

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

MOTHERING AND NATIONALISM IN EGYPT

by

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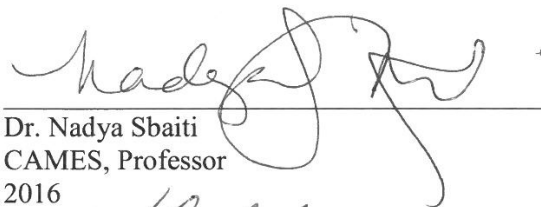
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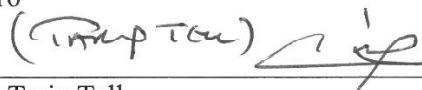
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

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This project seeks to explore the ways in which mothering was associated with nationalism at the turn-of-the-century in Egypt. Colonial penetration in Egypt saw a rise in focus in the ways that women were raising their children. Advocates, religious scholars, and academic pundits began to opine on the ways that women should change their mothering skills and adopt a more modernized way that was in tandem with a new Egypt.

This project is a literature review on the material published throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s where a majority of the material on mothering and nationalistic discourse was published. This literature review will seek to understand the ways in which mothering and nationalism were coined at the turn of the century and analyze the context in which the material was produced.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The way in which children are being raised now is a reversal from how parenting, specifically, mothering changed from the 20th century during the period of colonialism in the Middle East. Academics, advocates, religious scholars, alike began to shed light on the proper ways that children should be raised in order to keep up with the modernizing ways of the west. Children were seen as the future leaders of tomorrow that would bring forth a new nation that was at a par with its western counterparts. This meant that mothers had to stop their “erroneous” ways in which they were caring for their children and educate themselves on how to properly raise children by first eliminating old ways of mentality such as not bathing children because it was meant to “keep the evil eye away,” (Amin, 1899). Furthermore, mothers were encouraged to stop handing over their babies to wet nurses, caring for their children themselves, and breastfeeding them which prior to the 20th century was an act that was seen as degrading and backward. No other time more so than the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century do we see the relationship with mothers and their children alter in such a way that made the mothers the primary caregiver, educator of academics, morals, and religion.

We see this especially in the case of Egypt where the betterment of the country was associated with mothering; the future of Egypt, in other words, depended on the amelioration of women and children. In Palestine, it was the same concept, and educating girls and women became the priority to create teachers, nurses, and advocates

who would instill the fervor of nationalism in their children. Iran, prior to the 20th century, had an array of literature on the duties of a man to raise his children and manage his household; and after many publications like Qasim Amin's book, *The Liberation of Women: The New Woman*, was translated, a new form of literature began to emerge that advocated for the education of girls and women so the nation could prosper. The literature published from Egypt at the turn of the century proliferated throughout the region and was intensified throughout the country as academics, religious scholars, revolutionaries, and newspapers published works that featured Qasim Amin's premise: advancing the status of women that would in turn cultivate modern-civilized children and create an environment that fosters growth and development.

For the purpose of coherence, only the case study of Egypt will be taken to examine the ways in which mothering became associated with nationalism. I focus here specifically on Egypt because in my research I kept coming back to Egypt as the origin from where nationalism and mothering became intertwined. There is a plethora of research on the concept of the new woman in Egypt and much of the literature available during the turn of the 20th century from Egypt served as a bench mark for other nations in the region to form their own discourses on women and the nation. I'll examine the literature pertaining to Egypt and do a literature review in the ways in which the content was presented starting from the literature published in the 1980s with Judith Tucker's book, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (1985), and Mervat Hatem's journal article, *Psychodynamics of Mothering and Gender in Egyptian Families* (1987), followed by material published in the 1990s with Omnia Shakry's article, *Schooled Mothers and*

Structured Play: Child rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt (1998), and ending with works published in the 2000s with Hibba Abugideiri's article, *The Scientisation of Culture: Colonial Medicine's Construction of Egyptian Womanhood, 1839-1929* (2004), Beth Baron's book, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (2005), Helena J. Kaler's article, *Inscribing Gender in the Imperial Context: The "Woman Question" in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (2006), Cathlyn Mariscotti's book, *Gender and Class in the Egyptian Women's Movement, 1925-1939 Changing Perspectives* (2008), and Laura Bier's book, *Revolutionary Womanhood Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt* (2011). I end this research by analyzing Hoda Elsadda's book, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel 1892-2008*, to compare her literary examples to the literature used in this essay and try to find similarities and or differences to the facts present in the scholarly written material. This material was selected based on which authors were frequently mentioned in the overall literature review on mothering and nationalism and the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s were selected as the eras to focus on because it is where most of the literature on mothering and nationalism can be found.

Throughout the essay, I give a general summary on the material, and after each era, I attempt to conceptualize the context under which the material was published and point out the strengths and weaknesses throughout the authors' arguments while comparing and contrasting their various viewpoints.

Before I continue with the literature review, I want to give you background information on the historical state in which Egypt was in when the concept of a

changing woman began to be debated. Egypt was going through a transformational period under the Ottoman Empire. A series of reforms were implemented that put Egypt on the path of modernizing its public and civil institutions that would be more at par with Western countries. The Ottoman Empire during that period of time was trying to revamp its political and military institutions that would fortify its territories and keep colonial penetration at bay by appeasing local minority groups and strengthening its military might that would repel colonial invasion as well as local uprisings. Already the minority groups within the Ottoman Empire were adopting more “Western” ways that separated them from their more traditional counterparts. As the French and later British colonial presence and colonial goods entered the local-Egyptian markets, the traditional-familial workplaces and household altered in such a way that forced society as a whole to reconfigure itself, especially the position of women. As a result, there was an outpour of advocates for the adoption of more modern ways, those who sought to maintain their traditional ways of living, and those who supported a combination of the two. Regardless of the stance taken by Egyptian societies’ various groups, the role of women changed, (Keddie, 2007).

At the turn of the century Egypt, there was an outpour of both men and women activist who championed women’s rights. Doctors, the media, academics, journalists, and religious scholars praised the changes of the new woman to either adopt to the changing ways of a new-industrial nation or maintain its traditional ways of living. As Keddie states, “Growing interest in changing the position of women reflected not only Western models, but also the incompatibility of phenomena like extensive harems and

domestic slavery with the development of a more modern market capitalist system,” (Keddie, 2007, pg. 70). Egypt as a whole was facing new ideas and ways that forced it to re-focus on what it meant to be Egyptian as a whole and thus the intensive focus on women. How these changes impacted women, whether good or bad, depended a lot on what social class women belonged to in Egypt. Lower class women saw their outside work come to a halt often leaving them in poverty. The elite women were often unperturbed by these economic impacts.

What is evident, however, at the turn of the century, says Keddie, is the rise of women entering schooling, delayed marriages, marriages of choice, and a decline in the harem system, (pg. 65). Hence, during that same period, there is a rise of nationalist movements that put women at the forefront of their discourse to either advance their own causes or to rebel against what they saw as a total adoption of Western culture. Women seemed to be the only outlet that could be unchanged by Western ways, perhaps the reason many were keen on shaping women to what they believed would be appropriate for the changing times. Politically and economically Egypt had to adopt to a Western-capitalist system, but the home, the woman, was an area that was more tangible for people to mold in ways they thought would keep Egypt, as authentic and form its own entity, while it was integrated into a capitalist system. The overall atmosphere in Egypt at the turn of the century paved the way for the discourse on the new-Egyptian woman and her role as a mother that would create a sense of nationalism that saw its women as the benchmark for engendering a new-modernized Egypt.

CHAPTER 2

MATERIAL PUBLISHED IN THE 1980S

In Judith Tucker's provocative book, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, she begins by stating that politics and intellect has been the focus of Egyptian history prior to the 1980s honing in specifically on middle-class men; however, after the advent of translated works from Arabic to English, a new era of research was produced that focused on a more versatile field that included various classes and gender that had been absent to orientalist-historians. She believes that women's status in society wasn't a direct change of western customs and ideologies because it was western elites who were writing about these women, thus it is difficult to understand the true-historical nature of the changes women went through. Tucker argues, contrary to an orientalist view, that it was the economic changes that took place in the 1800s-1914 and the subjugation of women in politics that really molded the Egyptian woman and women's right of property, their status in the family, and the ideas on the roles of women at that time that were at the forefront of the changing dynamic woman, (Tucker, 1985, pgs. 3-6). As Egypt went from being a predominately agrarian society to an industrial productive society, it changed the status of lower-class women. This focus on a lower-class woman is a different approach to the literature available on women and the nation. Hence, Tucker basis most of her information on religious court proceedings, lawful documents, and formal statements. Her resources are useful in providing evidence in which women of lower classes (never actually identifying who the lower classes are) would go to the religious courts for their appeals. I think Tucker does the best job at giving light into the

problems that women were facing at that period of time. Her argument, similar to Beth Baron's book, *Egypt as a Woman*, is that state intervention in traditional family guilds and informal institution is what altered the families' roles, especially that of women whose traditional practices of work had been altered. This is where her argument is a bit confusing. She states from the beginning of her book that it is in fact colonialist penetration into the local markets that altered women's ways of work, but then she talks about reforms prior to colonialism that were taking place under the Ottoman Empire that also interfered in women's traditional work. Another point that I find erroneous to assume is to think that people, working-class people, didn't want to be integrate into the capitalist system. As much as it was perhaps an encroachment of colonialism into the local markets, I think we cannot underestimate the value perhaps that the people of that time saw in being part of that global market. In general, though the book doesn't specifically talk about mothering per se and its direct association with nationalism in Egypt, but it provides a historical background in the ways in which women were being shaped through a colonial context prior to a nationalistic rhetoric. The historical context of colonial penetration into Egypt and the changes that it brought politically, economically, socially, and culturally were the foundations in the 19th century that built a platform on which mothering and nationalistic discourse takes form at the beginning of the 20th century.

Mervat Hatem's article, *Toward the Study of the Psychodynamics of Mothering and Gender in Egyptian Families*, does not speak about mothering and nationalism in particular but she offers a psychological insight of mothering using Marxist and

psychoanalytic theories of children's development to explain gender roles. Hatem, however, focuses specifically on the period of industrialization and colonialism in Egypt to discuss the shifting roles of women and how that affected the traditional, extended family as a whole by creating a much more secluded family unit (father, mother, and children) and the expectations of both women and men and the total shift in the family's dynamic affect on their children. Similar to what happened in the U.S.A., Hatem, argues that women in Egypt were threatening men's positions in the industrial workforce and therefore were relegated to the sole task of mothering at home which in turn affected the mother-father-child relationship in middle-class families. This of course, states Hatem, is different in lower-income families where women worked in the informal sector as well as caring for their own children and the children of their extended families unless the family had entered the capitalist system whereby they would follow the patterns of the upper class families. Mothering all together takes on a different role depending on the class but Hatem mentions that middle-class mothers' roles were geared towards the upbringing of the family which based on the literature available on nationalism and mothering is referring to the urban-middle class, not because the authors are biased in their writings, but because the full title of mothering was attributed only to those women whose only job was to mother and to women who wanted to focus only on mothering their children, who were middle-class women. The role of raising children was seen as the task of the woman and that concept was developed as people entered the capitalist system who very much embraced the idea. According to Hatem, even women who were educated or getting an education believed

it should be done only up to where the woman gets pregnant, and if women were to get educated, it should be done in the field of medicine or teaching, (Hatem, 1987, pg. 293). This is where Hatem's strong point lies. Though she does not go in depth about women and nationalism in particular, she gives background information on the reasons perhaps why most of the literature available is based on a specific class of women and why in turn the message of nationalism and mothering was geared towards that group. Her weakness albeit lies in the methodology she uses to conclude her research. She uses American and European feminist theories and even though she admits to this fault in her research and the cultural differences between Western theories and using them in the case of Egypt, she nevertheless concludes that it is a valid comparison. Once more, she also uses the study of white middle-class families to compare it to Egyptian families but supplements the lack of diversity in her research by using "Arab material" (never going in depth with the supplement) to further her point, (Hatem, pg. 290).

I think it is important to focus on the context in which both this book and journal was produced. Both are post-Said, which you can clearer sense from Judith Tucker's book. Her premise from the very beginning is to disregard an orientalist perspective and focus more on class and labor, similar to Mervat Hatem. Both articles, though completely different, stress the importance of class and labor. For the 1980s, these types of arguments would have been mostly at the forefront considering that there was a shift in the different experiences of women in the various classes. Both speak in detail about Egypt's integration into the capitalist system and how that affected the status of a family and ultimately their social standing.

CHAPTER 3

MATERIAL PUBLISHED IN 1990-2008

Moving on with the literature published in the 1990s and 2000s, I start with Omnia Shakry's article, *Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt*, she posits that the roles of women only began to be debated as a direct result of colonialism and its opposition to it. She doesn't give a thorough-historical background like Judith Tucker in the ways in which women changed because of historical, political, and economic factors prior to the 20th century, and though she uses Beth Baron as a reference to prove her point, but not substantially, that women's roles were inextricably linked with nationalistic discourse, and briefly stating that medicine also played a role in the advocating of proper hygiene for children, Shakry takes a stronger approach in basing her thesis that mothering was linked to nationalism ever more forcefully after Qasim Amin's book, *The Liberation of Women*. Its influence, claims Shakry, had such a vast impact that articles were printed throughout the country by Islamists, feminists, academic pundits, colonialists, and anti-colonialists alike, shedding light to Amin's arguments of women's emancipation and its necessity for a new Egypt that would not and could not be taken for granted by colonial powers if its women and children were educated and properly raised. Qasim Amin's arguments, are similar in many ways, like Shakry points out, that this idea of mothering was a concept that was not new during the turn of the century Egypt but rather it was a concept that was already being debated in Britain in order to maintain ".....racial health and purity. Women became 'mothers of the race'," (Shakry, 1998, pg. 133). The nationalistic tone

and its role on mothering in 19th century Britain is a tone that was transcendent throughout the circles of the urban-middle classes of Egypt. I think Shakry does a good job in mentioning the period during and after WWI in which women's roles were also being shaped from the global environment. For example, the reformation of child care and infancy educational systems starting in Germany that gained prominence and attention throughout Europe which eventually affected Egypt. Hence, she talks in details about the way articles published during that period of time talked about Egyptian mothers leaving their children to nannies and servants who were not equipped to raise children and how mothers of that time were prone to spoiling their children and this type of *tarbiya* was incongruent with a modernized nation, (pg. 143). Shakry also brings forth arguments by both modern-feminists and Islamists alike that discuss the importance of educating women so that they may learn proper hygiene and child care skills that will enhance the child's health and upbringing. The two opposing viewpoints agree that educating women is an imperative. Finally, Shakry states that it wasn't colonial influence and European ideas that tried to impose its ways and ideas, but rather it obliged people to reflect on their backwardness of the nation in comparison to European's nations and whether it was because of superstition, Islam, its women, education, or any of the above variables, Egyptians, separately formulated their own ideas and questioned their status as a nation in comparison to Europe which confuses the reader in the end with her contradicting conclusion. I think Shakry tries to provide evidence that nationalism and mothering was a movement perhaps that did gain some

type of influence because of colonialism but explains that nationalism and mothering was a topic that was already in fruition.

Nevertheless, I think the article fits well within the context of Lila abu-Lughod's book, *Remaking women: feminism and modernity in the Middle East*, because her book is a series of articles that range from the various fields in academia from a historical perspective, to literature, sociology, and of course, as Lila abu-Lughod herself, anthropology. Her book does a good job, with the inclusion of Shakry's article, in presenting different points of view on what is modernity without confining the term to a specific group of modern vs. traditional, etc., but rather allow the reader to delve deeper into the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of modernity and what that relationship means to women. There is no classification of what it means to be modern and that seems to be the premise of the overall book; hence, why Shakry's article would be included within that context, because there is no one cause and effect for women and mothering but rather a series of notions that were both external and internal to Egypt. This book was published in the 1990s and during that period, there were many historical books that were published about the misconceptions of women in the Middle East and it is clear from Lila abu-Lughod's book, that she tries to address the misguided issue that religion, and religion only, is a determinate factor in explaining women's conditions.

In Hibba Abugideiri's new way of looking at women and nationhood, her article, *The Scientisation of Culture: Colonial Medicine's Construction of Egyptian Womanhood, 1839-1929*, explores what many authors mention nominally in their texts

about the importance of medicine and their contribution to a new, modernized woman. Abugideiri doesn't disregard that women and nationhood was exclusively a byproduct from the field of medicine; she states that Egypt's integration into the capitalist system, a burgeoning urban-middle class, and state politics all contributed to the notion of a new woman, but what's missing from the literature is the importance that medicine played in educating the masses on the way a woman should mother her child and in turn contributed to a nationalistic cause of a new Egyptian woman. Abugideiri accomplishes her purpose of outlining just how important modern medicine reinforced by the French and the English created an elite group of medical practitioners who became a dominating voice in society and governmental circles of how a mother should properly raise her child. This new group of elite doctors gained their recognition and prominence from their status upon graduation from the prestigious and elite University, Qasr al-Aini where students (male) who attended had to have been able to afford the fees, pass the rigorous examinations that had been instructed in English, and lived in the city, (Abugideiri, 2004, pg. 87). This new sense of authority and esotericism gave these men a special status that depended on the colonial state and situated them within a nationalistic discourse as well. Abugideiri explains that though the Egyptian medical establishment was not new to Egypt, the improvements and inculcation of new-medicinal knowledge and practices gave a small group of elite men the validity and recognition from the government to opine on women's role in their households and in turn "scientificised" Egyptian society, (pg. 85). Abugideiri states that especially after WWI, Egyptian doctors took on a more central role as head doctors and began to spread

their message throughout the press on the ways in which women could provide better health care services for their children. This rhetoric became intertwined with nationalistic discourse and reinforced by government officials that if they followed the prescribed recommendations by Egyptian doctors, then women and children would progress and contribute to the overall well-being of the nation and model the ideal Egyptian woman. Doctors recommended mothers, especially pregnant women, to live wholesome lifestyles through exercising, eating properly, getting adequate rest, breastfeeding, sterilizing bottles, and properly cleaning their babies, (pg. 94).

Furthermore, other doctors wrote about the proper ways in which British mothers cared for their children and how their methods should be applied to the Egyptian woman. This is where the article's weakness lies. Abugideiri mentions that in one doctor report it states that "In fact, in stark contrast to the tribal woman who could easily deliver her baby, 'even while walking', the urban middle-class woman was prescribed a forty-day bed rest, or else 'she would get sick,' (pg. 94). This quote is indicative of exactly who the audience was: middle-class, urban women reinforcing the nationalistic discourse that applied only to the upper-middle classes. This kind of research is what Cathlyn Mariscotti would argue does little to speak about the lower classes and the affect the medical establishment had on them. Furthermore, Mariscotti would argue that this type of rhetoric and research only strengthens a colonial and orientalist history. But for the purpose of this paper, Abugideiri doesn't need to explain the further complexities as the purpose of her paper was not in any way to highlight the various complexities that constructed motherhood and nationalism. Finally, I believe that though Abugideiri

explains this briefly, the overall atmosphere in Egypt during WWI was just a period in general where there were many diseases and illness that were going around, and perhaps it wasn't that doctors as a result of that started to write about preventative measures, perhaps it was the state and the people themselves who began to look for some kind of solution that was afflicting the general public; meaning, rather than the precipitation of Egyptian doctors, it was the state's and people's invocation of interference that gave doctors the platform on which to give their medical advice.

In Beth Baron's book, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics*, she uses a historical array of sources that spans from 1919 to 1940 that highlights the language and image of Egypt as a woman and the nationalistic politics of women during that period of time. In her thorough research, she uses historical documents, media, autobiographies, and drawings and prints published. She illustrates how much of what was published during that time frame was critical in shaping Egypt through the notion of Egypt as a woman. This was no different, she claims, is what happened in other parts of the world as well. The idea of women as the mother spread worldwide in nationalistic movements in India and South Africa. Whatever the discourse, this worldwide idea was used to restructure the family in Egypt so that it was more in tandem with modern discourses that were more appropriate in countries with a nationalistic rhetoric that were inextricably tied with capitalist countries. Egypt was no different in its nationalistic discourse as the woman of the nation. It was evident in its reference to the country as the people (*umma*) with a female ending letter and the widespread media attention on print photographs that represented Egypt as the mother of the nation, says Baron. In

1798-1801 with French occupation and later in 1882-1922 during the British occupation of Egypt, the “Woman Question” and the role of the family was tied with the new-modern Egypt that would engender a nation that had one identity, (Baron, 2008, pg. 17). Egypt as a womanly image was meant to unite the people of Egypt regardless of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, under the banner of the Mother, (pg. 7). The proliferation of photographs and print journals labeling and exhibiting Egypt as a womanly figure was the platform that many nationalistic advocates used to precipitate the importance of the woman and the family unit as a collective identity that was paramount in nation building. The image of Egypt as gendered based, along with the local and political transformations of Egypt like the abolition of slavery under the Ottoman Empire, the growth of the middle class notables, civil schooling and law, and the rise of an Egyptian educated class espoused a new way of thinking that encompassed the woman as the dominate figure in shaping the nation, claims Baron. In the turn of the century, the literature on the status of women begins to gain prominence as an important component to the advancement of the nation. The array of advocates on women’s rights, especially that of Qasim Amin’s works on the emancipation of women gains attention in the elite circles of Egypt and Iran. Albeit according to Beth Baron, she states that the “Woman Question” is debated within a varied context according to different scholars but in fact the concept of the family was being reconfigured as a whole because of the abolition of slavery that would no longer maintain the status of the once mixed family of wife/ves, children, husband, slaves, concubines, and eunuchs within the Ottoman empire. Furthermore, the cohesion of the Egyptian identity: local Egyptians or intermarried ones

from the Ottoman Empire, began to create a new form of identity that pitted Egyptians or mixed Egyptians (Circassian, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Asian, and or Turkish) against Turkish-speaking Ottoman elites, (pgs. 18-21). This new emergence of elites formed an Egyptian identity that re-evaluated what it meant to be Egyptian and did so under the auspices of Egypt as the Mother bringing together all her children in opposition to the Ottoman identity. Thus, the concept of the Egyptian identity began to take fold during the abolition of slavery because it brought into question identity and a questioning of what member would carry out what tasks within the changing family dynamics. The writings of various authors in periodicals were printed in Arabic and wrote exclusively on matters that focused on the home because the family was the only commonality that could bring together the Egyptian people. Baron uses this historical approach to shape the discourse of her premise.

Beth Baron deserves a lot of credit for giving such a holistic historical approach in presenting her data. She gives a historical background that leads to the notion of woman, motherhood and nationalism. Not only does she provide such detailed evidence to prove her premise, but she uses iconography which is seldom mentioned in the literature that I read. Furthermore, I think she adds importance to the changing dynamics of the Ottoman Empire prior to colonialism. Overall, her book is chronologically well-written and presents a new way of looking at Egypt as a woman both through its discourse and its iconography. Hence, similar to Abugideiri, I think both lack a sense of explaining gender in a more in-depth manner. For instance, the concept of man and what it meant to be a man at that period of time was not explained.

Helena J. Kaler's journal article, *Inscribing Gender in the Imperial Context: The "Woman Question" in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, is an essay voicing the opinions about British and Egyptian writers about women and their relation to nationalism in the context of colonialism. Helena Kaler takes a different approach surrounding this topic and states that though it was the British who initially championed the idea of the modern woman to benefit the nation, Egypt adopted her own ways of trying to modernize the nation while maintaining the traditional ways of women that, according to Helena J. Kaler, seemed incongruent with one another. This point contrasts slightly with both Shakry's and Baron's points. Whereas Shakry and Baron indicate that there is some type of codependent relationship of modernity/mothering with the state, Kaler concludes based on her research that the two are not correlated. She states, "Thus, nationalist movements are involved in a search 'for a regeneration of national culture, adapted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness. It is both imitative and hostile to the models it imitates,'" (Kaler, 1980, pg. 334). The traditional woman is incapable of being a progressive-nation builder. This idea that somehow the traditional woman could contribute to the idea and representation of the nation is erroneous and puts women at odds with themselves by trying to adopt the discourse being perpetrated and trying to change their traditional ways. I think this is where one of Kaler's weak points lies. She never actually proves this point substantially aside from simply mentioning it. She claims that there are many authors that write about these points yet she seems to only hone in on Earl Cromer's and Qasim Amin's points of views. Both Qasim Amin and Earl Cromer are advocating for

the advancement of women yet Amin is doing it through an Islamic framework. At the beginning of her article, she states that the problem with the woman question to begin with is that most of the literature available is written by middle class men with a British undertone yet in her own research she uses the very same research from the people she seems to criticize. Albeit she briefly mentions that after WWI there were many periodicals that were published (without stating the name of the periodicals) from former lower class peasants, Kaler doesn't seem to go into such details about what exactly they were writing about and instead focuses on the works of Huda Sharawi, Nabawiya Musa, and Bahithat al-Badiya who similar to Cromer and Amin have a Eurocentric undertone. Furthermore, she ends the passage in almost a contradictory tone by stating that Egyptian feminists (many middle-class women using European models as examples) associated themselves as agents of change within the family household that would engender both "national[ism] and modern[ity]", (Kaler, pg. 353). But perhaps, it seems contradictory like Shakry's article, but it maybe that that is what the authors are trying to show in their writings, to present the argument that it is not a simple definition of saying that colonialism imposed ideas on the people being colonized. Perhaps Kaler tries to demonstrate in the same way that Shakry tries to show, that modernization and mothering could have also been a local movement that was not necessarily imposed on by the outside but rather something that originated organically.

I think Shakry's (1998), Abugideiri's (2004), Baron's (2006), and Kaler's (2006) articles and book were published at the time where a lot of focus was being shed on the complexities of post- colonialism and its relationship to gender not simply

looking at it from an oriental perspective, or assuming that ideas imposed from Europe were adopted easily by the colonizers, but also under the context in which it was being imposed, and how the people reacted to and formed their own judgements and ideas in relation to colonialism. The complexities from these articles and book are shown from women's magazines, journals, the press, iconography, and the media which shows the ways in which Egyptians were creating their own histories.

CHAPTER 4

MATERIAL PUBLISHED IN 2008-2012

In Cathlyn Mariscotti's book, *Gender and Class in the Egyptian Women's Movement, 1925-1939*, she gives a different perspective on the developments of the woman question that unfolded in Egypt beginning from the late 1800s. Cathlyn is the first to critique all the flaws that are available presently in the research for the study of women in Egypt during the turn of the century. She argues that all research hitherto has been from an orientalist perspective. She states that the woman question and its requirements of emancipation were concepts and notions that were constructed by upper middle class men and women and the overall demands that they were seeking for were imposed on the lower class as if asking for public engagement and public recognition was somehow the same demands that were of the lower classes' demands. This "liberation" of active, public participation for women is a demand seen in the West and adopted by the upper echelons of society in Egypt and later feminist movements. Mariscotti, similar to Judith Tucker, argues that in fact women of the upper classes dealt with taxes and they used the revenues for establishing public institutions in the 1800s so middle class women weren't as repressed to the harem as feminist writers so seem to claim. Mariscotti believes that coining nationalism with women in Egypt is no different than adopting a Western, orientalist perspective. She states, ".....the nationalist movement incorporated Western liberal traditions such as the concept of individuality, constitutionalism, and education, (Mariscotti, 2008, pgs. 4-5). Mariscotti makes a strong case in arguing more fiercely that and completely dismissing all

literature that pertains to women at the turn of the century as invalid unless it uses research that gives a fair representation of the different classes of women, which is rarely available which all authors seem to point to. She argues that state feminism, a product of western-elitism, was formulated to advance the needs of elite men and women, and used lower class women as a means to advance their own causes. Laura Bier and Cathlyn Mariscotti would both agree in this respect that Nasser's followers were of the upper classes, however, Bier would differ in arguing that state feminism benefited the lower classes as well in terms of giving women the right to vote, free education, and available public services which Mariscotti would claim there is simply not enough evidence to prove that. Mariscotti claims that her book is not offering new data that is adding to the literature of women during the turn of the century or using any of the traditional methods of research of governmental archives, biographies, narratives, but rather she seeks to explore the "managerial-class and ruling-class," (pg. 34), complexities that break down after feminist objectives are institutionalized but she never really gives credible evidence to support her thesis nor does she exactly identify what comprises the managerial-class. Hence, she claims that even though there were class differences, at some point these women seemed to be arguing for the same cause but somewhere after 1950, a breakdown occurred between both classes where the upper classes no longer represented the lower classes, (pg. 18). I think she is right to argue that women and nationalism didn't have the same objectives across classes, and many others based on this literature do point out this weakness in their literature but Mariscotti does not add additional sources that really show the differences in the lower classes' needs.

She uses assumptions and theories to make her statement and offers no alternative in doing research other than saying what is lacking in the present research. She, in fact, uses the same journals that circulated after WWI (written by elite women) “..... to see how some of the women remembered events of the period,” (page. 23). Regardless of her shortcomings in her book, I think she does a good job at explaining where the literature on women during the turn of the 20th century lacks sufficient evidence. Hence, I feel that she is the first to differentiate within the lower classes themselves and their different stories. Women, themselves, she states deserve a proper analysis among the different classes especially women in Egypt who are not only subject to, according to Marscotti, an orientalist history but a history of upper class women and men who seem to reinforce the same orientalist’s views.

In Laura Bier’s book, *Revolutionary Womanhood Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser’s Egypt*, Bier focuses on Nasser’s “state feminism,” (Bier, 2011, pg. 3). Though her primary focus is to shed light on that premise, she does an excellent job of presenting the way in which the concept of women and modernity was coined in chronological order which allows the reader to systematically follow the chain of events that led to Nasser’s state-political transformation for women. At the beginning of her book, she highlights and gives credit to what was already in fruition prior to Nasser’s political take on women. The woman question had gained momentum and been debated in a more public light, after British colonization in 1882 and the publication of Qasim Amin’s book, *The Liberation of Women*, published in 1899, (pg. 26). She begins her chapter from this period and gives examples from articles, periodicals, films,

government archives, public speaking, court documents, films, and documentaries to illustrate the debates on women that were about the roles of women, children, family, progress, development, and modernization. She gives a clear and concise background on the reasons why this took on such an important role after the British occupation. The British had based their colonial imposition on the basis that Egypt was incapable of progressing herself and it was obvious from her primitive women. This caused, Bier claims, a secular and religious public debate among the upper-middle classes on the ways in which women should modernize. A call for hygienic practices, education, and proper decorum were the indicators under which Egypt would progress. She then proceeds to highlight the 1919 revolution where Egypt became semi-independent after protests by men and women of all classes who marched in defiance of British colonialism and were killed. That moment, says Bier, was indicative of inspiring social movements that brought an outpour of iconography and mass media debates that inspired the masses to voice their demands on equal political footing. By the 1930s and 1940s, Bier explains that there were more calls for political involvement of the state in women's and children's social and labor issues, (pg. 36). Hence, projects aimed at the lower classes facilitated education for hygiene and healthier living styles. Simultaneously during this period a debate about overpopulation and the need for birth control took hold. During the same period, Bier gives credit to feminist movements in advocating for women's political inclusion which differed from motherhood. This is different from the literature that I've read thus far. She doesn't associate feminist movements with embracing motherhood but ".....began to argue for wider political,

social, and economic rights on the basis of national service, not motherhood,” (pg. 39).

This period sees the entrance of women into universities and into the work force.

Adding to the literature on the question of women and nationalism, she gives a clear

depiction on the variety of ways in which this concept was being discussed from a

secular-religious, lower-upper (associated with Western modernization) divide. Beth

Baron, similarly, presents the same arguments. After the coup of 1952, Nasser begins

his policy of nationalization of major industries and the implementation of massive

reform projects that would elevate the masses of Egypt. His primary focus, argues Bier,

was the emancipation of women. Nasser very much saw his political success to the

status and improvement of women and made it his national priority to ensure that

women were at the forefront of receiving their rights, like the 1956 constitution which

granted women the right to vote, join office, gain worker’s rights, enter schooling for

free, and the right to access social welfare programs, (pgs. 55-56). Nasser focused on

external emancipation of women as oppose to the already debated discourse on the

internal, household development of women and children. Nasser, argues Bier, focused

on the individual development of women. Where Bier’s weak point lies and she

mentions that this is where her research became difficult, is that a lot of the research

available was either restricted or unavailable after 1952 but she claims nevertheless to

use literature, film, memoirs, and the press to make up for state documentations, (pg.

18). But like she mentions, the press was heavily controlled by the Nasser regime and

what was published was heavily scrutinized and written by a small number of elites who

shared Nasser’s views on women and the state. Finally, she admits, like all authors

based on this particular literature admit, that there is simply little available evidence that documents the ways in which women of lower classes were impacted and changed from these reforms, if they were impacted at all. Hence, another of her weakness and she admits to it, is to what extend can the press, columns, and blogs be used as accurate, historical accounts of what happened.

Overall, however, I think Bier gives a well-rounded overview on the overall context of explaining how women were empowered politically, economically, and socially during Nasser's era despite her research's shortcomings. I, think too, that this literature focuses on a period where not much attention has been given to women. Like Bier explains, the woman question has only been debated within two contexts: during colonialism and currently with the status of women in the Middle East but not much literature has been produced to explain the in between of the tangible measures that were taken to uplift women in Egypt. Bier's work published in 2011 and Mariscotti's article, 2008, add new data available on women, mothering and nationalism. They both highlight the ways that state feminism and feminist movements played a role and add to the complexities already present in the previous literature.

Though I cannot use Hoda Elsadda's book, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel, Egypt, 1892-2008*, to necessarily use it as an academic source to view the ways in which mothering and nationalistic discourse was being debated, I use her book instead to see how the concept of gender and nation, specifically, motherhood and nationalism was viewed from various Arabic novels to see if it differs from the research that academia has published.

Elsadda believes that not enough credit is given to authors that are mainly unknown in academia in shaping history when referring to gender and the nation. She uses novels and their stories to talk about social, religious, traditional, economical, and political issues of that time in Egypt. Elsadda claims that the problem with a lot of the research done on Egypt and gender is that the same authors are being read and the same discourse is being circulated to form the same paradigm of conclusions. Thus, in this book she tries to capture, not only the woman question and the representation of what it meant to be a new Egyptian woman but tries to illuminate male masculinity and Egypt's representation of what it meant to be a man. What is interesting from Elsadda's findings, is that she claims there are no ".....clear-cut definitions of what it actually meant to be a New Woman in turn-of-the-century- Egypt," (Elsadda, 2008, pg. 4). This is distinct from the literature where there are somehow rules and ways to follow that would have distinguish the new woman. This gender base construction, says Elsadda, has always been disproportionate in the literature available and at the turn of the century as much attention as women were being given, men, too, says Elsadda, should be given the same attention because the new woman was being debated and molded in order to create the new man, so in her book, she tries to give examples of how the debate of man was ensconced with nationalism which has been highlighted from the various texts above but not as detailed as Elsadda illustrates in her book. Hence, Elsadda uses texts from earlier periods that present the discourse on gender roles which is also different from the literature above which scantily uses these names other than Qasim Amin. She uses A'isha Taymur to discuss "the man question," (pg. 5), and says that proper care

and education are essentials to cultivate the new man. Taymur argues that a good housewife who upholds Islamic values and carries herself with proper decorum, will influence her husband in behaving the same way. To critique, Elsadda, she uses Taymur, a middle-class educated woman to appeal, again, to a middle class audience. Hence, Elsadda proceeds to give examples from al-fatah magazine, the first women's magazine in Egypt, (pg. 9), which touches on issues that relate to women and how they are supposed to conduct themselves at home and care for their children. Using this example, I don't see where it talks about men and their roles, except for where the magazine reiterates that a "good" wife is symbiotic of a good husband who can carry on responsibly with his public affairs, but Elsadda nevertheless sheds light on the various women who participated and opined on this magazine from the Middle East who again were middle-class women who were able to write and understand modern standard Arabic, (pgs. 9-11). She goes on to give examples from Abdallah al-Nadim, a working-lower class revolutionary, who wrote plays about the dangers of adopting western culture and how to act and behave against penetration of Western attitudes. Though his plays were in the local dialect, he uses examples of a "good" woman and man by adopting middle class, urban attitudes, (pgs. 12-19). She then uses Qasim Amin, ironically, which she seems to argue at the beginning of her book is an author that is given too much credit for starting the Arab feminist movement, (pgs. 21-25). As a counter attack to Qasim Amin, she uses Malak Hifni Nasif's writings to supposedly argue against Qasim Amin but seems to somehow point at the same points that Qasim Amin does, such as highlighting the importance of education, proper upbringing, with

the exception of veiling and arguing that it is a man's responsibility to also uphold his responsibilities not exactly mentioning what those responsibilities are other than not adopting western ways of behaving, (pgs. 25-33). Finally, she ends with writings from Labiba Hashim's writings who is not even Egyptian herself but a Syrian/Lebanese who talks about the importance of women's political inclusion, (pgs. 33-36). Elsadda does a good job of attempting to present a different point of view on males but I find that a lot of the research that she provides are similar to the literature present: geared towards the middle classes, using writers that are from the upper classes, and reinforcing the same literature that is contingent on a colonial context.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude with these limited readings, I realize that I cannot make general statements about what exactly was being debated at the turn of the century of Egypt, but I can differentiate and compare the various literature available, and find a general overview under what context the literature was produced. I found that the woman question started to come into fruition through the context of colonialism. Qasim Amin's book seemed to be the starting point where academic, religious, and political members of society began to contribute in some way to their own views of what the new Egypt should look like. Followed by the 1919 Revolution of Egypt where Egypt gained semi independence and there was a proliferation of iconography and debates on what the new generation of Egyptians needed to do to enhance their country and protect themselves against foreign occupation. Then in the 1930s and 1940s there was an intensification of feminist and political groups and then finally in 1952 where state-based gender agenda is implemented. The woman question of course is not limited to these periods and is continued throughout the 1970s from an economical perspective based on labor, in the 1980s-1990s based on women and development of social classes, to currently what we read in the 21st century, a revision of the woman question and presenting the flaws of the research published during the colonial period, and interpretations of women in relation to Islam.

As shown from the literature presented, the context under which the articles and books were published were influenced by the research that was being produced at the time. For instance, post-Said, the debate of capitalism and Marxism, feminist

debates on gender, and post-9/11 are examples of events that influenced the literature. For example, books published in the 1990s states Keddie saw, “.....the abandonment by nonapologetic historians of speculative statements about the early Islamic period in favor of an extensive reading and analysis of actual texts,” (pg. 232). Hence, a through more in-depth study was published on the various ways society viewed women, depending on the events and situation of that period of time. The 1990s, mentions Keddie, also saw a period where there was a refocus on the literature of women that focused on the internal-household affairs of women. Furthermore, there was a more in-depth focus on the relation of Islam and women and modernity.

The literature published in the 2000s was a re-focus on the voices of women in the media, political movements, and women’s involvement with the government, (Keddie, 2007, pgs. 233-234). Furthermore, women’s issues are being discussed in the ways they should be framed. For example, should women’s issues be something that should be seen from a religious perspective or framed within the context of universal violations of human rights. The ways in which women’s positions are currently framed are often exaggerated in present day literature with a political-Western undertone focusing on Islamists movements that capture the attention of the West.

Finally, I end with stating that throughout the literature, I did not read once the point of views from women of the lower classes nor did I read any literature that was geared towards the working classes. This defunct in literature is just in general difficult to find because of the lack of availability of resources and in general all the authors seem to mention that that is where their research is limited with their inability to provide

resources that cut across all classes but the question of a new woman is apparent in nationalist discourse, not only in Egypt, but throughout the Middle East and North Africa but how that concept was formulated was contingent upon a series of complexities that were a result of the changing political and economic dynamics of Egypt during the Ottoman Era, the advent of colonialism, and people's response to the changes.

I think of the ways in which mothering and nationalism developed and I realize that mothering is still associated with the betterment (whatever that definition means) of a country and we see, read, and hear it throughout the media and literature. A country's status of progress is still tied to the status of women and children and the concept is used for political purposes. Furthermore, the debate on mothering and the state has not changed from an orientalist perspective and others trying to offer a different perspective on the complexities. This topic cannot be categorized into categories nor can there be general conclusions of what mothering and nationalism entails. It is a topic that must be viewed holistically.

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