some individual men may experience their violence as depicted as more fem- ine, and there is still a strong association between men’s sub-culture and violence as masculinity. Because culture is dominated to a large extent by men, the cul- ture of violence is pervasive and forces itself upon the female characters, who generally reject it. This connec- tion between men, masculinity, and violence can be wit- nessed in texts written by Arab women authors. Here I look at how this connection is constructed by looking at the depictions of individual men as violent, violent women, and men who resist violence, and then use the notion of the Other as outlined by Foucault and Cixous to analyze the significance of these representations.

I have chosen to look at texts that have been translated into English not only because the fact that they have been translated demonstrates the general importance that the texts have been given but also because this should provide all readers of this paper access to the texts themselves should they wish to continue the inves- tigation in greater depth themselves. It is always a diffi-

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Feminist literary theorists have, until recently focused on the treatment of women as Other in texts written by men. Although this is an extremely important project for feminists, especially because of the weight that men’s writing continues to have in the canon, I feel that in order to decentr e men’s writing and to understand the roles men play in women’s lives, it is also important to analyze how women authors are representing men. In this paper, I have examined some of the writings by Arab women authors who have managed to be accepted in the Arab literary canon and how men and masculinity are represented in their texts. The most striking characteristic associated with men and masculinity in Arab women’s writing is women’s violence. Men in these texts may even be able to look at these texts, aimed at individual women, or may reflect a larger vio- lent toward ethnic or religious groups or indeed society as a whole. This violence may be organized and legit- imized by the state, as in the case of war, or may be an unforeseen passionate reaction; it may be an isolated incident or a chain of violent acts; it may be enacted as a tangible incident of physical violence or it may remain as an omnipresent threat. But as different as the repre-
cultural and dangerous task to generalize anything relating to Arab women. The term refers to women who possess a range of identities across disparate geographic and historical spaces. With this in mind, I am simply looking for common trends in Arab women’s writing without hoping to produce any “truths” that are supposed to reflect all Arab women’s experiences. Due to the length and time constraints of this essay, I have focused on the texts that best illustrate the representation of masculinity as violence. The authors referred to here are Hoda Barakat, Salwa Bakr, Hanan Al-Shaykh, and Suhai Abdullah.

Feminists have demonstrated in countless works that traditional definitions of violence do not adequately represent male violence against women. Because they ignore the systemic and pervasive nature of violence against women, often these definitions, usually incorporating physical violence only, are too narrow. Like the feminists, sociologists and philosophers who have studied violence against women, I have adopted a definition of violence that is, I am including as violent those behaviors or actions that women experience as dangerous and abusive. This expands the traditional definition of violence from straightforward physical reference to include emotional and sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation, and the threat of violence. All of these forms of violence are connected with masculinity in many Arab women writers’ texts.

Violent Men
Masculinity is generally equated with violence and individual men are depicted as unrestrained and unruly when it comes to women. Such men in Arab women’s texts are often flat and referential. Their aggressive is their primary personality trait and their relationship with the women protagonists is characterized by violence. In these texts, men use their violence and all other aspects of their selves disappear. In The Story of Zahra by Hanan Al-Shaykh nearly every man the protagonist Zahra encounters exploits or abuses her in some way. From the earliest years of her life, Zahra learns the violent potential of men from her father. This father beats not only Zahra’s mother for suspicion of adultery but Zahra herself. He “shoos her with blows that she
might admit her mother’s betrayal, and her mother is left bloodied (Al-Shaykh, 1995, pp. 14-15). Later in her life, Zahra rarely mentions her father except to express his attitude toward her—ranging from indifferent to negative, or to express a fear that he might kill her. “My father’s image, coming into my mind, frightened me to the extent where I felt sure he would kill me should he ever find me out. I would not even speak to him even if it meant him spending the rest of his life in prison. He was capable of severeing my head from my body” (Al-Shaykh, 1995, p. 31).

After her father, the next man she forms a relationship with is her first lover, Malek. A married man and friend of Zahra’s brother, Malek manipulates Zahra by offering friendship and romance in order to seduce her. After taking her virginity, knowing well the consequences for an unmarried woman without a hymen in the Arab world, Malek refuses to marry her. The friendship, romance, and even any semblance of care disappears even after two pregnancies and abortions, Zahra is left feeling used as Malek still does not feel any attachment or responsibility toward her. Even when Zahra has a nervous breakdown and needs to be hospitalized after Malek takes her for an abortion without her consent, Malek evades responsibility by lying to her family about the situation and saying that the breakdown occurred at work and that he came to her rescue (Al-Shaykh, 1995, pp. 38-9).

After the breakdown, Zahra decides to escape to Africa and ends up in her uncle’s house. Again, the uncle, Hashem, who was a leader in a violent coup d’état in Lebanon, abuses her. As the only person she knows in Africa, Zahra is dependant on Hashem, and he takes advantage of this situation. Although the beginnings may seem innocent, such as when he watches her sleep and tries to hold her hand, Zahra is disgusted and disturbed by her uncle’s advances. But when his desire pushes him to lie on top of her, as she is sleeping, Zahra again suffers a breakdown and tries to kill herself.

While recovering in hospital, Zahra chooses to accept a marriage proposal from Hashem’s friend Majed. Majed is a patient and forgiving husband, but still there exists in him a subtle and latent violence. He is emotionally abusive toward her, insinuating her unnecessary fears.

“You look like a cat that has just eaten its own kittens,” he said. “How is it possible for anyone to wear such a short tight skirt? Who do you think you are, girl?” It would be all very nice if the short skirt showed a pretty figure. But look at you, look at all this make-up. Your face is no better than a Halloween mask.” (Al-Shaykh, 1995, p. 96)

After several fits Majed’s patience is exhausted, and he reacts violently when Zahra refuses his sexual advances: He tried to put his arms around me. I slipped away. He tried to take my hand. I stepped back. He followed. I screamed, but he ignored my cries. I tried to push him away, but he was set on having a fight…. I forced him away, making up my mind that he would never touch me unless I was dead, lifeless, as if it had been with our foreign neighborhood when she defended herself to the death as the hair-dresser tried to rape her.

Majed remained insisting, and “I [Zahra] went on defending myself until my resistance began to fail, my crying still having no effect. Then I bit his hand with all my strength and heed him, ‘Damn you! Bitch! Animal!’... I fell on the floor as he pushed and then kicked me. He threw me down on the couch as I went ceaselessly screaming and moaning” (Al-Shaykh, 1995, pp. 108-9).

Zahra then requests that Majed divorces her and she returns to Lebanon. There she becomes involved with the next and last man in her life. The Lebanon she has returned to is raging with war and violence. Even Zahra’s brother Ahmad, the only man who until this point has not acted violently, has become a combatant. Every trip outside the house could amount to suicide. But when she is out one day, she notices the neighborhood sniper watching her. They meet, and they have a sexual relationship. With this snipers, Zahra experiences her first sexual pleasure; she falls in love with him and even enters thoughts of marriage. But when she discovers she is pregnant and too far along to abort, she tells her sniper. He is supportive to her face, but when she leaves him, she is shot from the rooftop. Even after a relationship with a man whom Zahra has had in her life is characterized by violence and abuse. Though some of the violence she has witnessed by the men in her life is part of the war, most of it is directed at her.

Violent Women
One might argue that there also exist violent women in the text. Yet, upon closer examination, it will be noticed that in most cases the violence of women is represented as aberrant, abnormal, and not an essential characteristic of the women’s personality. Whereas violent men are represented as little more than their violent actions, violent women are represented as “naturally” non-violent. They are only pushed into violence by a man’s need to defend himself. Cases which are usually depicted as caused by men. In this way, as Nadje Al-Ali writes, the authors “turn around the roles of criminal and victim by demonstrating how the real criminals are not the women of the prison, but those considered to be their victims.” (Al-Ali, 1994, p. 3). The novel The Golden Chariot by Salwa Bakr demonstrates this.

The Golden Chariot, a novel set in al-Qanatir women’s prison, tells the tale of a故犯, a woman enrolled in a criminal women’s prison. They are not only abused by individual men (as in The Story of Zahra), but are victims of the masculine culture of violence as a whole. All of the women in the prison are there “as a reaction to men abusing their bodies, men being unfaithful, dishonest, exploitative and violent” (Faqi, 1995, p. 10). And of the violent crimes committed by the inmates, which range from castration to murder, have occurred as a result of “the violation suffered by them at the hands of men” (Maniatty in Faqi, 1995, p. v). The male characters in the novel tend to be flat and essentially violent toward women.

The main character, Aziza is in prison for killing her stepfather who had sexually abused her since childhood. After the death of her mother, and fearing his abandoning her and taking a second wife, a violent crime committed by him. Before committing the act, she imagines how to accomplish the deed in the least violent, most romantic possible way— as she does love the man. She imagines coating him in chocolate and breaking him into edible pieces, or alternatively smothering him with the powerful scent of flowers (Bakr, 1995, pp. 8-9). The other women in the prison, who were charged with violent crimes similarly committed them against an abusive family member. Besides Aziza were mur- deresses and two had committed assault.

Aziza the gaunt, as she is known in the text, is a woman imprisoned for having killed her stepfather. The man, Hussain, whom she loved deeply, had exploited her sexually and financially, offering promises of marriage and life in a better place. In reality, however, he was only in the relationship to gain sympathy and take advantage of her by being used by him, when Aziza finally realized that he was only using her, she ended the relationship. Hussain began spreading vicious rumors about her that greatly damaged her reputation. In order to avenge herself Aziza hires a criminal-crafter to castrate the former lover. Another imprisoned for assault, Jamalat who is a poor thief who threw a hot iron at a neighbor. This man had been stalking Jamalat and her younger mentally disabled sister. Jamalat was less afraid for himself than she was for her sister, whom she feared she could not always protect
The “eight eyes” after which the story is entitled are those of men in an Upper Egyptian village that haunt the story’s protagonist. The young hero, Ismail, is expected by them to avenge his father’s death in a blood feud. Ismail, on his part, sees the violence as unnecessary and believes that “justice [has] run its course”. (Abdallah, 1990, p. 334). When he expresses this reluctance to the village men, Ismail feels that their eyes tear into him in judgment, saying, “The Young man is spineless…Hasan did not have a son. He had two daughters: Hanja and Iman.” In order to assert himself as a man, Ismail feels that he must fulfill the violent expectation imposed upon him. Ismail has a nightmare that he killed the intended victim, and wakes up with a scream to tell his mother: “His eyes were innocent, modest like two doves. Yet the eight eyes continued to chase me and burn my breast with their looks: Be a man, Ismail. Be a man!” (Abdallah, 1990, p. 335). His mother responds that she is proud of Ismail’s pacifism and asserts that she has taught him to be like that, to behave better than the beasts. In this way, the author identifies pacifism with women and violence with men. The mother appears to reject violence “naturally”, whereas Ismail’s pacifism is learned. All of the other male characters are portrayed as passive and gentle, and their crimes as aberrant single acts that went against their nature and were only a direct reaction to the violence their victims inflicted upon them. Not one of the men is represented as having violent or even aggressive personality. These acts are portrayed as solely situation, where anyone, no matter how naturally non-vio- lent, would have behaved, according to Madame Zaynab, Bakr writes, “People found it impossible to imagine that this beautiful, petite woman, as fragile as fine crystal, could commit a manly act in a thing as simple as burning a stove, they never knew… that she could have done it a second, third, or fourth time were she ever to be placed in a similar situa- tion again.” (Bakr, 1995, p. 150). It can be seen in all of the cases that the women would not have acted vio- lently had they not been threatened by their male “vic- tims”.

Men Resisting Violence

Not all men are represented in these texts as violent. Those who resist violence, however, are not seen as men by society. It is in these cases that the connection between violence and masculinity is the most striking. Unlike in the case of the violent Arab women, this type of character is round and is likely a protagonist, and he is represented as abnormal. His relationship and resistance to violence is a struggle between himself and the person he feels he should be, that society wants him to be. Both the short story “Eight Eyes” by Sulfi Abidallah and the novel The Stone of Laughter by Hoda Barakat deal with struggle.

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In tracing the transformation of a man from feminine to masculine and paralleling it with a shift from disinterested pacifism to cold-blooded violence, Barakat establishes violence as the strongest characteristic of masculinity. Because rape and leadership in war are written to mark the culmination of Khalil’s transition into masculinity, violence is set up as the epitome of manhood.

Conclusions

Drawing primarily on the theories of literary theorist Jacques Derrida, scholars have explored the ways in which authors represent the Other. Derrida suggests that the human mind tends to view the world in terms of binary oppositions, where one term is given more value; e.g., good/bad, strong/weak, and so forth (Eagleton, 1996). Each part of the binary defines the other, with the valued part of the binary being the prime signifier. Each set of binary opposites becomes linked to other similar sets, so that “strong” may be associated with “good” and “weak” with “bad.” Because of the relationship between the binary oppositions, people tend to align themselves with the valued parts of the binaries and view anyone who is different to themselves, who is “Other,” as having negative traits. Helene Cooux, the French feminist literary theorist, adopts Derrida’s understanding of binary oppositions and develops it further by arguing that the primary opposition is androgyne and that all other binaries follow (Moï, 1985). Feminist scholars have elaborated on this notion in their analyses of the textual representation of women by male authors. They suggest that while men represent women as good, rational, normal, autonomous, and so forth, they represent women, the Other, as evil, emotional, foreign, abnormal dependant and so forth.

In my analysis of Arab women’s writings, I found that female authors also tend to represent men as Other, with characteristics in opposition to their own. The difference, however, is that women writers seem to disturb the ordered sets, so that while men may have opposite traits, these traits are not necessarily associated with other sets of opposites. Therefore, women represent themselves as good, but also caring, emotional, pacifist, strong, wise, and so forth, and men in these texts become bad, selfish, insensitive, violent, weak, and insensible.

Because of this fundamental disruption of the binary oppositions, writers often have been treating violent war as the signifiers in the binary/male/female, and are able to define men and masculinity as they know it, their texts fulfill to a large extent the feminist deconstructionists’ project. Despite this rupture, however, the Arab women writers discussed here have continued to write of men and masculinity in opposition to women and femininity. This, although reinventing and challenging traditional phallocentric binary thinking, may be read as reasserting natural and perhaps essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity. Feminist reading of the texts may reveal that the writers may only be depicting a version of their reality, where most men are potentially violent and where this violence may only be a product of socialization rather than as innate qualities. However, by depicting most men as violent they may instead read as reaffirming “natural” differences between men and women. By so strongly insisting that violence is a fundamental part of masculinity, these writers run the risk of establishing binaries that are equally rigid and that may continue to constrain members of both sexes to their gendered norms.

Masculine Identity in Hoda Barakat’s The Stone of Laughter

Since masculinity is “historically changing and politically fraught” any attempt at defining it remains deficient and incomplete. As R.W. Connell puts it, masculinitie “come into existence at particular times and places, and are always subject to change” (Connell, 3). In Lebanon, the civil war had an enormous impact on the masculine and feminine. The war polarized people according to their gender; the masculine ideal was represented in courageous men killing and fighting in the name of their country, whereas women were frequently associated with passivity. The irrelevance of this opposition is reflected in many Lebanon war novels, where the traditional roles are reversed (Agbary, “Domestic Spaces in War Fiction: Entrapment or Liberation”), 83). The absurdity of this division is expressed in Hoda Barakat’s The Stone of Laughter through the protagonist Khalil, who refuses to accept the identity that is imposed on him by society. In this novel, one of the major themes Hoda Barakat deals with and criticizes is gender roles in Lebanon at the time of the civil war. As Mona Fayad succinctly puts it, Barakat’s novel presents the war as a situation “where gender roles are rigidly overdetermined, where participation in the community through fighting is the basic touchstone of masculine identity” (163). Nevertheless, it is clear that in Barakat’s novel the male protagonist is ill-at-ease in an aggressive male role, and consequently, retires into a protected female inner space. (Agbary, “Introduction: Lebanese Women and Literature,” 13).

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remind him of “two pigs who walk, with the revolting secret smells that their vile bodies secrete”, and he laughs at the thought of telling them that “all these blazing embers are extinguished in one, tiny moment in two disgusting little parts of their bodies” (Barakat, 117). Khalil is in love with his neighbor Naj, who gets killed by militiamen. Several months after Naj’s death, he falls in love with Yussef, who also gets killed. Khalil is attracted to their masculinity. Even the bare torsos of dead men fill him with excitement because “those firm, naked bodes confirm to him beyond all doubt that they are men, that the sharp flame of their masculinity is what led them to kill” (Barakat, 146). But when Yussef dies, even this fact becomes questionable. The women who mourn over Yussef’s death refer to his corpse as “she”, making the issue of gender seem even more so complicated to Khalil. Even though Khalil strongly resists the mark of gender, he eventually realizes that in order to survive, there has to be a change in his life. The death of both Naj and Yussef affects him deeply. Unable to express his sorrow, he isolates himself and avoids almost all human contact. Khalil also gets severely sick. Unable to eat, he vomits blood and his body gets thin and ugly. He develops an ulcer and he has to be operated on. The time he spends in the hospital is central to Khalil’s transformation. He is fascinated by the hospital’s ambience and sees it as “the city’s real paradise” because it creates the right atmosphere for forgetting the war (Barakat, 158). The hospital seems to be independent of the world outside: it has its own light, its own air, and the whiteness “washes the brain clean of any images of the blood” (Barakat, 158). The narrator speaks of his unreturning illness in this novel, and Khalil’s transformation is not presented as something desirable. Khalil, whom we loved at the beginning, becomes a violent monster we fail to sympathize with.

In the last scene, Khalil is transformed. His transformation does not take place without a process in which Khalil dehumanizes himself and others (Fayaad, 165). He is a different person, he wears sunglasses and a leather jacket; he smuggles weapons and rapists young women who lives above him even though he initially took care of her. As Fedéric Lagrange correctly asserts, “it should be stressed that Khalil does not become straight in the last scene” since “the end of hesitation is also the end of ‘passive’ sexuality: whether it be heteroerotic or homosexual” (185).

Khalil’s transformation is illogical, as the title of the novel suggests. The “Stone of Laughter” refers to the philosopher’s stone, which, in alchemy, is a stone or chemical substance thought to have the power of transmuting base metals into gold (Fayaad, 165). As the gold that is sought by the alchemists, Khalil’s new identity hardly resembles his former identity. The narrator does not condemn Khalil nor tries to justify his acts. As Rashid Al-Daf puts it, the realism in Barakat’s novel is neutral; she merely wants to expose man. It is as if Barakat were trying to say: “That’s the way life is” (Al-Daf, 62). Nevertheless, the moral standards are criticized in this novel, and Khalil’s transformation is not presented as something desirable. Khalil, whom we loved at the beginning, becomes a violent monster we fail to sympathize with.

In a region where gender differences are deeply ingrained and sedimented within its social structure, it is no surprise that the rhetoric of masculinity and femininity has long been reified in various Arab cultural and literary productions. This rhetoric has also been projected in diverse forms and from various manners. Moreover, while it is true that substantial studies have been devoted to the discourse of femininity, much still needs to be said about the manifestations of masculinity, manhood and machismo in modern/postmodern Arab productions and publications. More specifically, much needs to be said about the multifold exultations of masculinity, the ambiguities it entails and the subversion and pitfalls it has underwound in Arabic literature, cinema and poetry. Thus, this essay will attempt to highlight the rhetoric of masculine hegemony and its subversion as it has been manifested in the award winning film Arak El-Balah (1998) by prominent Egyptian director El-Kashef’s Arak El-Balah’). Therein, it will make clear that in traditional societies challenging masculine ideals are bound to trigger irreversible violence.

To begin with, much has been said about the world of Radwan El-Kashef and the realm of his films. Born and raised in the southern part of Egypt, this native of the Sai’id is said to have “brought his home village alive in the imagination” of his friends and viewers, through “the innumerable stories” he captured on and outside the screen. This attachment to his southern roots, says Han Shukri, stems from and is intrinsically linked to his “image of the world that is the source of creativity” (Shukri, 2000).

In fact, this world is deeply embedded within the “magical and mundane” reality of his films. From his first graduation project Janoudya’ (The Southern Woman) 1984), to to Leila Banana (The Blueness of Violets) 1992) 2, Arak El-Balah (Date Wine) 1998), and Al-Saher (The magician) 2001), El-Kashef has weaved multifold stories of women; stories that encapsulate their dilemmas, weaknesses, desires and dreams – a conundrum reality. Consequently, El-Kashef’s films are said to be “situated within a woman’s world” and “seen through a woman’s eyes” (Al Ahram Weekly, Winter) While it is true that El-Kashef’s films are concerned with and work through as

Mascullity, Manhood and Machismo in Radwan El-Kashef’s Arak El-Balah

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The world of women, for me, is a world of symbols, concealment and allusion. It is a reality different to that which is lived.

Arak El-Balah is one of El-Kashif’s most acclaimed films. Since its release, the film has been lauded by both critics and viewers alike. The film has also appeared in various international and regional festivals and has received numerous awards including: the Silver award in the Carthage Film Festival (1998) and the Aljazeera Film Festival in Belgium (1999); as well as Best film in the International Festival for Mediterranean Cinema in Tetuan, Morocco (1999) 4.

Like most of El-Kashif’s films, the story takes place in Upper Egypt, in an imaginary village in the district of Sohag. The plot of the film is as follows: all the strong men in the village depart in search of wealth leaving behind women, children, an old man and a young boy - named Ahmad - who is on the threshold of adolescence. Thus, begins a new precarious phase in the village, a phase where strong, frustrated, angry, and befuddled women attempt to defy individual and collective hardships, where Ahmad dreams of climbing the tallest palm tree in the village and where uncontrollable violence erupts once the men return.

Nevertheless, at the center of all this is also the story of the making of a man in a community of women and the ambivalence this inflicts.

The initiation of Ahmad (played by Hamdy Ahmad) into manhood is very much an intrinsic part of El-Kashif’s cinematic narrative. In fact, from the opening scene, which captures a thousand men bidding their grandmothers adieu, Ahmad’s milestone journey into manhood begins. For as the men depart, the females turn to hymns and laughingly proclaim that “you are the only man left”, a phrase very much indicative of the new role that will be ascribed to him and which he has yet to fulfill. Elsewhere, a woman addresses a boy by telling him that they will make him a man no matter the challenges. Yet, the scene that follows does not only capture the festivities that take place following the birth of a baby boy, it is also a celebration of Ahmad’s initiation into manhood. Amidst bouts of lullabies and songs, the women dress Ahmad in proper men’s attire, hand him a gun and watch him fondly as he mounts a huge stalk. Evidently, the ritual underlines the scores the transformation of this young boy into what is presumed to be manhood. It is also an early indication that it is the women in this community who will bolster/stabilize Ahmad’s manhood, who will indirectly construct/deconstruct his masculine identity and who will instruct him as to what it takes to be a man; a factor that is bound to create a lot of havoc in the shaping of his masculine identity.

After all, Ahmad is secluded in a community of women. Instead of learning about what Chenjerai Shire calls “the gender of certain material objects that are vital in the shaping of masculine identity” (150), Ahmad learns about the objects and ideals employed to suit to his own self within an image of machismo is very much part and parcel of becoming a man, particularly in the Sa’id. Thus, Ahmad is compelled to pursue his lifelong dream of climbing the el-Ilyah, the tallest palm tree in the village and one that only heroic men can ever approach, is a struggle to situate himself. Ahmad shoots an animal instead of the ‘idealtypical’ young man even has a chance to perform what he perceives to be the ‘macho’ deed, another incident occurs that further decenters his notion of his manhood.

Ahmad finds out that one of the married women (Shifaa) in the village has committed adultery with a stranger and is pregnant. Instead of fulfilling his duty as the only man in the village, Ahmad demonstrates ‘weakness’ by not washing the family and village honor. In short, amid Salma’s pleading, Ahmad shoots an animal instead of the ‘ideal-typical’ woman. By failing to conform to the male ideals of protecting one’s honor and shame, Ahmad exhibits what other men would describe as a male malaise, i.e. getting in touch with one’s sensitive part. Thus, he exposes a fundamental glitch in his manhood and becomes ‘effeminate’ in his own eyes before anyone else. It is his attempts to reassert his manhood, the young man tries to shoot the woman’s lover. However, he does not possess the ‘manly’ precision acquired for such a task and his target manages to escape.

The consecutive and degrading events heighten Ahmad’s intention to climb the palm tree. The young man needs to perform what Frank Pittman calls “the Big Impossible” for the attainment of a “heroic masculinity” (182). Thus, he seeks a silent consent from his grandfather (the only one liable to give it) and proceeds with his mission despite the reservations of the women. As Ahmad mounts the tree, the women – clad black abayas - stand in awe and fear, all the while attempting to stop him. Yet the young man is heedless to their warnings; the climb is an essential element in his ascent into manhood. As he clambers to the top of the palm tree and plucks the ripe fruits, Ahmad’s notion of who and what he is undergoes a marked transformation in his eyes and in the eyes of the female masses.

For thereafter, the women’s attitude towards Ahmad changes. Salma no longer accepts his ‘boyish’ appearance. Rather, she accedes to his wishes and repeatedly says: “Set as much conditions as you want, you are my man and it is you who will determine what your mission is” (183). Salma posits that her father – upon his return – will bless the marriage, after all “where else will he find such a strong and able man.” Salma is not alone. Another married woman tries to seduce him, but stops short when an older woman rebukes her behavior. In short, the women’s newly established power to claim and assert Ahmad’s performance and affirm his manhood and dominance. Yet, El-Kashif soon subverts this rhetoric of masculine hegemony by a sequence of symbolic events that force the viewer to reevaluate and reassess this traditional rhetoric. And perhaps questions its appropriateness in light of the changes that are sweeping this region.

As Ahmad basks in the exultations of masculinity that the women bestow upon him, Shifaa, the adulteress, burns herself and implicates encouragement from the woman. Shifaa’s suicide carries nuanced interpretations. On one
level, it is a subtle condemnation, perhaps by the women themselves, of Ahmad’s simultaneity which was too frail to commit the deed. In other words, despite the admiration the women shower on Ahmad, there is a deep-rooted, latent feeling that he continues to be influenced by patriarchal idioms of honor and shame. Consequently, these women unintentionally demean Ahmad's manhood when they exhibit no qualms about urging Shifaa to go ahead with the suicide - a factor that is cynically sug-
ggested rather than stated.

Moreover, the fact that Shifaa herself took the initiative to perform what Ahmad should otherwise have accomplished is perhaps a subtle message that Ahmad’s manhood and through him all conven-
tional ideals of manhood in the Sa’id family are deeply disintegrating and are being dismantled by women such as Shifaa; women who choose to become perpetrators of their own fate and des-
tiny, even when they do so out of despair. The choice, hence, ascertains their individuality rather than their feehlessness. Thus, the scene forces a re-evaluation of our understanding of man-
hood in this region.

If Shifaa’s suicide awakens Ahmad’s masculine insecur-
ities, the death of his spinsters plays one other role. The broadcast of the radio show spires and enforces the idea that the traditional dis-
course of a man and woman do not follow the same course. Thus, it imposes upon the audience that male values are to be cultivated above female. The broadcast of the radio show spires and enforces the idea that the traditional discourse of a man and woman do not follow the same course. Thus, it imposes upon the audience that male values are to be cultivated above female.

The anticipated crisis springs forth with the coming of the men. For when the latter arrive, they do not placate Ahmad’s incoherences, nor do they appease the women by venting negative emotions that have been caused by the many eco-

nomic and social hardships. Rather they trigger uncon- trollable violence and tragedies. This is because the immi-
giants soon discern that much has changed in their absence. The women are no longer weak, emotional and fragile. Instead, they exhibit individual autonomy and what the men perceive as ‘rebellion’ and ‘disobedience’, one woman refuses to sleep with her husband because she is not in the mood, another smokes openly and still another asserts her opinion without any reservations. These occur-
rences baffle and enrage the men.

Since in societies in which the depicted in the film, a woman’s behavior is an index to a man’s success in con-
trolling them, the men blame Ahmad. They reprimand his ineptness at monitoring the behavior of his wives, daughters and granddaughters. Even more, they often consider him an accomplice in the ‘detrimental’ transfor-
mations they detect. Nevertheless, the representation only exemplifies when Salma’s father discovers that his daughter is pregnant and learns of the real reasons behind Shifaa’s decision to commit suicide, which must be Ahmad. The dis-
covers lead to the conviction of Ahmad.

The men cunningly plan Ahmad’s execution to avenge their honor and to re-establish their dominance. Perhaps the reason behind their actions is explained through the scenario that “the cause of man’s honor and shame is that he is deeply embedded within the Sa’id’s mind, expect deflowering to occur on the wedding night only.

Yet Ahmad does not even muse over this notion. He does not incriminate Salma’s sexual capitation nor does he deem her an ‘immoral’ woman. On the contrary, Ahmad anxiously awaits the return of Salma’s father to marry her.

Ahmad’s incongruous attitude towards certain social val-
ues pertaining to this region reflects the opposing forces residing within him. Ahmad clearly stumbles between two forces: the one insists on practicing conventional ideals of manhood and the other fashioning and contesting these ideals. Moreover, his ambiguity does not merely spring from the fact that he has dwelled in women’s spaces for long, but also from the flux of social and political practices that are emerging around him. These changes include the immmigration of many men villagers, the individuality of women and the fact that the Sa’id’s no longer travel and isolated. Strangers such as the men entertainers can now gain entry into his social circle. Yet, through the final cri-
sic of the film, El-Kashef predicts and emphasizes that these changes will not be as easily absorbed as those changes that have swept other regions.

In conclusion, it is quite clear that the rhetoric of mascu-
line dominance and its collapse are one of the major dis-
courses of the film. Through this discourse and through the actions of the characters, the film emphasizes the inherent influence women had, and will continue to have, in undermining and fostering a man’s sense of himself. It also highlights that a woman’s behavior and local idioms such as honor, virginity and shame are tied to and affect the construction of male identities. More importantly, the film exemplifies the harsh reality of many traditional vil-
lages in Upper Egypt and elsewhere. It will have been thrown off course by the changes befalling society. Consequently, in an effort to shield themselves from such currents they respond brutally and, sometimes, viciously.

END NOTES
1. El-Kashef died of a stroke in June 2002, at the age of 100, days before the release of his film Al Saher.
2. Janviya won the Ministry of Culture’s prize for Best film in 1998.
3. Lah yu Banafa won the Cairo International Film Festival’s Special Jury prize in 1992.
4. Atal El-Bada’s other awards include: Best film, directing, editing, script, actress in an Egyptian Film in the Egyptian National Film Festival (1999); Best Film in the Anges Film Festival in France (1999); Best photography in the South African Film Festival in Johannesburg (1999).

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graphy, 147 – 158.

The last symbol of traditional manhood and machismo is obliterated.

The women, no longer willing to confine themselves to their passive roles, – not only against the tragedy led by Salma herself, wives, daughters and granddaughters angri-

lly march forward in protest against the violent actions of their kith and kin. Women who have challenged his authority as a suro-
gate father, brother and neighbor and rendered him socially impotent, ‘ adding that, as a result, “violence may be a means through which the illusion of whole-

ness is reasserted” (B7). R. W. Connell also emphasizes that “the hierarchy of masculinities is itself a source of violence, since force is used in defining and maintaining the hierarchy” (217). Thus to reaffirm their disintegrat-
ing masculinities and to avoid the downward spiral of the patriarchal pecking order, the men take action - violent action.

First, they invite Ahmad to one of their gatherings, a factor that flatters his manhood. They, then, repeated-
ly boost the young man’s ‘machismo’ at having climbed the palm tree. Salma’s father also stresses that Salma will become his only if he succeeds in climbing in the tree and in the dark. Ahmad’s need to prove his manhood to the men and to quell his eagerness to marry Salma dis-
quarters him. But the attempt that he climbs the tree, the men shatter its roof and the young man is killed. As the gigantic tree falls, chaos erupts. Also, the

...a woman’s behavior and local idioms such as honor, virginity and shame are tied to and affect the construction of male identities.
International Committee Discusses Discrimination Against Women in Lebanon
Gender-Based Discrimination in the Area of Nationality

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The United Nations’ International Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) held its 64th session from February to March in Geneva, Switzerland. On March 3rd and 4th the committee considered the fourteenth of the committee’s periodic reports of Lebanon on its implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (in accordance with article 9 of the CERD).

The committee’s 18 members representing Russia, China, The United Kingdom, The United States, Guatemala, Egypt, Algeria, Brazil, Denmark, Pakistan, India, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Greece, Austria, France, Ecuador, and Argentina, examined the report submitted by the Lebanese Republic and had some serious concerns on a number of issues.

The committee requested clarifications related to the status and working conditions of domestic migrant workers, the confessional system, and the conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The committee also asked the Lebanese government to explain the reasons why Lebanese nationality is derived from the paternal side only. Both the Brazilian and the Russian committee members Jose Lindgren and Alexei Avramovsky, raised important questions about the principle of jus sanguinis, civil marriage and naturalization. Committee Expert Tang Chengyuan (China), who served as “rapporteur” for Lebanon, asked whether the jus sanguinis principle, which stated that Lebanese nationality was only derived from the paternal side, might be reconsidered.

Jus sanguinis, Latin for ‘right of blood’, is a right by which nationality or citizenship can be recognised to any individual born to a parent who is a national or citizen of that state. It contrasts with jus soli, Latin for ‘right of soil’. The regulation of the acquisition of nationality by birth to a parent who is already a citizen of the state is provided by a derivutive law called lex sanguinis. Lex sanguinis does not necessarily discriminate against the mother as is the case in Lebanon. In many European countries, lex sanguinis is the preferred means of passing on citizenship. More recently, these countries have begun to move more towards use of lex soli, partially under the influence of the European Convention on Nationality.

Answering the question on jus sanguinis, the Lebanese national delegation said Lebanon was among several countries which had adopted this system and saw no need to amend this law at present to adopt another form of nationality acquisition. The delegation, which included four middle aged men, stated that Lebanon preserves the principle of jus sanguinis in order to “preserve the unity of the family under the father”.

In Lebanon, laws regarding women’s ability to retain and transmit citizenship are similar to those that existed in the United States in the first part of the 20th century. Lebanon does not recognize the citizenship of children from marriages between female citizens and foreign men. Yet the question of marriage does not necessarily enter into it, rather, women are not recognized as being able to confer citizenship upon their children. A child born to a foreign father and a Lebanese mother must take his father’s citizenship, or else risks having none. Countries like Kenya and Malaysia, do not recognize citizenship by descent from the mother if the birth occurs overseas. But others, like Algeria, Kuwait, Nepal and Lebanon, restrict recognition of citizenship to descent from the father, whether the child is born in the father’s country or elsewhere.

Gender-based discrimination in the area of citizenship is one of the ruthless forms of de jure discrimination faced by women in Lebanon and around the world. The Lebanese mother carries her baby for months inside her ‘Lebanese’ body. The pre-born baby is then ‘Lebanese’ as long as her fate is not born. The minute the child is born he/she is separated from the mother’s nationality and is forced to acquire the nationality of the recognized father.

Gender subordination in Lebanon, that was taken for granted most of the Twentieth Century has become legally unsupportable. The right to establish independent legal domicile, women’s access to equal educational and employment opportunity, pay and benefits, and independent immigration and naturalization law rights are related one to another. They follow logically upon the emancipation of women, collectively from the rejection of the concept of legal ‘unity of the family’ under male dominance.

Nationality remains a convenient criterion for exclusion of women. The solution to past and present administrative discrimination against women in Lebanon lies in the judiciary and the legislature. Gendered and ethnocentric directions in policy making and within the Lebanese Parliament partially explain outdated conceptions of nationality. Such conceptions are inappropriate for the liberal state to which at least some of the Lebanese look up to.

Equal nationality both implies and is dependent upon equal citizenship. Prohibiting the children from acquiring the nationality of their mother is considering the mother a ‘second class’ citizen inferior to men. ‘Authority’, ‘obedience’, ‘subordination’ and ‘property’ are commonly used to describe both the pre-modern status of women. The chaotic, unapproachable state that denies relevance to modern liberal norms is unlikely to provide women or children their entitlements.

The essays are grouped in three sections. The first, “Making men: Institutions and Social Practices” is the most ‘academic’ part of the book and addresses ritual and practices, such as circumcision, through which boys enter the socially accepted realm of ‘manhood’. Abdelwahab Bouhaila, in his discussion of circumcisions in Tunisia and Morocco, questions the religious and physiological validity of this ritual, concluding...
that it mainly reflects “a symbolic valorization of the phallic and an obsessive fear of losing it.” Yoram Bilu addresses the same ritual, but in the Jewish community, as well as two subsequent rituals, which are the first haircut and the school initiation ceremony. All three practices, he explains, are the initiation rites into manhood, which in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community, is associated with the initiation to the world of Torah study. Two essays then address the institution of military service, in Israel and Turkey, the latter complemented by a particularly gripping interview with a former conscript. Emma Sinclair-Webb’s article sheds light on the two-dimensional perception of military service in Turkey; on the one hand, a recently refreshed association between military service and manhood has resulted from the conflict with Kurdish groups, while on the other hand, the evasion of military service by those directly involved, namely young men. As the editor remarks, the theme of violence stands out quite forcefully in these essays, and while it had not been anticipated, it is “fitting in relation to a region which is currently one of the most militarized and conflict-ridden areas.”

The second section, “Male Fictions: Narratives, Images and Icons,” is a richly diverse and informative part dealing with perceptions of masculinity in literature, movies and the press. For instance, Frédéric Lagrange in “Male Homosexuality in Modern Arab Literature” explores attitudes to homosexuality in Middle Eastern societies, attitudes marked by “the will not to know” that most probably contributed to the quasi absence of sociological work on this matter. He asserts: “For reasons that have to be analyzed, not only are the margins of the sexual ethic, such as homosexuality, severely underdocumented in sociological essays, flushed or harshly attacked in the press, but literature itself proves much less eager to discuss pleasure in all its manifestations than it did until the first half of the 19th century.” As such, his essay offers a cultural insight on a subject that has practically never been analyzed, let alone discussed.

The final section “Memoir and Male Identity” consists of three personal accounts that illustrate the formation of masculine identity. The last essay closes the loop of the book with an original work on the moustache in Middle Eastern societies: “Pipe, moustache, sun-glasses, and also the overcoat which we used to imagine as the dress of secret policeman, all this combined to make up the complete man who looked nothing,” he writes, concluding that the moustache is “no more than a remaining trace of the customs of a previous generation.”

As Sinclair-Webb suggests in her introduction, many more fields of interest can be explored in the future to gain a richer understanding of masculinity in the Middle East. Imagined Masculinities is by no means an academic work in the strictest sense, and was not intended to be as such: the contributions’ backgrounds are as diverse as the approaches adopted in the book. Read as such, this book can be of great interest to scholars interested in gender studies and those interested in the Middle East, as well as to the general readership. Moreover, by offering translations of original work in Arabic, the book brings the non-Arab audience insights into issues of masculinities by writers from the region. On the whole, its conscientiously eclectic approach brings fascinating and more importantly, groundbreaking material, to a wide audience.