5.6

'VEILING RESISTANCE'

Fadwa El Guindi

In the mid-seventies[1] a phenomenon became noticeable in the streets of Cairo, Egypt that seemed incomprehensible to many observers of the Egyptian scene and bewildering even to the local people. This was the strong, visible and growing presence of a new Egyptian woman, with an appearance unfamiliar to contemporary urban Egypt and to her own parents. The new woman was a young urban college student completely 'veiled' from head to toe, including the face. Confused at the thought of a future 'veiled' doctor, engineer or pharmacist, many observers speculated as to the cause of this development. Was this an identity crisis, *our* version of America's hippie movement, a fad, youth protest or ideological vacuum? An individual psychic disturbance, life-crisis, social dislocation or protest against authority?

THE VEIL BECOMES A MOVEMENT IN EGYPT

The contemporary veiling movement passed through several transitional phases after the 1970s, spreading all over the Arab world and among Muslims worldwide (see Wallace 1956 on processual phases in similar movements). Today the Islamic movement continues to grow strong as it enters its third decade. Dress has played a pivotal symbolic, ritual and political role in this dynamic phenomenon. The new vocabulary and dress style embodies a moral/behavioral code. Islam has struggled to position itself vis-à-vis the Islamic veil. The response of secularists and Western feminists shows how threatening this trend is to their ideological position. Egypt (with other Arab countries) has accommodated the new movement and put effort into integrating it politically, despite initial attempts by the state to suppress it. Today the veiled and unveiled interact normally in daily life. Some mothers who originally objected to the veil have adopted it. The Islamic *ziyy* (dress) goes almost unnoticed in Cairo by the local population.

Islamic veiling in Egypt is somewhat different from the situation of the *chador* in Iran. The *chador* is a black head-to-toe wrap that was worn by rural and urban traditional women before the Revolution. The Shah, to Westernize the country, banned it, and the Islamic Revolution, to indigenize tradition, enforced wearing it. In Egypt, the Islamic dress worn after the mid-1970s by women replaced modern secular clothes and is part of a grass-roots activist movement. Unlike Egypt, both Iran and Turkey have long traditions of State-legislated dress reform for both sexes. Although state-discouraged in Egypt, veiling initially met with phenomenal success and spread throughout the urban centers.

As some young Egyptian women took up veiling in the mid-1970s, the government increasingly felt the threat of Islamic militancy and looked for solutions. In 1993, the education minister, Husain Kamal Baha' al-Din, sought to combat the spread of Islamic activism by imposing changes in the area of education, such as the transfer or demotion of teachers with activist leanings, a revision of the curriculum and restrictions on the wearing of the veil (Barraclough 1998: p. 246). However, a ban on wearing the veil at universities was thrown out by the courts. By 1994, attempts to limit the wearing of the veil in schools to students who had their parents' permission were receiving heavy criticism. The minister of education started back-pedaling – conceding that schoolgirls could wear the veil even without parental consent. State interference focusing on the veil remains controversial in Egypt.

In the Ottoman world there were deep roots to the tradition of clothing laws, extending back to the beginning of the empire. And as elsewhere Ottoman clothing laws gave a particular emphasis to head coverings, which typically designated honor and rank. Turbans played a key role in mid-eighteenth century rituals surrounding the Ottoman coronation ceremonies in Istanbul. In the procession, two horsemen each carried turbans of the monarch, tilting them to the right and to the left to receive the homage of the accompanying janissaries. The centrality of the headgear was evident even in the early fourteenth century (Quataert 1997: pp. 403–12).

According to Norton (1997), Turks can judge by appearances and are aware that dress denotes difference, devotion and defiance. 'A glance at what a stranger is wearing is often enough to tell them that person's religious and political stance. Clothes can tell them the wearer's defiance of or devotion to the principles of Kemal Ataturk, the reformer who founded the Turkish Republic and banned the fez' (Norton 1997: p. 149). The present situation in Turkey, like that in most groups in the Islamic world, is such that dress marks the front line in the battle between Islamic advocates and extreme secularists. But whereas the fez was the subject of state legislation, the veil was not, though it was generally discouraged and in some places prohibited. Turkey avoided an outright ban on the veil, the measure the Shah took in Iran, since 'forced unveiling of women' in Iran [is comparable to] the shock that Westerners would experience if women of all ages were forced to go topless in public' (Goldschmidt 1983; Norton 1997).

In the 1970s there was a one-party effort to create 'indigenous dress styles for Muslim women and to legitimize traditional Islamic dress' (Norton 1997: p. 165). Turkish women began to wear long coats and headscarves. Deep divisions formed between secularists and Muslim advocates (Olson 1985). The word 'turban' was introduced in the midst of a headscarf issue. It was ruled that a modern turban may be worn instead of a headscarf. Interestingly, by the mid-1980s in Egypt some of the women who were reluctant at first to wear the *khimar* (a headcovering that covers the hair and extends low to the forehead, comes under the chin to conceal the neck, and falls down over the chest and back) began to wear a turban-like headcovering that had Turkish origins. It was seen as more chic.

AL-ZIYY AL-ISLAMI (ISLAMIC DRESS)

The Code

Women's Islamic dress, known as *al-ziyy al-Islami*, is an innovative construction that was first worn in the mid-1970s by activists. It does not represent a return to any traditional dress form and has no tangible precedent. There was no industry behind it – not one store in Egypt carried such an outfit. Based on an idealized Islamic vision gradually constructed for the early Islamic community in the seventh century, it was made in the homes by the activists themselves. Privacy, humility, piety and moderation are cornerstones of the Islamic belief system. Luxury and leisure await Muslims in the next world. Some elements of this vision can be supported by reference to the *Qur'an;*[2] others find support in the secondary source of Islamic information, the *Sunna,*[3] through the *Hadith,*[4] The 'Prophetic vision' had

become idealized through the ages, developing into a model to be emulated via recurring revivalist purifying movements within Islam, just as in the Islamic movement of Egypt in the 1970s.

In the Qur'an (considered the primary and divinely revealed source), but mostly according to the Hadith (a worldly source), evidence suggests that the Prophet Muhammad had paid much attention to a dress code for Muslims in the emerging community, with a specific focus on Muslim men's clothing and bodily modesty during prayer. By comparison, reference to women's body cover is negligible. One such reference, al-Ahzab in *sura* (33:59), distinguishes the status of the Prophet's wives from the rest of the believers, and the other (33:53) protects their privacy from growing intrusions by male visitors.

Men and women in the contemporary Islamic movement who argue for the Islamic dress and behavioral code use as support for their argument two specific *suras* in the Qur'an – al-Nur and al-Ahzab.[5] *Al-Nur*, translates as follows:

> And say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their genitals [and] say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their genitals, draw their *khimar* to cover their cleavage [breasts], and not display their beauty, except that which has to appear, except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves, or eunuchs or children under age; and they should not strike their feet to draw attention to their hidden beauty. O ye believers turn to God, that ye may attain bliss (Qur'an 24: 30, 31).

Several points can be drawn from this text: (1) the Arabic notions of lowering the gaze and covering the genitals are central to the code; and (2) men are first mentioned as having to abide by these two prescriptions, to control their gaze at women and suppress their passion and forwardness when interacting with 'strange' women. In the Hadith men especially are enjoined to cover their genitals during worship. Unlike other religions, Islam accepts sexuality as a normative aspect of both ordinary and religious life (Mernissi 1975; Marsot 1979; Nelson 1974) and fluidly accommodates both sacred and worldly activity in the same bi-rhythmic space. There is no contradiction between being religious and being sexual. Sex is to be enjoyed in socially approved marriages.

However, outside marriage, behavior between men and women must be desexualized. Both body and interactive space need to be regulated and controlled and both men and women are required to abide by this temporary desexualization to make public interaction between them possible. This presumes that cross-sex interaction would potentially be sexually charged. Islam accepts sexualized, reproductive men and women and guides them to regulate their public behavior.

As the same *sura* (al-Nur) shows, concealing and revealing is very much tied to cultural notions of respectability or the body parts that are considered sexually charged. Islamic mores were being formulated as the *suras* were revealed. The reference to drawing the headveil to cover a woman's cleavage may have been a reaction to the way women in the region prior to birth of the new community seem to have worn clothes that exposed their bodies. Images from what is now modern Yemen, for example, show women from the low-status group of *al-akhdam* (servants) wearing clothing that revealed the breasts. These suggest, not seductive sexuality, but slovenliness.[6] Another prohibition concerns anklets. The phrase 'not to strike the feet' is a reference to the practice in which women wore decorative jingling anklets made of heavy metal (silver or gold). It is not the anklet per se that is erotic, but the jingling that evokes erotic passions.[7]

Early (1993), in her ethnography on *baladi* (local traditional urban) life in Cairo, describes the traditional *baladi* dress, *milaya laff* (a wrapped black over-sheet) draped over a house dress to cover the hair and entire body when in public; the

ends of the long wrap are tucked under the arm. From underneath, a tightly knotted scarf covers the hair (p. 70). El-Messiri notes the dimension of sensual playfulness: with high-heeled sandals and tinkling anklets, the dress can combine sexual glamor with modesty (1978: pp. 526, 529).

Within Islam, a woman's sexuality does not diminish her respectability. Islam in fact supports this combined image in womanhood. The Hadith mentions an incident in which the Prophet Muhammad told a woman to color her fingernails with henna so that her hands were not like the hands of men. What Islamic morality forbids is the public flaunting of sexuality. In general, the Islamic code would consider the behavior of the urban *baladi* women in Egypt described in El-Messiri's and Early's ethnographies as exhibitionist. Dressing and moving in a way that draws sexual attention to the body is *tabarruj* (exhibitionist dress and behavior). It is associated in Islamic perception with Arabian women of *al-Jahiliyya* (the Days of Ignorance or pre-Islamic days) and was frowned upon during the formative years of the Islamic community in the seventh century.

The Dress

In the contemporary revival, the dress code was translated this way: men and women wear full-length *gallabiyyas* (*jilbab* in standard Arabic), loose-fining to conceal body contours, in solid austere colors made out of opaque fabric. They lower their gaze in cross-sex public interaction and refrain from body or dress decoration or colors that draw attention to their bodies. The dress code for men consists of sandals, baggy trousers with loose-top shirts in off-white or, alternatively (and preferably), a long loose white *gallabiyya*. They grow a *lihya* (a full beard trimmed short), with an optional moustache. Hair is to be kept shoulder length. This last feature has not been sustained and was eventually dropped. The general behavioral code of austerity and restraint has support in Qur'anic segments that repeatedly stress the undesirability of arrogance and an exhibitionist demeanour.[8]

Similarly, women wear the *hijab* which consists of *al-jilbab* (ankle-length, long-sleeved, loose-fitted dress) and *al-khimar*, a headcovering that covers the hair and extends low to the forehead, comes under the chin to conceal the neck and falls down over the chest and back. The common colors used by women during the first decade of the movement were beige, brown, navy, deep wine, white and black. This dress is worn while engaging fully in daily affairs in public social space in which not only their gender is accepted but also their sexual identity. Austere dress form and behavior therefore are not accompanied by withdrawal, seclusion or segregation.

The voluntary informal dress code extends beyond clothing to a general demeanour characterized by serious behavior and an austere manner, an ideal applied to both sexes. Some women more conservatively add *al-niqab*, which covers the entire face except for the eye slits; at the most extreme, a woman would also wear gloves and opaque socks to cover her hands and feet. This trend has been spreading throughout the Arab world, particularly among university students. Chatty describes a similar trend occurring in south-eastern Arabia (Chatty 1997).

During the first decade of the movement in Egypt the dress code for women corresponded to the degree of Islamic knowledgeability and reading, as well as to a step on a scale of leadership among women. The more intensely covered the college woman, the more 'serious' her public behavior, and the more knowledgeable she is in Islamic sources, the higher she was on the scale of activist leadership among women. She would lead discussions, for example, in mosques and in women students' lounges between lectures. This correspondence dissolved as the movement spread outside the university campuses and as the *hijab* became part of normal life and was integrated with secular life in Cairo and the other major cities.

This Islamic dress was introduced by college women in the movement and was not imposed by the al-Azhar authorities, who ordinarily prescribe Islamic behavior by issuing decrees. Instead, this was a bottom-up movement. By dressing this way in public these young women conveyed their vision of Islamic ideals by becoming exemplary contemporary models. Encoded in the dress style is an affirmation of an Islamic identity and morality and a rejection of Western materialism, consumerism, commercialism and values. The vision behind the Islamic dress is rooted in these women's understanding of early Islam and, as earlier presented, in primary and secondary textual sources. But it is a contemporary movement about contemporary issues.

Clearly, the movement is not simply about a dress code. Like early Islam in Madina, this activism espouses egalitarianism, community, identity, privacy and justice. It condemns exhibitionism in dress and behavior, which was characteristic of *al-jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic era). Hence, al-Jahiliyya is not just a historical moment, but a state and a condition of society that can recur at any time. Reserve and restraint in behavior, voice and body movement are not restrictions – they symbolize a renewal of traditional cultural identity.

VEILING IN TWO FEMINISMS

The Egyptian feminist movement at the turn of the century was described as a secular movement that 'brought together Muslim and Christian women of the upper and middle classes[9] who identified [themselves] as Egyptians' (Badran 1995b: p. 45). Leila Ahmed does not see it in such monolithic terms. In a discussion linking Western colonialism and feminism, Ahmed distinguishes two strands of feminism propounded by Egypt's 'First Feminists' (1992: pp. 169–88). There is the Westward-looking feminism espoused by Huda Sha'rawi (1879–1947)[10] and another, advocated by Malak Hifni Nasif (1886–1918)[11] that did not affiliate itself with Westernization.

Groundedness of feminists in their own culture has been largely overlooked in the discourse on feminism.[12] Fundamental to a genuine Arabo-Islamic society are mastery of the Arabic language (formal not colloquial) and access to Islamic knowledge. These two cornerstones of the culture had gradually become the domains of men – a masculinization process that distanced many women from the core of their culture. This process is connected to the valuation for 'foreign' languages (at the expense of the Arabic language) that has developed among the urbanized ascribed aristocracy and spread among urban achieved-status groups. Speaking 'soft' Arabic with French loan words became feminine and chic. A corollary practice was the informal adoption of a husband's last name in lieu of one's maiden name. It should be noted in this regard that Arab women have financial autonomy. The legal system requires that a woman should keep her maiden name after marriage. Officially, the state in Arab society does not recognize a husband's name even when it is informally adopted by women. Nasif, true to her views and her self-image, continued to use her natal family name after marriage, whereas Huda first simplified her name from Nur al-Huda (her name at birth) to Huda and then, upon marriage, changed her last name from Sultan (her father's name) to Sha'rawi (her husband's name) – a social (not an official or a legal) practice borrowed by urbanized women to validate their modern, feminine and chic image.

A superficial familiarity with Islamic knowledge acquired casually through male relatives also became the norm among women. One can only speculate about the factors that led to this state of affairs. Women identified with French culture at the expense of Arabic, which was considered *déclassé*. Lacking the necessary command of the Arabic language, Huda Sha'rawi, the pioneer feminist of the Arab world, did not write her own memoirs. Instead she dictated a chronicle of events to her male secretary, who had a command of the Arabic language. Despite her prominence as a

feminist leader, she was distanced from her native language and therefore not a complete insider in her own culture. Instead, she mastered foreign languages. 'She was educated at home by tutors in both Turkish and French, the languages of a lady of the time' (Fernea and Bezirgan 1977: p. 193). One must note that those 'ladies' (see Marsot 1978) made up an insignificant percentage of the Egyptian population, and their programs were mostly relevant within their own circles. While Huda was tutored in foreign languages her brother was receiving private Arabic lessons.[13]

This had not always been the case in Egypt. Al-Sayyid Marsot mentions that in the eighteenth century the greater masses of both sexes were illiterate, but 'among the elites both men and women were literate in religion and in language [and] the *ulama* (male religious scholars) and *alimat* (female religious scholars) were more educated than any other sector of society' (1979: pp. 14, 15). Colonial and missionary pressures at the turn of the century as well as consumerist and secularizing trends in the twentieth century led women away from rights they already had in Islam – most importantly the right (with precedents in Islam) to full participation in the Islamic process, teaching and worship. By submitting to these distancing trends, women excluded themselves from the two most relevant spheres (the Arabic language and Islamic studies) that most crucially regulate and sanction their lives, engender dignity and respect and legitimize their rights and privileges. These became dominated by men.

As early as the 1870s and 1880s, before Egyptian organized feminism developed, Egyptian women were publishing their writings and were engaged in public speaking. They wrote poetry, prose, biographies, articles and essays and published them in the mainstream press at a time when publishing was new to Egypt. By the 1890s an emergent 'sisterhood' of exchanges of letters and circulation of books expanded and took new forms. Badran describes the environment of the turn of the century in Egypt as 'an urban harem culture, the site of the first emergence of women's feminist awareness and nascent feminist expression' (Badran 1995a: p. 4). Collective debate grew through 'salons' held by the women of the aristocracy and expanded with the founding by non-aristocratic women of a women's press.

Egyptian women, Muslim and Christian, were positioning their liberation vis-à-vis the simultaneously rising nationalism that grew up in response to colonial intervention.[14] Colonial domination was complete and humiliating, particularly in its very denial of Egyptianness. The British colonizers referred to Egyptians as 'natives' or the 'native race'. Their avoidance of the term 'Egyptian' made Egyptians seem nameless and nationless. It was in this climate that both nationalism and feminism took hold. Egyptianness and women's rights rose simultaneously. Paradoxically, the degree of political or personal affiliation with the colonizer became a barometer of commitment to nationalist activism. It is significant in this regard that, according to Badran, Huda Sha'rawi's father, Sultan Pasha, was implicated in assisting British intervention in Egypt (1995a: p. 11).[15]

Women had already begun to debate their position on these issues when men, in search of factors behind the demise of their country, began questioning existing social practices with regard to gender and formulated what many considered to be feminist positions in the process. These men were highly educated, had legal training and had been exposed to European thought. Consequently, a men's discourse on women's issues (questionably characterized as feminist) emerged in the Arab world (Badran 1995a: pp. 13–16). Unlike women's organized feminism, the veil was central to men's 'feminist' discourse. Women were drawn into the debate and popular periodicals became partisan publications. Three periodicals[16] were 'staunch defenders of the veil [and two][17] condemned the veil … Muslims, Jews, and Christians all wrestled with the question of veiling' (Baron 1989: pp. 372, 379).

A prominent Egyptian man who provoked heated controversy and debate was Qasim Amin, who came to be regarded by many as the founder of feminism in Arab culture. The response to his book *Tahrir Al-Mar'a* (The Liberation of Woman), published in 1899, was intense, and opposition to its message was vociferous. In the book, he advocated

primary school education for women and reform of the laws on polygyny and divorce. Were these considered radical proposals at the time? Ahmed notes that they were not new. These issues had been proposed in the 1870s and 1880s, perhaps even earlier, by Muslim intellectuals who had argued for women's education and called for reforms in matters of polygyny and divorce 'without provoking violent controversy' (1992: p. 145). By the 1890s the issue of educating women beyond the primary level was uncontroversial and girls' schools were established. So why was there such a strong reaction to Amin's work?

A closer look reveals that Amin called, not for feminist reforms, but rather for a fundamental social and cultural change for Egypt and other Muslim countries, a Europeanization of Arab culture as if were, in which women's issues were embedded. Central to this reform, proposed as the key to change and progress in society, was the call for abolishing the veil.

Tal'at Harb, a wealthy Egyptian industrialist entrepreneur who pioneered modern banking in Egypt, responded strongly to Amin. He is described as having 'defended and upheld Islamic practices' (Ahmed 1992: p. 164). But in fact Harb used Islamic language and selected quotations from Christian and Muslim scriptures and Western and Muslim men of learning to defend and uphold a perspective that is not much different from Amin's Western vision of female domesticity: that the wife's duty was to attend to the physical, mental and moral needs of her husband and children (Harb 1905 [1899]: p. 21). First, these are the same duties ascribed to her by Amin. To modernize Muslim society Amin wanted to abandon its 'backward' ways and follow the Western path, which of course required changing women. His call for women's education was based on the idea that women needed education in order to manage the household, a responsibility that entails many skills. 'It is the wife's responsibility to establish the family budget … to manage servants … to make her home attractive and appealing to her husband, to enjoy food, drink and sleep, and not seek comfort elsewhere, with neighbors or in public places. But her first and most important duty is to raise and socialize the children, physically, mentally, and morally' (Amin 1976, Vol. 2: p. 31, my translation). Borrowing from Western notions of domesticity and womanhood in order to validate what is characteristically an Arab quality of family relations, Amin wrote that the adult man is nothing but what his mother made him to be from childhood. *'The essence of this book and the message I wish to impart to all men … is the special relationship between a man and his mother … it is impossible to produce successful men without mothers capable or enabling them to be successful*. This is the noble duty that advanced civilization has given to woman in our age and which she fulfills in advanced societies' (1976, Vol. 2: pp. 78–9; translation mine, emphasis in original).[18] Most significantly, Amin reaffirmed the special and unique mother-son relationship already inherent in Arab society by using European notions of female domesticity.

Second, it is questionable whether Tal'at Harb's views would be characterized as Islamic. Qasim Amin, on the other hand, was explicitly positioned outside the Islamic spectrum. He was a French-educated lawyer whose rationale in calling for change in the position of women and for abolishing the veil was not much different from the colonial /missionary agenda. The ideas espoused by the British colonial official Lord Cromer, who embodied the colonizer's posture and agenda, and the missionaries, whose strategy was to undermine Islam and Arab tradition, were reflected in Amin's book. Amin's text also assumed and declared the inherent superiority of Western civilization and the inherent backwardness of Muslim societies: he wrote that anyone familiar with 'the East' had observed 'the backwardness of Muslims … wherever they are'. Among Muslims he saw a hierarchy that put the Egyptians at the bottom[19] – Muslim civilization in general is represented as semi-civilized compared to that of the West. As Ahmed put it: 'In the course of making his argument, Amin managed to express … a generalized contempt for Muslims … often in lavishly abusive detail' (Ahmed 1992: p. 156). Veiling was not a practice confined to Muslims; it was an urban phenomenon associated mostly with the upper classes. The Coptic intellectual Salama Musa noted in his memoirs that his mother and two

married sisters wore the long veil until about 1907 or 1908, and that if was through missionary influence that Christian women began to drop the practice. Also Qasim Amin's wife continued to wear the veil. He tried to enforce unveiling on his daughters despite efforts to the contrary from his own uncle.[20]

Both Amin and Harb claimed to be concerned with women's liberation. They differed in their frameworks but reached similar conclusions. One exception is the veil. Harb's women must veil and Amin's must unveil. The argument between Harb and Amin was not, as it is commonly characterized, feminist versus antifeminist,[21] but rather reflected two muddled versions of domesticity, a Western female domesticity versus an indigenous man's vision of female domesticity. Islam was not in any serious way the ideological basis for either position.[22] Contradictions abound in both. In appropriating a women's issue, men polarized discourse surrounding the veil.

Amin's book, then, can be seen as fuelling feminist debate rather than simple pioneering feminist reform in Egypt. It put on center stage the colonial narrative of women, in which the veil and the treatment of women epitomized Islamic inferiority and entered the colonial agenda of appropriation of resources and culture into mainstream Arabic discourse and programs of reform. The opposition it generated similarly marks 'the emergence of an Arabic narrative developed in resistance to the colonial narrative. This narrative of resistance appropriated, in order to negate them, the symbolic terms of the originating narrative' (Ahmed 1992: p. 164).

By 1910 sensitivity toward the nuances of veiling and unveiling was established. The newspaper *al-'Afaf* began publication in Cairo in 1910 'proclaiming itself the mouthpiece of women' (Baron 1989: p. 370). In the twenty-sixth issue of its first volume it used as a frontispiece a drawing of a woman standing in front of the pyramids and the sphinx, holding her arm aloft with a banner that read 'modesty is my motto'. Across her face she wore a light, translucent veil. The mouth and nose were revealed through the transparent fabric and the eyes were not covered. Baron (1989: p. 28) notes that the paper was criticized (see *al-'Afaf* 1911: p. 1)[23] and that three issues later the image was revised. The redrawn veil was thick and non-transparent, and the nose, face and chin were not revealed through it. Revealed, however, are the complex subtleties entailed in the reaction to this visual imagery of the veil and womanhood.

Interestingly, removing the veil was not part of the official feminist agenda at the time. According to Badran (1995a), unveiling, which had been of concern only to urban women, 'had never been part of the EFU's (Egyptian Feminist Union) formal agenda' (pp. 94–6). The phrase used in the discourse surrounding the context of lifting the 'veil' was *rafal-higab* (the lifting of the *hijab*). Ironically, what secular feminists lifted was the traditional face veil (*burqu'*), which is rooted in cultural tradition and history rather than in Islamic sources, not the *hijab*. In her speech at the Feminist conference in Rome, Sha'rawi specified the face veil (*burqu'* or *yashmik*), not *hijab*, as a barrier to women's advancement (pp. 253, 254; see Kahf 1998). When Huda Sha'rawi dramatically cast off the veil in 1923, it was the face veil she removed, not the *hijab*. Further, the act mirrored a change already taking place, as the debate over the issue of veiling and unveiling shows.

It is not trivial that Huda Sha'rawi only removed the face cover (*burqu'* or *yashmik*) but kept the head covering. Technically, therefore, Sha'rawi never 'lifted the *hijab*' Some attribute her success in feminist nationalist leadership, compared to Doria Shafiq (1914–1976),[24] for example, to the fact that she respected this tradition. In her *Memoirs* there is a segment in which she mentions being congratulated for 'my success in arriving at lifting the *hijab* … but wearing the *hijab shar'f* (lawful *hijab* – used specifically to mean the Islamic *hijab*) (Sha'rawi 1981: p. 291). The distinction made is important, and becomes central to the debate on contemporary veiling. Sha'rawi lifted the traditional customary veil and wore the *hijab* in the manner that finds support in Islamic sources.[25] Significantly, she was decorated with the state's highest honor, *Nishan al-Kamal* (Medal of Perfection). Badran (1995a) describes how in the first two decades of

the twentieth century feminist women like Huda Sha'rawi and Malak Hifni Nasif (Bahithat al-Badiya) retained the veil, because 'uncovering the face was premature [and] society was not ready for it' (Badran 1995a: pp. 22, 23).

Of the early feminists, Nabawiyya Musa, the first college graduate and the one who was not from the aristocracy, removed her face covering unceremoni-ally around 1909. 'Bahithat al-Badiya died in 1918 without having unveiled' (Badran 1995a: p. 23). The comment by Nasif that after social change 'I would approve of unveiling *for those who want it*' (Nasif 1962: pp. 275–9, emphasis added) confirms, contrary to falsely publicized claims, the tolerant stance of early twentieth-century Egyptian feminism with regard to veiling. It also brings out an element in Nasif's feminism absent in other programs – choice on the part of women.

Huda Sha'rawi unveiled ceremonially in a public political feminist act in 1923 upon returning from a feminist meeting in Rome – an act of far-reaching symbolic significance.[26] Its impact and ripple effect was felt beyond her narrow circle of the elite.[27] The gesture has entered the lore on women's liberation and, as lore, is alive and is continually embellished. Evidence in photographs and reports reveals how girls had begun to appear unveiled in schools,[28] in the streets,[29] and in protests between 1910 and 1919 (Baron 1989: p. 379). It has been observed that in Cairo before the First World War Egyptian women were far more advanced than their Lebanese counterparts. Egyptian women, it was observed by a Lebanese writer, are 'more emancipated than us … they saw the world with unveiled eyes [unlike our women] who did not see the world except from behind black veils' (Khalidi 1978: p. 64). So unveiling was already publicly visible before 1914. While Sha'rawi's dramatic gesture did not mark the beginning of unveiling, her social and political position in society gave the process celebrity and legitimacy.

The *hijab* worn by Muslim and Christian women at the turn of the century is different in meaning from the *hijab* worn by college women in the 1970s. The first was characterized as 'a national Egyptian dress for upper-class women, then called *al-habara*'[30] It consisted of a full-length skirt, a head cover and *al-burqu'* (a face covering from below, the eyes down to the chest) and was worn by Muslim and Christian women. In her memoirs, Huda Sha'rawi used the term *izari* (my cloak) in referring to what she commonly wore as a wrap when she went out. She did not seem to use the term *hijab* except in the context of the political act of lifting the veil (Sha'rawi 1981: p. 89).[31] Ahmed notes that Amin's book, the debate it generated and the issues of class and tradition with which the debate became inscribed may be regarded as the precursor and prototype of the debate around the veil (Ahmed 1992: p. 164). This is not quite so, however, since by the time Amin published his work in 1899 the debate had already begun in the press.

Reacting to the writings of European-influenced Egyptian men who advocated the lifting of the veil for women, Malak Hifni Nasif saw a nuanced 'male domination enacted through [their] discourse of the veil' (Ahmed 1992: p. 179). She opposed mandatory unveiling. Badran does not distinguish between the feminism of Nasif and that of Sha'rawi. She sees the latter as a continuation of the same struggle. After Nasif's death at a young age 'Sha'rawi publicly pledged to continue her struggle on behalf of women' (Badran 1995c: p. 230). But Ahmed does.

The two leading women espoused two feminist views: one more authentically Egyptian, the other Western-influenced. This differentiation is important because research increasingly shows that feminism is rooted in culture. It challenges Western feminism's claims of universality, which dominate discourse and research in the West. Differences exist among feminisms and multiple feminist strands can exist within the same society. Background, upbringing, education, social class and political ideology all influence the content of feminism and feminist goals. And just as Western feminism is solidly rooted in European and American cultures, the Egyptian feminism of Western-influenced Egyptians can be different from a feminism that is more deeply and authentically rooted in the culture and tradition of Egypt, despite apparent similarities.

The Arabic language and Islamic knowledge mattered to Malak Hifni Nasif, but were not included in the official feminist agenda as it developed under the leadership of Huda Sha'rawi, which stressed women's suffrage., education reform, health services, and employment opportunities. Nasif, in contrast with Huda Sha'rawi,[32] was highly proficient in the Arabic language. She gave lectures in fluent Arabic and was a prolific Arabic writer. She was comfortable with her roots and well grounded in her native (Arabic) language and Arab culture.

In her *Memoirs* Sha'rawi recounts how the Egyptian delegation to the International Women's conference in Rome in 1923 vowed 'that we would follow in the footsteps of the women in Europe in the awakening of our women so that we could take our land to its rightful place among the advanced nations'[33] (1981: p. 252). The same frame of reference is used in the language of the agenda submitted by the Sha'rawi-led Egyptian Feminist Union to the government. The rationale for the feminist program was couched neither in terms of absolute feminism and women's entitlement, nor in terms espousing the preservation of tradition. Rather, the rationale was in order for Egypt 'to reach a level of glory and might like that reached by the civilized nations' (1981: p. 262).

Looking up to Europeanization of behavior and culture was made integral to the inscripted culture of the aristocracy. Internalizing a valorization of European culture while undermining native culture, its members presented a 'gallicized' public social self. That was the way to convey and validate their class. However, the implication of this colonization of selves and minds is an area of research that has not received sufficient attention.

The principal beneficiaries of the British reform measures and the increased involvement in European capitalism were the European residents of Egypt, the Egyptian upper classes and the new middle class of rural notables and men educated in Western-type secular schools who became the civil servants and the new intellectual elite. Whether trained in the West or in the Western-type institutions established in Egypt, these 'modern' men with their new knowledge challenged the traditionally and religiously trained *ulama* (the al-Azhar authoritative scholars of Islam), displacing them as administrators, bureaucrats and educators to become transmitters of the newly valued secular scholarship and secular approach to society. Traditional knowledge itself became devalued as outmoded and backward. The resulting proposals seemed to have adopted the weaknesses in both cultures, the colonizing and the colonized.

Nasif's agenda stressed two significant elements absent in Sha'rawi's feminist agenda. First, she demanded that all fields of higher education be opened to women. Information on the specific fields that were reserved for men is significant here. In the West the fields that were 'open' for women were mostly the 'soft' fields of art and home economics. American women until recently did not tend to go into the professional schools of medicine and engineering or majors such as mathematics or economics. In the Arab world, studies of patterns in higher education (El Guindi 1985, 1986) show that, when higher education became widely accessible in the 1950s, enrollments were balanced between the sexes. The distribution in 'soft' fields and professional majors was similar for both sexes. Yet while women were significantly present in medicine and engineering (valued or modern society), they were absent in two particular majors: Arabic Studies and Islamic Studies. This is where cultural context is important in determining which obstacles facing women are relevant for their liberation. When Nasif demanded that *all* fields be made open to women, was she concerned about Arabic and Islamic Studies? This very issue would become relevant several decades later in the 1970s.

Second, she demanded that space be made in mosques for women to participate in public prayer. By demanding that mosques be made accessible to women, Nasif had established an agenda that recognizes what is core in the culture (see Nasif 1909). Her agenda was Islamic, her goals feminist. These premises presupposed a strong populist movement that is Islamic feminist.

Clearly, whereas Sha'rawi was socialized into a world that attached high value to French culture above local tradition, Nasif was firmly rooted in Arabo-Islamic culture. But one cannot easily characterize Nasif as a traditionalist. In their

ultimate goal of advancing women's rights, Nasif and Sha'rawi did not differ. Had Nasif lived longer, however, it is very likely that two parallel (organized) feminisms would have developed – one grounded in Arabo-Islamic culture, the other in European culture and feminism.

The discourse of colonialism incorporated a language of feminism and used the issue of women's position in Islamic societies as the focus of attack on those societies. Men serving the colonial administration, such as Cromer in Egypt,[34] who ironically opposed feminism in his own country, England, espoused in the colonial context a rhetoric of feminism that attacked Egyptian men for upholding practices that degraded their women. This posture of subversion and appropriation of the colonized culture can be interpreted as the colonizing power's attempt to legitimize its own domination and justify its occupation policies. The kind of feminism emerging out of this colonial context becomes an alternative form of dominance that gives its men and women a sense of superiority. By adopting it, Egyptian men accepted and Egyptian women reproduced their own subordination within their culture as well as their country's subordination to European dominance.

Two Notions of Gender

In the course of my analysis of Islamic activism (El Guindi 1998) two conceptions of gender emerge. The first individuates society,[35] secularizes culture and feminizes social, political and moral issues. Its agenda prioritizes women's problems, mostly independent of cultural constructions and often segregated from society as a whole and from political affairs. While if assumes universality, this notion originates in Western thought and is embedded in cultural values constructed out of a Euro-Christian ethos, relations of domination, and the colonial encounter. It is based on constructs of polarities. Filtered through lenses of Christo-European constructions, efforts to understand the Middle East have resulted in distorted perspectives about Islamic constructions of gender, space and sexuality. For example, gender roles are described as domestic (private) versus public – a division that better describes Western European society but distorts understanding of Arab and Islamic society. Also, piety is mistakenly separated from worldliness and sexuality, leading to the ingrained focus on seclusion and virginity and thus missing nuances characteristic of Islamic space and privacy as they pertain to veiling. Looking at Islamic culture through these lenses of distortion reveals violations of ideal separations between the worldly and the religious, between Church and State, between domestic and public.

Instead of the polarity that characterizes Western constructions, Islamic principles insist on the integration of dualities. Hence we encounter a modality of polarity (Western) versus a modality of relational integration (Arabo-Islamic).

It is within the latter model that we locate the second conception of gender, which is embedded within cultural tradition and Islamic activism and is contextualized in local, regional and cultural history. This conception is more relevant to an objective understanding of Muslim women's activism. Approaching Muslim women's rights through liberal feminist agendas cannot be effective because these agendas are based on the Western experience and derive from Western values; hence they are irrelevant to most issues of concern to Muslim women. Matters pertaining to women and the family are based on scripturalist-derived decrees and laws. To be effective, these issues must be dealt with within the same framework that created them. Feminism within the context of Islam can provide the only path to empowerment and liberation that avoids challenging the whole of the culture (Mir-Hosseini 1996).

But there is another point. Reaffirmation of traditional values and identities also feeds from the same Arabo-lslamic source. One can choose either the liberal feminist or the Islamic feminist path, but in neither can reform be effected or goals be achieved without direct access to primary Islamic knowledge in Arabic. This point had not escaped Doria Shafiq, who struggled to find legitimacy for her feminism even among feminists. She recognized the need to master

Islamic knowledge and to communicate in the Arabic language. Any Europeanized activities were considered marginal (see the ethno-biography of Doria Shafik by Nelson (1996)).

The Egyptian college women who pioneered the Islamic movement in the 1970s penetrated precisely these culturally relevant realms. They were reading primary sources, although much of their energy was spent in justifying their newly constructed dress and defending their posture vis-à-vis society. Their dress gradually became a uniform and a model for public demeanour and cross-sex relations. Mainstream society and Islam began to accommodate them. Increasingly, Egyptians dressed more conservatively. Islamic dress was mass-produced and made available at a low cost. Commercial stores specialized in its sale, thereby making it chic and appealing, and hairdressers opened special sections for the *muhaggabat*.

Islamic Feminism

Another feminism, which I label Islamic feminism,[36] set itself unambiguously apart from the two feminisms of Nasif and Sha'rawi when the prominent pioneer, Zaynab al-Ghazali, carved an alternative path. Al-Ghazali was born in 1917, the daughter of an al-Azhar-educated independent religious teacher and cotton merchant. She was privately tutored in Islamic studies in the home, and afterwards attended a public secondary school. Her father encouraged her to become an Islamic leader. She obtained certificates in Hadith and Tafsir.

Al-Ghazali had first begun her activist career by participating in the activities of the secular feminist organization founded by Huda Sha'rawi, who was her mentor, as she was to many prominent women. After joining the Egyptian Feminist Union she became dissatisfied and sought another path for women's rights – one from within Islam. Rejecting the Western woman as a model for Muslim women, Zaynab al-Ghazali abandoned the secular Egyptian Feminist Union and founded, at the age of eighteen, Jama' at al-Sayyidat al-Muslimat (the Muslim Women's Association), which was active from 1936 to 1964.[37] She published and gave weekly lectures to thousands of women at the Ibn Tolon Mosque (Hoffman-Ladd 1995: pp. 64–6). The Association published a magazine, maintained an orphanage, offered assistance to poor families, and mediated family disputes' (1995: p. 64). Her public activism and mastery of and leadership in Islamic issues set her apart, and qualified her to lead women within the Islamic fold.

An autonomous, strong-minded woman who was dedicated to learning Islam from childhood and gained credentials that qualified her to teach it, she divorced her first husband who allegedly interfered with her Islamic activities. She espoused Islamic ideals that supported family values while she also developed into a prominent activist leader in Islamic teaching and organizing (Hoffman-Ladd 1995; Hoffman 1985). Neither she nor the Islamic leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood saw her combined roles as contradictory.

When al-Ghazali first joined the Association of Huda Sha'rawi she had established her commitment to women's rights and to serving women's interests. When she switched from the secularist feminist path to the path of Islam to reach these goals, she revealed her own conviction of Islam and awareness of its importance in ordinary people's lives. The movement's success and wide appeal legitimized Islam as potentially liberating for women. When Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood,[38] sought her cooperation and suggested that both associations work together to unify the movement, she insisted on keeping her organization autonomous. Her leadership was not questioned by men or women in the general movement. However, she obviously posed a threat to the state – sufficiently so that she was arrested, imprisoned, and reportedly tortured. She describes her experience in her prison memoirs (al-Ghazali 1977).

The seeds of Islamic feminism were sown long before al-Ghazali formed the organization for Muslim women in 1936. In 1908 some Muslim women in Egypt led by Fatima Rashid, wife of Muhammad Farid Wajdi, owner of the nationalist

newspaper *al-Dustur* (The Constitution) formed an organization, *Tarqiyat al-Mar'a* (Refinement of the Woman), through which Rashid urged women to adhere to religion and veiling as 'the symbol of our Muslim grandmothers' (Rashid 1908a: p. 76; 1908b: p. 84). Modesty, morality and Islamic principles (i.e., the view that Islamic law gives advantages to women) were its founding principles. The newspaper *al-'Afaf* endorsed this affirmation of culture and religion against foreign intervention and customs (Baron 1989: p. 380).

The movement led by Zaynab al-Ghazali was modeled after the other contemporaneous organized feminist groups and, like them, it was characterized by having a charismatic female leader at the helm. There was a large difference in the size of the organizations' memberships. Records show that membership in the Islamic organization was exponentially larger than in Huda Sha'rawi's. Smaller still was that of Doria Shafik, who was seen as an extremist secularist Europeanized feminist. Her core supporters were from Europe or were family and friends.

The movement that emerged in the 1970s is different. Above all, it is populist. It is also grounded in culture and in Islam, and never had any formal organization or membership. It erupted everywhere in the main urban centers of Egypt, particularly in the universities, ultimately spreading outward. It was a grass-roots, voluntary youth movement, possibly begun by women, which mixed backgrounds, lifestyles and social boundaries. Its impact was powerful. Out of it emerged a grass-roots Islamic feminism (El Guindi 1982a, 1982b. 1983, 1992, 1996, 1997).

This thread of Islamic feminism is left out of chronicles of Egyptian feminism. Secularist-bound scholars either deny its existence or ideologically dismiss any scholarly discussion of such formulations (even empirical studies) as apology. [39] Nevertheless, it is feminist because it seeks to liberate womanhood; it is Islamic because its premises are embedded in Islamic principles and values. Yet, in some senses, the liberal Western-influenced feminism of the aristocracy and the Islamic one are not far apart. Both are about emancipation of women. The early feminist lifting of the face veil was about emancipation from exclusion; the voluntary wearing of the *hijab* since the mid seventies is about liberation from imposed, imported identities, consumerist behaviors, and an increasingly materialist culture. Further, a principal aim has been to allow women greater access to Islamic literacy.

In the 1980s the movement shifted from establishing an Islamic identity and morality to asserting Islamic nationalism, engaging in participatory politics, and resisting local authoritarian regimes, colonial occupation and Western dominance. Embedded in today's *hijab* is imagery that combines notions of respectability, morality, identity and resistance. Women (and men) who oppose the *hijab* are opposing the absence of choice, as in Iran, Turkey, Algeria and Palestine. Resistance through *the hijab* or against it, in tangible form as attire or in intangible form as a code of behavior, has generated a dynamic discourse around gender. Islamic ideals, Arab society and women's status and liberation.

NOTES

1. Fieldwork for data on which this article is partially based was conducted in Egypt on many research trips (1976, 1979, 1980, 1981–2) and annual research trips from 1984 until 1997. Support was provided by a faculty grant from UCLA African Studies Center (1976), a Ford Foundation grant No. 770–0651 (1979, 1980) (as part of the UCLA Interdisciplinary Ford Foundation project, *Rich and Poor States in the Middle East*, directed by the late Malcolm Kerr under the auspices of the Center for Near Eastern Studies) and a Fulbright Fellowship (Islamic Civilization Senior Research Scholarship) grant No. 80–006-IC (1981–82). Subsequent trips were funded by El Nil Research, Los Angeles.

The author acknowledges with gratitude support from El Nil Research in granting permission to use the ethnographic photos from its archives selected for use in this article. This articule is a shortened version of a chapter that appears in *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (New York: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1999).

2. The word *Qur'an*, derives from words that mean both 'recite' and 'read'. It is based on the oral revelations transmitted to God's messenger, Muhammad, which were recorded upon his request on any available material: cloth, leather, bone, stone, etc. These were meticulously compiled and written up. The *Qur'an* is divided into Suras and the Suras into Ayahs.

3. The *Sunna*, which means 'the path', with reference to the path of the Prophet, consists of actions, sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad as transmitted by reliable sources close to him.

4. The compilation of the *Sunna*, which occurred long after the death of the Prophet, was a scholarly process carried out by Imams; its results were published in written form. The writren books containing the *Sunna* are called *Hadith*, a word that translates as 'Prophetic Narratives'. There are nine recognized Hadith Compendia. Each is divided into books by subject and chapters by constituent topics.

5. The text for this note is missing in the original publication.

6. They are most certainly not suggestive of the eroticism of women's breasts (as in American culture), as there is no ethnographic evidence to that effect. Breasts are traditionally more associated with maternity than with sex, as is the case in many cultures outside the Euro-American fold. The sexualization of breasts is a Western influence.

7. Another part of a Middle Eastern woman's body that is considered erotic is her eyes.

8. *Sura* 4: 36; 17: 37; 28: 83; 31: 18; 40: 75; 57: 23.

9. The classist characterization of Egypt using the tripartite classification of lower, middle and upper that is used in most writings on Egypt is too simple and too ethnocentric to be of value in understanding the groupings in modern urban and traditional urban quarters and rural Egypt. Wealth, education, religion, etc. do not lend themselves to neat 'class' membership. There are very wealthy butchers proud of the *baladi* identity and living in traditional urban quarrers, for example. There are educated, Westernized, urbanized individuals with strong rural backgrounds who visit their relatives in the villages. For the purposes of discussion of urban movements and class organization prior to the Revolution of the 1950s, which is the point where one can (though still simplistically) talk about an emergent middle class, it is best to use the dichtomy that has gone out of use: ascribed-status class and achieved-status class. This would be particularly useful in discussions of the Western-influenced feminist movement.

10. Hilda Sha'rawi was born Nur al-Huda Sultan in 1897 in Minya in sourhern Egypt, the daughter of Sultan Pasha, a wealthy landowner, and Iqbal Hanim, a woman of Circassian origin. She was tutored at home and was proficient in French, but learned enough Arabic to memorize the Qur'an (Badran 1995b: pp. 44–6).

11. Malak Hifni Nasif was a feminist activist and writer, known by the pen name Bahithat al-Badiya (Researcher of the Desert). The daughter of a scholar, she entered primary school when the state opened a section for girls in 1895 and received a diploma in 1901. She also enrolled in the Teachers, Training Program at Saniyah School and received a certificate in 1905. After marriage she published and lectured. She sent a list of feminist demands to the Egyptian Congress in 1911 (Badran 1995c: pp. 229–30).

12. Through African-American, Asian-American, Arab-American and Native American women's voices and voices from the non-Western world, discussion of different feminisms is gaining momentum in scholarly debates and activist forums. The dominance of the Western model of feminism is being challenged.

13. It is mentioned in Sha'rawi's *Memoirs* that she secretly bought (run-of-the-mill) novels from women peddlers – her only Arabic reading (see Kahf 1998 for an analysis of the *Memoirs* as literature). Kahf notes how the first eleven chapters of the *Memoirs* 'tell the story of the journey to acquisition of voice by the girl who had been left outside the

door of Arabic self-articulation' (1998: p. 65). The question is: what was the role of Huda's secretary, Abd al-Hamid Fahmi Mursi? Was he a passive ghostwriter or a subordinate 'editor' of her verbally transmitted chronicle? The latter is the more likely. In 1892 *Al-'Afaf* started as one in a series of Arabic women's journals and *al-Fatat*, edited by Hind Nawfal, was another. By 1919 over thirty of these periodicals had circulated in Egypt.

14. Badran 1995a describes how, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Egypt experienced growing encroachment by the West on its economic life. The country had become a major source of raw cotton for England following the loss of supplies during the American Civil War. In 1882, the British occupied Egypt on the pretext of safeguarding the khedive and foreign economic interests during the "'Urabi Revolution," a peasant revolt led by TJrabi Pasha and Egyptian military officers seeking access to the higher ranks monopolized by the Turco-Circassian ruling elite and a broader integration of Egyptians into the civil administration (1995a: 11).

15. Huda's mother participated in establishing a clinic sponsored by the first Lady Cromer (Sha'rawi 1981: 119–20).

16. These were: *Tarquiyat al-Mar'a* (1908), *al-'Afaf* (1892) and *Fatat al-Nil* (1913).

17. These were: *al-Jins al-Latif* (108) and *al-Sufur* (1915). The writer and editor Abd al-Hamid Hamdi founded the latter, which endorsed complete unveiling, progress and reform in all domains (1915: 1(1), pp. 1, 2).

18. The selections from Qasim Amin were in Badran's book *Feminists, Islam, and Nation* (1995a). I checked them against the original and retranslated the extracts myself to capture nuances lost in Badran's translation.

19. Egyptians were 'lazy and always fleeing work', left their children 'covered with dirt and roaming the alleys rolling in the dust like the children of animals', and were sunk in apathy, afflicted, as he put it, 'with a paralysis of nerves so that we are unmoved by anything, however beautiful or terrible' (1976, Vol. 2: p. 134). Nevertheless, over and above such differences between Muslim nationals, Amin asserted, the observer would find both Turks and Egyptians 'equal in ignorance, laziness and backwardness' (1976, Vol. 2: p. 72).

20. This observation is made in the article by Beth Baron (1989: p. 379).

21. Ahmed 1992 observes that analysts (e.g., Cole 1981: pp. 394–407) routinely treat the debate as one between 'feminists', that is, Amin and his allies, and 'antifemi-nists', that is, Amin's critics. They accept at face value the equation made by Amin and the originating Western narrative: the veil signified oppression; therefore those who called for its abandonment were feminist and those opposing its abandonment were antifeminists (Ahmed 1992: p. 162).

22. Among the dominant political groups finding voice in the press at the time Amin's work was published was a group that strongly supported the British administration and advocated the adoption of a 'European outlook'. Prominent among its members were a number of Syrian Christians, who founded the pro-British daily *Al-Muqattam*. At the other extreme was a group whose views articulated in the newspaper *Al-Mu'ayyad*, published by Sheikh 'Ali Yusuf, fiercely opposed Western encroachment in any form and were emphatic about the importance of preserving Islamic tradition in all areas. The National Party (Al-Hizb al-Watani), a group led by Mustapha Kamil, was equally fierce in its opposition to the British and to Westernization, but it espoused a position of secular rather than Islamic national ism. This group held that advancement for Egypt must begin with the expulsion of the British.

Other groups, including the Umma Party (People's Party), which was to emerge as the politically dominant party in the first decades of the twentieth-century, advocated moderation and an attitude of judicious discrimination in identifying political and cultural goals. Muhammad 'Abdu was an important intellectual influence on the Umma Party, though its members were more secular minded; he had advocated the acquisition of Western technology and knowledge and, simultaneously, the revivification and reform of the Islamic heritage, including reform in areas affecting women. The Umma Party advocated the adoption of the European notion of the nation-state in place of religion as the basis of community. Their goals were to adopt Western political institutions and, at the same time,

gradually to bring about Egypt's independence from the British. Umma Party members, unlike Mustapha Kamil's ultra nationalists or the Islamic nationalists, consequently had an attitude, not of hostility to the British, but rather of measured collaboration. Among its prominent members were Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid and Sa'd Zaghloul (Ahmed 1992: pp. 144–68).

    To sum up the various political ideological trends, there were: (1) that which supported Europeanization and British colonialism; (2) that which opposed Western encroachment and reaffirmed tradition and Islam; (3) that which opposed colonialism and Westernization, choosing a secular path; and (4) that which called for adopting Western technology and knowledge but chose to revitalize Islamic heritage and reform women's position.

23. Sulayman al-Salimi, *Didd al' Afaf* (Against Virtue), Vol. 1, No. 28 (29 May 1911: p. 14). This is cited in Baron 1989: p. 383.

24. A contemporary, yet opposite, of Zaynab al-Ghazali in that the former had internalized the superiority of Europe and European ways.

25. Kahf's notion of the *hijab*'s two layers of meaning, concealment versus covering, is polemical and analytically unproductive (1998: p. 79).

26. Baron, like many writers, makes a link between women's veiling, seclusion, and the 'harem system'. This linkage hinders analysis. She mistakenly interprets Huda Sha'rawi's dramatic unveiling as 'the signal for the end of the harem system' (1989: p. 371).

27. Here I disagree with Baron, who suggested that the dramatic unveiling act may have been 'a significant gesture only to those of the elite' (1989: p. 371).

28. A 1910 photograph in the collection of *al-Mathaf al-Markazi al-Qawmi li-Buhuth al-Tarbiya* (the Central National Museum for Educational Research), of Wizarat al-Tarbiya (the Ministry of Education) in Cairo shows students from Abbas girls' school with their faces uncovered. This was noted in Baron 1989.

29. Aflaha Tullab al-Sufur, *al-'Afaf*, 1 (20), 24 March 1911. This is noted in Baron 1989.

30. A photograph taken during the 1919 Revolution shows an unveiled schoolgirl addressing the crowd (Shaarawi 1987: p. 115).

31. This was in a taped interview I recorded with feminist Ceza al-Nabarawi, a contemporary of Huda Sha'rawi, in February 1979 during our participation in the Symposium, The Changing Role of Sudanese Women', held in Khartoum, Sudan (22–28 February 1979), in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of Al-Ahfad Schools and Girls' Education.

32. *Izar* is a piece of white calico that covers the whole body like the *habara*, which for a married woman is made of glossy black silk. According to *A Dictioinary of Islam* (Hughes 1885) the *izar* is worn by 'females of the middle classes, who cannot afford to purchase a *habara*' (p. 95). This latter comment indeed cannot be applicable in this case, since Huda Sha'rawi was a wealthy woman from a family belonging to the gentry of Egypt. Most probably, *izar* was used to refer to the more casual attire worn in non-ceremonial outings.

33. However, the biculturalism of Sha'rawi does not translate into 'valorization' of everything European. Her *Memoirs* reveal occasional reluctance to participate in some European social activities. Her Europeanization was not total. She was caught between what is culturally proper and the emblematics of her class.

34. The term used in the *Memoirs* is *al-umam al-raqiya. Raqiya* is the same term often used to denote the upper class in Egypt at the time, *al-tabaqa al-raqiya*, meaning the 'refined stratum'. Classist connotations to the usage are to be noted.

35. Earl Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1908, Vol. 2: p. 146), cited in Ahmed 1992.

36. For a sophisticated critique of individuated gender and its relation to the Western notion of equality as both relate to feminism see Nelson and Olesen 1977.

37. I have been working on this concept since I began my fleldwork on the Islamic movement in Egypt, which began in the 1970s (El Guindi 1981, 1982a, 1983, 1987, 1992, 1996).

38. This is separate and different from the Society of Muslim Sisters (*al-Akhawat al-Muslimat*), a branch organization of the Muslim Brothers. According to Ahmed 'women who joined the [Society of Muslim Sisters] wore a head covering', but the position of the organization differed little from the general modernist position (1992: p. 194).

39. The Muslim Brothers (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslitnin*), founded by Hassan al-Banna (1906–49) in Egypt in 1928. The Muslim Brothers' platform was anti-colonial, anti-Zionist and anti-Westernization; it was led by the son of a mosque imam who had studied at al-Azhar and was posted to teach in the Suez Canal town of Ismailia. Al-Banna saw the large disparity between rich and poor lifestyles and the language of foreign domination and injustice that permeated Egypt. He founded the organization on principles of purifying Islam, liberating Egypt and Palestine, and opposing Western-influenced parties and government. It was a grass-roots organization that granted needed services to the underprivileged sectors of the population. It grew rapidly. Al-Banna early on emphasized the important role of women in Islamic reform (Mitchell 1969).

40. The bias built into secularist scholarship is not addressed. It raised the question for any theoretical formulation of feminism of whether an individual Muslim woman's personal experiences (childhood abuse or rape) or ideological positions (such as atheism) qualify her formulations to enter a culture-free spectrum of feminism. To what extent is one individual's account of abuse only that? To what extent does an atheist position prejudice discussion on religion? The case of the Bangladeshi physician/writer Taslima Nasrin comes to mind.

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