

Western Mimicry or Cultural Hybridity: Deconstructing Qasim Amin's "Colonized Voice"

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Abstract

Qasim Amin (1865-1908) remains one of Egypt's most controversial figures in the early modern women's rights movement. His use of Orientalist arguments to support the advancement of women's rights and to reform veiling was inflammatory to Egyptians demanding their rights for self-determination. Yet embracing aspects of the imperial value system did not mean that Amin succumbed to colonialism. Instead, he found compatibilities between his interpretations of Orientalism and Islam regarding women's morality and the nation's strength. The fusion and hybridity of indigenous and colonial epistemologies can be found in Amin's demand for reforming women's rights in Egypt.

Introduction

It is difficult to avoid Qasim Amin's name when discussing the early women's movement in modern Egyptian history.¹ A jurist, philosopher, and social reformer, he remains best known for his two controversial treatises demanding the reform of women's rights. In 1899, Amin published *The Liberation of Women*, in which he maintained that the decline of Egypt's status as a strong global power was directly correlated to the subjugation of Egyptian women. He argued that Egypt could regain its past status only

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when women had the right to a basic education and to unveil. He reiterated his position in 1900, when he published *The New Woman* as a rebuttal to the numerous criticisms he had received for *The Liberation of Women*.

Alone, Amin's position on women's education was not particularly controversial. What prompted intense criticism was his use of pro-European arguments and Orientalist stereotypes to critique Egyptian society at a time of rising Egyptian nationalism. This, in addition to his condemnation of Egyptian customs and practices of Islam and veiling, was particularly inflammatory. But Amin's Orientalist suppositions were not the product of anti-Islamic or anti-nationalist sentiment; rather, they were formed out of an imperial dogma and structure attempting to mold colonized bodies into a loyal – yet subservient – class dedicated to the British Empire.

Yet despite the empire's best efforts, indigenous cultural, social, and religious norms were not obliterated and replaced with western mores. Instead, local suppositions and imperial rhetoric were reevaluated and reformulated and, at times, indigenous values found compatibility within colonial rhetoric. In this discussion, I argue that the hybridity and fusion of indigenous and colonial thought can be seen in Amin's work, for he relied on both Orientalist and Islamic arguments to support the reform of women rights.²

Amin's Writings

Amin first wrote about the status of Egyptian women in 1894. His French rebuttal to Duc d'Harcourt's *L'Égypte et les Égyptiens*, a stinging Orientalist explanation of Egypt's poor development that included a damning critique of Egyptian women. In *Les Égyptiens: Réponse à M. le duc d'Harcourt*, Amin defended the status of Egyptian women, a reversal of what he would do in his two later works.³ Years after writing his response, Amin confided to a friend that he was not satisfied with his defense:

Even after I had written my rebuttal of d'Harcourt, I could not shake from my mind one important subject which we had debated. I am referring, of course, to the problem of the Egyptian woman. Up until that time, I had been totally unaware that something might be wrong with our family patterns ...⁴

While he became fully cognizant of Egyptian social woes only in 1899, years before, while studying in Europe, Amin had begun to note some of his Egyptian companions' detrimental "behavioural patterns" in his adolescent diaries. He later articulated these patterns in more detail in his posthumously published diary *Aphorisms*.⁵ These journals revealed the

source of what later became the three tropes of Egyptians in *The Liberation of Women* and *The New Woman*: “the lazy Egyptian,” “the ignorant Egyptian,” and the “traditional Egyptian.” After visiting the Louvre with several fellow Egyptians, Amin commented on his peers’ reaction to the museum, as follows:

We, a group of four Egyptians, went to the Louvre Museum to take a look at the most outstanding works [that] the genius of the world’s greatest men had produced. After we had toured two of the galleries, one of my companions sat down on a bench, saying, ‘I have seen enough and will wait for you here.’ Another said, ‘I’ll go along with you because I like to walk and this visit is a good form of physical exercise.’ We were also accompanied by a man who looked straight ahead, not glancing to the right or left. He went on like that until we came to the hall of jewels and precious metals. The he exclaimed, ‘This is the best exhibit in the entire museum.’

When we reached the statue of Venus de Milo, which I recognized to be in a class by itself, I asked our guide what it would bring if offered for sale. He replied ... ‘it would cost the fortune of the wealthiest man in the world or all of mankind’s possessions put together ... it is priceless’ ...⁶

Amin’s first companion represented laziness, a trait that Amin later on would see as a major flaw in colonial Egyptian society, and became the archetype for the “lazy Egyptian.” After seeing two galleries, this companion decided to abandon the tour and his companions in order to rest. Amin interpreted this behavior as a failure to make personal sacrifices for the sake of intellectual betterment. Instead of pushing past his exhaustion, the “lazy Egyptian” chose to look after his immediate and most basic physical needs. Amin later expressed this “laziness” as a fundamental flaw in Egyptians. In *The Liberation of Women*, he wrote:

It is reasonable to state that the life of Western countries is a continuous struggle between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong: it is an internal struggle in all branches of education, the arts and industry... Countries like ours have preferred a less ruffled existence. That is because we have neglected the nurturing of our minds to such an extent that they have become like barren soil, unfit for any growth. *Our laziness has caused us to be hostile to every unfamiliar idea ...*⁷ (emphasis added).

Amin saw Egyptians as placid, overindulgent, and comfortable creatures who would rather fight intellectual stimuli and denounce beneficial ideas to ensure that their unambitious lifestyle would remain uninterrupted. Amin saw his companion as suffering from this intellectual lethargy’s early

stages, and for Amin, any form of intellectual lethargy was dangerous, for not only did it make someone ignorant – it also made one dishonest:

An intellectually lazy person whose arguments are weak is often satisfied, in refuting an apparent truth, to hurl a false remark and declare it a heresy in Islam. He only makes this false remark to avoid the effort of understanding the truth, [and] to disengage from the labor of research ...”⁸

Such a person would be more apt to justify the maltreatment of women, claiming that Islam sanctioned it, rather than exert his mind against the status quo, no matter how dismal Egypt’s condition was and what benefits reform would engender.

Amin’s second companion represented the “ignorant Egyptian.” His motive for accompanying Amin was for physical rather than intellectual stimulation. He walked through the gallery but did not recognize or appreciate the deep aesthetics and symbolism behind the paintings and exhibitions. The “traditional Egyptian,” while eager to exercise his body, failed to exercise his mind and was unable to recognize the value of his experience. In Amin’s work, the “ignorant Egyptian” in the museum became a metaphor for the Egyptian who did not take advantage of colonialism’s civilizing mission. For Amin, the West was *the* prototype of a successful nation. In *The New Woman*, he described Egypt in a “stage of apprenticeship” and, although the West should not be mimicked without qualification, there was much to learn from western methods.¹⁰ He believed that its scholars were objective and that their motives were sound:

Westerners have achieved a high level of education and have been able to research and explore the social conditions of the Eastern and Muslim societies ... The driving force behind their work was their interest in identifying the truth ... We have not achieved this level of education ... So it should come as no surprise that they understood our current condition, with its strengths and weaknesses, before we did.¹¹

In understanding Egypt’s dilemma, its colonial conquerors devised infrastructures to improve it through colonialism. Therefore, Egyptians should at least pay attention to what the French and British had brought to Egypt because ultimately, Amin reasoned, these changes were for Egypt’s own good.

Along with arguing that the imperialists were looking out for the Egyptians’ best interest, Amin described another and more pressing reason for adhering to the civilizing mission: survival. Although Amin praised the West to the point of excess, he recognized that imperialism was not a

benevolent machine. It would stop at nothing to achieve its goal of conquest, even if it meant crippling or annihilating the “host” population. While imperialists recognized Egypt as “a country with a former civilization”⁷² and chose to civilize rather than exterminate Egyptians, Amin believed that the current imperial policy was only a reprieve.

Referring to Darwin, Amin postulated that if Egyptians did not modernize along European lines and if they were “unable to compete successfully in the struggle for survival [they would be] eliminated.”¹³ To prepare for what Amin believed to be an upcoming clash of civilizations, Egyptians had to strengthen their nation by adopting the same methods of education and child rearing as the West: “. . . if [a nation] arms itself for the struggle with the same armour, it will be able to survive alongside its competitor.”¹⁴ Ignorance in modern ways would only bring about the demise of the Egyptian nation.

“The lazy Egyptian” and “the ignorant Egyptian” were not the only elements crippling Egypt. “The traditional Egyptian,” as represented by Amin’s last companion, used the same rationality as his two peers and, like them, also was destroying the country. According to Amin, his last companion did not react to the Louvre’s art until he saw a display of precious metals and jewels – items of traditional value that were worth far less than the museum’s other artifacts. The “traditional Egyptian,” valuing only material manifestations of wealth and power over abstract constructions of knowledge and intellectual fortitude, was incapable of understanding how the latter could better the nation.

Amin attributed this type of detrimental thinking to a blind adherence to tradition. He argued that there was a “total interdependence between the traditions of a nation and its level of civilization and knowledge” and that tradition was “one of the most influential and permanent components [that is the] least likely to change.”¹⁵ Given its tenacity, Amin was alarmed that Egypt was full of unfavorable traditions. He saw Egyptian traditionalists as tyrannical people who rejected any challenge to custom.¹⁶ They upheld detrimental mores because they were locked in past memories of the great Islamic and Arab civilizations and only remembered the wealth of the past. They had forgotten that it was the amassing of knowledge, which Amin described in Enlightenment terms, that had made Egypt’s past civilization so great:

History has . . . demonstrated that two generations after the birth of Islam the world was illuminated with the light of knowledge that Muslims spread into every country or land they had occupied. There was no branch of knowledge or arts that they did not master or contribute to . . . This gen-

eral movement was comprehensive and occurred in every area that the mind could fathom and the eye could see.¹⁷

By trying to recapture their glorious past and failing to understand the process that had brought it about, the traditionalists were blind to the decay in their nation.¹⁸ Moreover, given tradition's strength within society, it was even more pressing that Egypt succumb to colonial restructuring.

It was the trope of the "traditional Egyptian" that Amin later primarily linked to Egyptian women's degraded status. According to him, this continual attraction to obvious displays of beauty prompted the "traditional Egyptian" to praise the display of jewels over the Venus de Milo. This same "sparkle factor" led men to value women's physical appearance over their intelligence. Such men, so misguided in their judgments, failed to see what Amin believed was the inverse correlation between women's appearance and their actual social value. In *The Liberation of Women*, Amin wrote: "Outward appearances such as clothing and jewellery have become the only differentiating factors among women. We can even assert that the level of ignorance and mental immaturity increases as a woman's wealth increases ..."¹⁹ Yet his companion, like other Egyptians, could not look past the sparkle to understand where the true value lay.

In contrast to his companions, Amin saw himself as enlightened. He respected the civilizing mission and appreciated his western education and his time in Europe. In particular, Amin drew from his experience in the Louvre. He expended his energy and benefited from the intellectual stimulation he felt from the museum and, as a result, saw it as a microcosm of Egyptian society. Amin believed that Egyptian women were currently like the jewels in the display case – they were pretty to look at, but, in the greater scheme of Egypt, were worth very little. However, with social reform, women had the potential to contribute to the nation through their morality and child rearing roles. In *The New Woman*, he wrote:

Eventually, the qualities of the woman become characteristic of the family and are extended to the country. Thus a good mother is more useful to her species than a good man, while a corrupt mother is more harmful than a corrupt man.²⁰

Women could strengthen the Egyptian nation and thus become as valuable as the priceless Venus de Milo.

It took Amin more than a decade to connect these three detrimental tropes lingering in his mind to the Egyptian women's plight of and the nation's demise. In 1899, Amin presented his correlations between the sta-

tus of women and nation in his controversial *The Liberation of Women*. A nation was made up of strong, progressive, and intellectual men, but men's values were wholly dependent on their mothers' character: "It is impossible to breed successful men if they do not have mothers capable of raising them to be successful."²¹ Using both Islamic and Orientalist arguments, Amin called for extending primary education to girls and the end of secluding and veiling women. He praised western men for allowing women to be educated and work in scientific, medical, and industrial fields.²² Egyptian women, he maintained, also should work outside the house, but only in restricted roles in commerce, medicine, and jobs that did not demand "physical strength or nerves."²³

Egyptian women were not entitled to the same level of education as their western counterparts. Amin reasoned that they should be schooled only to improve their domestic skills and ameliorate the private sphere. An ignorant woman, he contended, could not run a well-maintained household. Thus, girls should be schooled in cooking and cleaning.²⁴ A woman educated in such home-related matters would be able to raise strong children who would be able to strengthen the nation. Such outside interests as history and music also were encouraged, but more for improving women's domestic responsibilities in child rearing and husband-pleasing duties.²⁵ Amin postulated that if wives did not appreciate their husband's intellectual pursuits, the home would no longer be a heavenly abode. He wrote:

When a man finds his wife in ignorant condition, he quickly despises her and treats her as nonexistent ... she becomes depressed, thinking that he is treating her unjustly ... and eventually she hates her husband. From then [on], life is like hell for both of them ...²⁶

By itself, Amin's promotion of women's education and free movement was not particularly innovative. Girls were already being educated in missionary-run and Islamic benevolent schools, and politically active women were reevaluating their position in Egyptian society.²⁷ Before the first woman-run and woman-written journal appeared in 1892, a small number of women debated their social and political concerns in male-run journals.²⁸ Five years before Amin published *The Liberation of Women*, such women writers as Zaynab Fawwaz and Hanna Kawrani were debating the merits of women's suffrage.²⁹ When Amin published his book, there were already over six women's journals debating the same issues.³⁰

Moreover, Amin's positioning of women in the private sphere upheld the patriarchal view that was dominant in, though not exclusive to, colonial

Egypt. As Amina Wadud explains, “[i]n androcentric cultures, females are looked upon in terms of their utility to men, primarily reproductive.”³¹ By relegating women to the private sphere, placing them in the primary role of “breeders” for the state, and dedicating their children to the nation, Amin literally and symbolically appropriated the functions of women. He reasoned that women’s primary role was to create and ameliorate the domestic sphere. A woman’s education and leisure activities would be developed solely for the purpose of making Egypt a strong nation and an international power.

While Amin’s views on education and women’s roles in the private sphere were not radical, his pro-European arguments, articulation of Orientalist stereotypes, and attack on veiling were inflammatory. His thesis in *The Liberation of Women* argued for the reform of Egyptian society. He maintained that centuries of despotic rule had led to the intellectual shutdown of Egyptians. They had become lazy, ignorant, and locked in tradition. Political and social tyranny created tyrannical homes, and “man in his superiority began to despise woman in her weakness.”³² Immorality ensued and irrationality thrived, both of which created a weak and corrupt society. Moreover, irrationality allowed for the blind acceptance of religious jurisprudence, which demanded that women be veiled and sequestered. By crippling one half of Egyptian society, Egypt became a weak nation of Egyptians who lacked aspiration and any desire for betterment.

Given the problem of a backward Egypt, Amin searched for a solution. He looked to the West to account for its success. Its strength, he concluded, came from its unveiled and educated women:

The evidence of history confirms and demonstrates that the status of women is inseparably tied to the status of the nation. When the status of a nation is low, reflecting an uncivilized condition for that nation, the status of women is also low, and when the status of the nation is elevated, reflecting on the progress and civilization of that nation, the status of the women in that country is also elevated.³³

Amin believed that the Egyptian custom of veiling was the main articulation of women’s oppression. To ensure women’s modesty, Egyptian men had gone too far by secluding their women and leaving them isolated, uneducated, and without proper child rearing skills. Given that women were deemed unintelligent, incompetent, and denied free movement, they were denied their Qur’anic right to handle their own business affairs and marry and divorce freely. He argued that face veils (*niqab*) made it impossible to identify women,³⁵ and that long gowns (*jilbab*) made them awkward in their movements.³⁶ Such excesses, Amin maintained, increased rather than cur-

tailed immorality, because women did not know how to socialize properly with men, and their concealed identities allowed them to act vulgarly without fear of recognition.³⁷ The immorality of Egyptians, Amin reasoned, was a major barricade against Egyptian society's advancement.

This barricade was upheld by traditionalists, who believed that women were incapable of character, intelligence, or decency. Traditionalists fostered the belief that veiling and isolation upheld women's morality. Amin argued that these mores caused Egyptian men to deny women their education and to become jailers who enslaved women through veiling and seclusion. The result was a society based on distrust. Marriages were loveless and based on wealth and beauty instead of friendship and respect.³⁹ Men rejected the humanity and equality of women and devalued motherhood.⁴⁰ They regarded women with contempt for their uneducated and weak minds.

As a result of this maltreatment, women suffered. Seclusion made them lazy, gossipy, and deceitful.⁴¹ They were ignorant, yet clever enough to manipulate their husbands.⁴² Never experiencing the pleasure of education made them disrupt their husbands' pursuits of knowledge.⁴³ Women were promiscuous, because excessive veiling became a disguise that allowed them to go unrecognized in their carnal pursuits.⁴⁴ Amin even went so far as to claim that veiled women had questionable hygiene, charging they did "not comb their hair daily" and failed to "take a bath more than once a week."⁴⁵

The poor character of women made their mothering skills abhorrent. Disregarding levels of poverty and disease, Amin charged that "[t]he number of children killed by ignorant women every year exceeds the number of people who die in the most brutal wars."⁴⁶ If not already dead, their children were found "dirty and left to wander the streets."⁴⁷ Egyptian mothers who were not negligent were detrimental to their children's emotional well-being. Mothers, Amin charged, disciplined children in sporadic bursts of scolding, bribery, and affection. By exhibiting such erratic and contradictory parenting behavior, they failed to instill the values of honor, trust, and truth. Such behavior, Amin deduced, presented "to the child a model of lying, causing him to los[e] trust in what people say."⁴⁸ Amin concluded that with lazy, suspicious, and ignoble children, it should be no surprise that Egypt was a weak and morally corrupt nation.

To show Egyptians the benefits of reform, he presented examples from his idea of an ideal society: the West. Amin maintained that all men in the West appreciated women's humanity,⁴⁹ which resulted in educated women being respected by men for their intellect and child rearing capa-

bilities.⁵⁰ Due to their socialization with men, European women were not ill-mannered like Egyptian women and were far more modest:

When you meet European women on the street, they appear diligent, tranquil and dignified. Casting down their eyes before men. If however, they look at men, they do so out of the corner of their eye.⁵¹

Instead of wasting away in seclusion, Amin believed that western women “contributed significantly to the foundation of knowledge ... shoulder to shoulder with men [in] every branch of trade and industry, [and in] every branch of knowledge ...”⁵² Western women even had better hygiene practices and, unlike Egyptian women, kept “up their appearances, whatever their internal state.”⁵³ No matter what hardship they may encounter, the golden mothers of the West never maltreated their children, because education showed them the value of instilling nation-strengthening values in their protégés:

Westerners who love truth, behave well, value honor for its own worth, empathize with the sick, are kind to animals, value management and good principles in their work, are serious and diligent, venerate and honor their country, or value perfection in life have not developed such traits because they have read the appropriate books ... [they have] developed them through the active roles of their mothers.⁵⁴

Thus for Amin, there was no denying the superiority of the West. Its citizens were everything Egyptians should aspire to be: educated, honest, respectful, noble, and clean. By juxtaposing Egypt against the West and claiming that Egypt’s inferiority could be remedied by using the West as a role model, Amin appeared to rearticulate the binary of Orientalism and imperialism’s civilizing mission.

Amin’s Orientalist suppositions caused a flurry among Egyptians, and the reaction from readers was enormous. Over 30 books and articles written by both men and women appeared to debate the merits of unveiling.⁵⁵ Not to be bested, the following year Amin wrote *The New Woman* to counter his critics. With the exception of a few clarifications and several examples of American liberated women, Amin maintained his position until his death in 1908.

The Making of an Orientalist

In part, circumstances made Orientalism a major component in Amin’s arguments for social reform. Orientalism was the nexus between Europe’s bid for power over the Middle East and Asia, and the knowledge produced

to secure that power. As Edward Said explains, Orientalism was “a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinctions between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’”⁵⁵ Rationality, adaptability, civility, subjectivity, and humanity were perceived as western traits and thus denied to the Oriental. However, the articulation of Oriental tropes hinged not only on negative or prejudiced statements, but on the power of the West over the East to appropriate the “Other’s” voice and to speak for its experience.

The Orient, wherein the West positioned Egypt, was part imagined and part real. Though not entirely a geographic location, the Orient was the site of European colonies and material wealth. The Orient, however, could not be ruled by military means alone. In addition, in order for Europe to possess its material wealth, the Orient had to be understood and reconstructed, both physically and ideologically, in western terms.⁵⁷ By restructuring indigenous political, social, and cultural institutions, the British Empire forced the seemingly orderless Orient to open itself to the empire’s scrutiny. Whether accurate or not, the Orient could be possessed if it could be known and conceptualized in western terms. Subsequently, bodies of political, social, and academic knowledge developed to dominate, restructure, and hold authority over the Orient. The resulting knowledge allowed the empire to harness the power of colonized bodies.⁵⁸

In Egypt, as Timothy Mitchell explains, control was achieved by the continuous western instruction, inspection, and control of colonized bodies.⁵⁹ The education system was one of many institutions that fell victim to this ideological overhaul. Prior to colonization, the British perceived Egyptian pedagogy as noisy, chaotic, and inefficient. The common practice of children receiving one-on-one instruction while sitting in small groups in the open courtyards of village and town mosques sharply contrasted with the rigid and formulaic methods of British teachers.

After the British seized power, classes were remolded and shaped according to the British system, in which a teacher stood at the head of the class and simultaneously taught a room full of students sitting in uniform desks in rows placed in regular intervals,⁶⁰ and schools were placed in major city centers and districts of importance. As Mitchell explains, “The appearance of order means the disappearance of power. Power is to operate more and more in a manner that is slow, uninterrupted and without external manifestation.”⁶¹

Egyptian universities also were redesigned to maintain the imperial endeavor. The Earl of Cromer, Egypt’s first viceroy, who called Islam a

“complete failure” as a social system⁶² and claimed that “[t]he special aptitude shown by the Englishmen in the government of the Oriental races ... [is the] most effective and beneficent instrument for the gradual introduction of the European civilisation to Egypt,”⁶³ remolded Egyptian universities to create a loyal class of civil servants. Basing his civil and academic reconstruction on French universities, Cromer envisioned that future Egyptian civil servants would serve British imperialism rather than use their talent to strengthen the Egyptian nation.⁶⁴ Consequently, school syllabi were so effective in propagating Orientalist tropes that even such notable Egyptian scholars as Rifa’a al-Tahtawi translated Orientalist works into Arabic and used European sources to trace “Egyptian indolence back to the ancient Egyptians.”⁶⁵ His and other Egyptian-authored Orientalist-based books later formed a significant part of the curriculum in Egyptian-run schools.⁶⁶

Like his intellectual counterparts, Amin was subjected to imperial pedagogy. He was born in the heart of the “Orient” at a time when western powers were vying for its power and wealth and, consequently, was partially shaped by the western dogma and machinery that propagated and maintained imperialism. Amin, who was born in Cairo probably in 1863, attended primary school in Alexandria and then the Cairo Preparatory School (1875), which had a strict and heavily Europeanized curriculum. He continued to receive a westernized education after receiving his law degree. In 1881, at the age of 17, he was one of 37 students who received a government scholarship to study at France’s Université de Montpellier.

After Amin’s intense westernized training, he became a part of the empire’s civil servant class. In 1885 he became a juror in the Mixed Courts, a judiciary system saturated in foreign western influence. The Mixed Courts, created 10 years before Amin’s appointment, were based on a combination of the Napoleonic judicial system and Islamic law. It had foreign judges from England, Austria, Germany, and France, and it was these foreign powers who nominated jurists for judicial posts.⁶⁷

Amin continued to have a successful career in these foreign-run judicial offices. In 1887, he entered the predominately western-run Egyptian office of the Government Division of Legal Affairs. By 1889, he was appointed one of the National Courts’ Egyptian judges. Given his extensive training in imperial schools and institutions, it was no wonder that Orientalist dogma found its way into Amin’s worldview. The influence of Orientalism in Amin’s suppositions is readily apparent. His insistence that the West was superior and should be used as a model for Egyptian development echoed the same sentiment as Cromer’s “Englishman’s mission”⁶⁸:

That Egyptians could prosper only if they followed the tutelage of their British conquerors.

Amin's anti-veiling rhetoric closely resembled the laments of European politicians, travellers, and missionaries. In addition to asserting the backwardness of Egyptian society, Cromer claimed that Muslim women's degradation included, among other things, public veiling.⁶⁹ Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, decried the veil as symbolic of a "hopeless life."⁷⁰ In their *Our Moslem Sisters: A Cry of Need for Lands of Darkness Interpreted by Those Who Heard It*, missionaries Annie von Sommer and Samuel Zwemer claimed that veiling was the "chief barrier to progress"⁷¹ in the Middle East.

Amin's blatant use of Orientalism and his low regard for Egyptian women still causes controversy among scholars. In her *Women and Gender in Islam*, Leila Ahmed devotes a significant part of her chapter on "The Discourse of the Veil" to highlighting Amin's Orientalist tropes. She begins her insightful study by deconstructing how colonial and anti-colonial forces vied for dominance by centering on women and the veil, and inserts a useful discussion on the use of western-formulated feminism to destabilize native culture.⁷² Ahmed presents a brief overview of how the West juxtaposed itself against Islam to prove the latter's inferiority by drawing a false correlation between the status of women and the veil.⁷³ After referring to Cromer's contempt for Islam and the Egyptian custom of veiling, she deconstructs Amin's intensely patriarchal dialogue on women's status by flagging how the purpose of Egyptian women was to breed strong men for the nation. She concludes by charging Amin with mimicking Cromer's suppositions to prove the inferiority of Islam, Egypt, and, more specifically, Egyptian women. She writes of Amin and those similar to him that:

... they are men of the classes assimilating to European ways and smarting under the humiliation of being described as uncivilized because 'their' women are veiled, and they are determined to eradicate the practice.⁷⁴

While accurate in her articulation of Amin's patriarchal conception of women's roles and his derogatory use of Orientalism against his fellow Egyptians, Ahmed omits any analysis of Amin's use of Islamic arguments to support his demand for social reform. Instead, she dismisses it as mere mimicry of Cromer.⁷⁵ "The book," she charges, "merely called for the substitution of Islamic-style male dominance by western-male dominance. Far from being the father of Arab-feminism, then Amin might more aptly be

described as the son of Cromer and colonialism.”⁷⁶ Amin, however, was not just the son of Cromer, for he had another ideological parent.

Appropriating and Rearticulating Orientalism and Islam

Superficially, Amin’s statements mimicked the binaries of Orientalism. He juxtaposed Egyptians against westerners and spoke in absolutes. However, a much more complex process was involved in Amin’s apparent reiteration of Orientalist values. Ultimately, this process created a fusion of indigenous and Orientalist norms and mores that make suppositions such as Amin’s a product reflective of his time and space rather than a mere reiteration of western perceptions of the Orient.

In her discussion on nationalist movements in Turkey and Algeria, Megda Yegenoglu partly explains how colonized bodies incorporated Orientalism in their worldview. She first puts forth a theoretical model, based partly on Edward Said’s Orientalism and Judith Butler’s work on discursive bodies. Said’s discussion of Orientalism’s ontological and epistemological process, while useful in explaining the dialectic reinforcement of Orientalist tropes, excludes native agency. According to Said, because the Orient is partly an imagined body, Orientalism prevents the Orient from being “a free subject of thought or action.”⁷⁷

Implied in Said’s articulation is that colonized bodies lack independent agency because they always react to the West’s power. To resolve this problem, Yegenoglu turns to Butler’s *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Butler contends that the construction of an object as part material and part textual is irrelevant and does not prevent its ability for agency. The issue is not whether the material or the textual is more real; rather, it is how they intersect and connect. Moreover, the object’s resistance does not necessarily occur exclusively outside the regulatory norms, but can occur by appropriating or rearticulating components of the normative governing laws.

Butler explains that “the power of discourse to materialize its effects is thus consonant with the power of discourse to circumscribe the domain of the intelligibility.”⁷⁸ Yet only certain actions will manifest, because they are based on discursive circumstance. These “reiterative chains of discursive production [may] seem barely legible as reiterations,”⁷⁹ but nonetheless still depend on regulatory norms for their creation. Agency is situated in the regulatory norm’s appropriation or rearticulation, and rearticulation is a form of challenge, for it suggests that the norm can be produced differently.

According to Yegenoglu, this process of appropriation and rearticulation was used in nationalist movements from Turkey and Algeria. In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal completely accepted the imperial paradigm that labeled Islam and Turkish culture as inferior and undesirable. He took the pseudo-correlation between Islamic dress (hijab) and backwardness and began a brutal series of reforms to de-Islamicize Turkey, which included the forced removal of women's religiously mandated veils.⁸⁰

Algerian nationals, however, inversed this strategy and reclaimed the veil as a national symbol. For both the nationals and the French, veiled Muslim women were the essence of Algerian culture. Whoever controlled their bodies controlled Algeria. During the French occupation, authorities attempted to remove Islamic institutions and practices from Algerian society in an attempt to pacify the population. Veiling was especially discouraged.⁸¹ In order to reclaim Algeria, Algerian nationals strongly advocated the reinstatement of hijab, and Islam became a means to regain part of Algeria's authentic past. In so doing, as Yegenoglu maintains, the Algerian national discourse rearticulated the Oriental binary. She writes:

... despite endowing the native with some sort of subjectivity, the nationalist discourse of the [Algerian] Ulema unavoidably reproduced the epistemological structure of the Orientalist hegemony: embracing Islam in response to a civilizing mission ... the veiling of women in response to the colonial desire to unveil them, revitalization of the native tradition in response to the dissemination of Western mores and cultures.⁸²

While this model of appropriation and rearticulation is instrumental to understanding Amin's rearticulation of Orientalism, it cannot deconstruct his use of Islamic suppositions to support social reform. Yegenoglu's paradigm, as it stands, fails to recognize that the appropriation-rearticulation model works on multidimensional levels and that it also was used by colonized bodies to reevaluate indigenous cultural and religious values and mores. By assuming that appropriation and rearticulation are used only in one direction, the complexity of cultural formation is rejected and the hybridity between imperial and indigenous cultures is dismissed.

Subsequently, as seen by Yegenoglu's examples, the acceptance or rejection of Islam becomes dependent upon the acceptance or rejection of veiling. There is no measure to account for an acceptance of Islam by rejecting veiling, and any rejection of veiling becomes exclusively sourced from western dogma. Ultimately, Yegenoglu's formulation levies the mimicry trope against the "Other." Colonized bodies are still denied free agency.

However, the binary trap can be avoided by comparing precolonial religious frameworks to national rhetoric and evaluating the Islamic themes brought forward or rejected in national discourse. This allows for discussing cultural hybridity, which is a far more accurate and honest way to study imperialism and indigenous voices. By applying this reformulation to his work, the presence of the Oriental binary in his social reforms becomes far more meaningful than a mere reproduction and dismissal of western epistemology. Amin's suppositions become a representation of cultural hybridity.

Amin was adamant that Islam could not be blamed for Egyptian women's pitiful condition. Their low status, he reasoned, was the fault of ignorant Muslims. Amin felt that Muslims all over the world had failed to develop because they blindly followed and defended tradition, claiming they were acting in piety but failing to realize they were not following the "true" and progressive Islam as Amin understood it to be:

Everyone acquainted with Islam, whether foreigner or Muslim, highly esteems its power ... They also understand that what present-day Muslims (and the majority of their scholars) call Islam is in reality a conglomeration of many ideas, customs, and traditions that have no relationship to the genuine, true and pure religion ... Thus it is the medley of beliefs, traditions and morals that people call religion and consider to be Islam that is in fact the obstacle to progress.⁸⁵

To prove Egyptians were slaves to tradition and that Islam was a liberating religion, Amin set out to establish the religious parameters of women's rights. In all four chapters of *The Liberation of Women*, Amin cited the Qur'an, the Hadith, the Shari'ah, and classical Islamic jurists to maintain his assertion that reform was justified for the Egyptians' material good and spiritual well-being. To express the value of early childhood development for both boys and girls, he referred to the renowned Islamic reformer Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111).⁸⁴ To challenge the belief that women were incapable of learning, he related a hadith celebrating 'A'ishah's religious knowledge: "Half of your religious principles could be taken from the examples and teachings of 'Aisha ..."⁸⁵

He referred to both the Qur'an and the Hadith to establish the right of women to manage their own property, which required education and free mobility. He reminded his readers that it was an Islamic obligation to be kind to women and to love one's wife.⁸⁶ Amin also made a very strong case against seclusion, by highlighting that the Qur'an said that only the Prophet's wives had to be approached from behind a curtain because of

their unique status. He related Qur'an 33:32, which specifically addresses the Prophet's wives: "O ye wives of the Prophet! Ye are not like any other women. If ye keep your duty (to Allah), then be not soft of speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease aspire (to you), but utter customary speech."⁸⁷ Therefore, Amin stated, Egyptian women were permitted to move freely because the verse only applied to the Prophet's wives because of their high status. For Amin, Islam was not in conflict with his view of women's rights; rather, Islam affirmed it.

Unveiling Identity

The most compelling and controversial reform for which Amin argued was the end of veiling as practiced by Egyptian women. On this point, Orientalism and Islam converged. The veil became a symbol of self-identity for both Orientalists and Amin, and Amin negotiated his way between the two belief systems in order to develop his arguments for its reform. Through metaphor and jurisprudence, the western worldview conceived of the non-western world as a gendered space.⁸⁸ By extension, this worldview sexualized Oriental bodies, particularly those of Muslim women, and turned them into a metaphor. The unequal power relationship, the intense curiosity and fear of Islam, and the articulations of gender and race all converged in the western fixation on the veil. Orientalism became woven into its very fabric.

Through a sexualized reading of Orientalism, Yegenoglu contends that the relentless desire to unveil Muslim woman was part of a complex ideological-subjective formation based on fluctuations between fascination, anger, and frustration over the veil's obstruction and representation.⁸⁹ The veil barred the Orient from being fully known, fully controlled, and wholly exploited. Only by ripping off the symbolic veil could the West's image of the Orient be confirmed as the West's binary opposite and thus validate the western identity.

Intrinsically linked in this complex ideological-subjective formation was an element of voyeurism, where both men and women fantasized about removing the veil to expose Muslim women's bodies. French photographers created lewd postcards of Algerian women, described by one scholar as "an anthology of breasts."⁹⁰ Such respected photojournalist magazines as the *National Geographic* manufactured images of sexually charged harem scenes,⁹¹ and such European travelers as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu fulfilled the penetration fantasy by entering and reporting her sightings of Muslim women's private quarters and baths.⁹²

Like his Orientalist counterparts, Amin saw the veil as masking his identity as an Egyptian. It barred Egypt from becoming a strong nation-state, because it encouraged moral corruption among women. In both instances, identities were being drawn and affirmed on women's bodies. However, there was a crucial difference between Amin's discourse and that of the Orientalists.

For Amin, removing the veil was not a means to sexualize Egyptian women. While Amin urged removing the *niqab* and the *jilbab*, he did not reject hijab as a headscarf or as a moral code of conduct, because for him, the main problem with Egyptian society was that it lacked morality. Moreover, Amin postulated that mimicking the West would not create a moral society. In *Aphorisms*, he wrote: "[Egyptians] have begun to imitate Europeans in all affairs of life. But I do not think that such an imitation will have a commendable influence on rescuing our nation from the state it is in now."⁹³ In *The Liberation of Women*, he further explained that Egyptians lost all sense of modesty and decorum in their attempts to westernize,⁹⁴ and for him, this was the root of the Egyptian problem: Egyptians lacked morality and modesty.

Although his arguments were expressed through Orientalism, Amin's morality was not constructed exclusively from western ideology. Rather, it was deeply rooted in Islam, as demonstrated by his use of Islamic suppositions to support women's rights. His use of Orientalist tropes did not contradict his Islamic beliefs. Ironically, he found them compatible with his interpretation of Islam.

Amin's social reforms rearticulated the Islamic worldview that drew an intimate connection between *haya'* (modesty) and hijab (modest dress). A prophetic hadith states: "Every religion has a quality that is characteristic of that religion, and the characteristic of [Islam] is *haya'*."⁹⁵ In Islam, those who have *haya'* are malleable to religion and open to dedicating their life to God.⁹⁶ With *haya'*, individuals reject their arrogance and understand that absolute perfection and power exists with God, and thus turn to God's laws to avoid sin and to move as close to perfection as humanly possible.

Haya' is an internal regulator that helps people follow God's laws by generating a sense of shame when doing something wrong.⁹⁷ The Qur'an connects *haya'* and hijab through the parable of Adam and Eve's fall from Paradise. After Satan tempted them to eat from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, humanity's first parents discovered their *saw'athima*: "Then Satan tempted them, only to reveal ... to them what was hidden [*saw'athima*] ..." (7:20).⁹⁸ Classical English translations of the Qur'an define *saw'athi-*

hima as “shame.”⁹⁹ However, more recent translations by Ahmed Ali and Fadwa El Guindi translate it as “hidden parts”¹⁰⁰ and “genitals,”¹⁰¹ respectively.

Despite the minor discrepancy in translations, interpretations of the Qur’an maintain the metaphor between disobedience to God and the disgrace of being stripped naked, as seen in: “O children of Adam! We have bestowed *libas* (dress) upon you to cover your [*saw’athima*] and serve as a protection and an adornment. *Libas* of piety is the best” (7:26-27). The concept of chastity and spiritual purity is articulated further in *Surat al-Nur*, in which both Muslim men and women are told that lowering their gaze will diminish spiritual corruption. Women, however, are specifically instructed to cover their breasts.¹⁰² To a patriarchal Arabian society, the difference between men’s and women’s demonstrations of modesty reinforced the women’s role as the standard-bearers of a society’s morality. Amin, a product of two deeply patriarchal systems, continued to make this association in his treatises dealing with Egyptian women’s rights.

Amin rearticulated this Islamic worldview through an entirely patriarchal lens, thereby disregarding any interpretation of Islam confirming that men and women are equal in moral and intellectual capabilities, responsible and accountable for their own actions, and not bound by biologically determined functions.¹⁰³ Moreover, he was disinclined to seek how patriarchy conflicts with the Qur’anic worldview, which holds “no metaphysical, ontological, religious or ethical primacy for the male over the female.”¹⁰⁴ Instead, he used his interpretation of Islam to maintain that men are actors and women are to be acted on through social reforms instigated by men for the benefit of the male-dominated nation.

Throughout *The Liberation of Women* and *The New Woman*, Amin appealed to the Egyptian man’s sense of religiosity and emphasized how his arguments for reform did not contradict Islam. First he justified reforming the custom of veiling by writing that:

... [w]ere women’s socialization effected in accordance with religious and moral principles, and were the use of the veil terminated at limits familiar in most Islamic schools of belief, then these criticisms [against the custom of veiling] would be dropped and our country would benefit from the active participation of all its citizens, men and women alike.¹⁰⁵

Later, in the chapter entitled “Women and the Veil,” Amin clarified what he meant by veiling as he continued to make his morality argument. Veiling, he maintained, was “one of the permanent cornerstones of morality”¹⁰⁶ and

as such, Egyptian women should not end its use. Rather, they needed to return to its true Islamic definition, which, he explained, did not include the *niqab*. He referred to 24:30-31, which implores women to “lower their gaze,” to be modest, and to cover their bosoms.¹⁰⁷

To dispel any doubt of his presentation, Amin sought to clarify the vagueness of these verses. He detailed the edicts on veiling from four schools of Islamic thought, which were derived by four Islamic jurists between the seventh and ninth centuries. Upon discussing their edicts, Amin concluded that the Egyptian custom of veiling had needlessly deviated too far from what was religiously ordained, and that it was Islamically permissible for women to expose their hands and faces. Based on this, he insisted that the *niqab* was not a religious requirement.¹⁰⁸ He argued that as women are permitted to control their own legal and business affairs by the authority of both Qur’anic and Islamic law, they must be identifiable to make the transaction valid. As women who wear the *niqab* were not identifiable, women therefore were permitted to uncover their faces based upon both the authority of classical Islamic jurists and, more importantly, the divine law.¹⁰⁹

Amin then played upon the androcentric assumption of women’s inherent immorality. Excessive veiling, he maintained, was a result of the Egyptian fear of promiscuous women. However, the Egyptian manner of veiling did not deter immoral behavior; rather, it amplified it. The *niqab* masked women’s physical flaws and thereby made them more desirable. A gauze *niqab*:

... reveals the good features and hides blemishes; the veil conceals the tip of the nose, the mouth, the jaws, and reveals the forehead, temples, eyebrows, eyes and cheeks and sides of the neck. These two coverings are, in reality, ornaments worn by women to incite an onlooker’s desire.¹¹⁰

Amin insisted that as the *niqab* masked women’s identity, they could “act in a manner that incites desire” and, because they did not know how to socialize with men, they were more apt to act on their amorous whims.¹¹¹ He concluded that ultimately, the *niqab* was not conducive to moral behavior and piety, for if that were the case, it would have been ordained in the Qur’an. In using a Calvinist sort of logic, Amin reasoned that by making women visible and identifiable, they would be unable to sin under the blanket of anonymity. Their bodies and energy, which would otherwise be spent in committing adulterous acts, could then be productively harnessed to better the state.

Conclusion: “And thus the twain shall meet ...”

As seen by Amin’s appropriation and rearticulation of both the Orientalist and the Islamic arguments, women’s rights did not exclusively stem from one particular value system.¹¹² He interpreted both epistemologies and worldviews in such a way that his formulation of women’s rights found compatibility in both. Given that Amin was the product of a colonial system, this should not be surprising. Although trained to be a tool for imperialism, he also had been raised in a Muslim society. While he expressed his demand for reform through very uncharitable Orientalist suppositions, an understanding of Islamic concepts of modesty and morality illustrates that his argument was a hybrid of two ideological systems rather than a mere reiteration of an oppositional binary.

Amin saw Islam through a patriarchal lens and interpreted scripture so that it would support his bid to an almost exclusive and wholly unfair relegation of women’s lives to the private sphere. He saw the home as a microcosm of Egypt and, while regulating women’s lives to the home, dedicated their bodies to the state by implicitly associating Egypt’s decay with the custom of face-veiling.

By contemporary standards, Amin’s disregard for women’s self-determination and dismissal of class concerns hardly echoes a woman’s rights-based argument by either secular or Muslim women’s rights activists. Moreover, Amin did nothing to dispel the myth that women’s morality must be constantly regulated by men. Yet for Amin, who did not perceive Orientalism and Islam as two competing binaries, this appropriation and need to regulate women’s bodies was perfectly legitimate in his debate about women’s social reform. Accepting one system did not mean rejecting the other, and elements of both systems ultimately converged on women’s bodies and rallied on the symbol of the veil.

Amin believed that the key to national strength included women’s free movement and limited education. In making this claim, he prevented women’s bodies from belonging to themselves and appropriated them for the nation-state. Stating the achievements of the West was a way to show that women’s rights would benefit Egypt. It was more irony than mimicry that Amin cited the West’s treatment of women as being a better example than the Islamic treatment. In writing as he did, Amin was not acting as an “inauthentic native” or mimicking the West. Instead, his bid for reform truly reflected the indigenous and colonial influences of his time and space.

Notes

1. For examples, see Lelia Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Deniz Kandiyoti, ed. *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996); and Lila Abu-Lughod, ed. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
2. The term Islamic is deceiving, because it suggests that Amin used a "pure" form of Islam to justify his arguments. However, Amin was a product of a particular socioeconomic background, and his worldview was shaped by political and social factors that ultimately affected how he interpreted religious scripture. His interpretation, as will be seen in this paper, was filtered through a lens of patriarchy. In addition, as several contemporary scholars note, it is highly dubious whether the Qur'anic scripture was ever intended to place men on a higher intellectual or moral tier than women. See Amina Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from A Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Azizah Y. Al-Hibri, "An Introduction to Muslim Women's Rights," in Gisela Webb, ed. *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar Activists in North America* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000) for examples. Nonetheless, for the sake of simplicity, the term Islamic will be used in this paper to describe Amin's rationalization and use of religiously derived arguments.
3. Qasim Amin, *Les Egyptiens: Response a M. le duc d'Harcourt* (Cairo: J. Barbier, 1898).
4. Tawfiq Habib, "Qasim Amin and the Egyptian Woman," *Al-Hilal* 36 (May 1908): 945. Cited in Mary Flounders Arnett, *Qasim Amin and the Feminist Movement in Egypt* (PhD. diss., Dropsie College, 1965), 101.
5. The Arabic title of Amin's diary is *Kalimat*.
6. Qasim Amin, "Aphorisms" in Arnett, *Qasim Amin*, 14.
7. Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women*. trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1992), 4.
8. *Ibid.*, 4.
9. Qasim Amin, *The New Woman*. trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1995), 13.
10. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 45 and 55; see also his *New Woman*, 86.
11. Amin, *New Woman*, 79.
12. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 63.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 63-64.

15. Ibid., 5.
16. Ibid., 8.
17. Ibid., 66.
18. Amin, *New Woman*, 28.
19. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 16.
20. Amin, *New Woman*, 66
21. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 1.
22. Ibid., 12; Amin, *New Woman*, 8.
23. Amin, *New Woman*, 45.
24. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 23.
25. Amin, *New Woman*, 67.
26. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 17.
27. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 159-60.
28. Baron, *Women's Awakening*, 60.
29. Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, 15.
30. Baron, *Women's Awakening*, 21-22.
31. Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 81.
32. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 9.
33. Ibid., 6.
34. Ibid., 38, 77-78, 87.
35. Ibid., 40-41.
36. Amin, *New Woman*, 18.
37. Ibid., 26.
38. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 16.
39. Ibid., 20-24.
40. Amin, *New Woman*, 14, 71-72.
41. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 33.
42. Ibid., 16.
43. Ibid., 22.
44. Amin, *New Woman*, 29.
45. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 20-21.
46. Amin, *New Woman*, 48.
47. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 26.
48. Amin, *New Woman*, 49.
49. Ibid., 6.
50. Amin, *New Woman*, 5-14.
51. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 32.
52. Ibid., 73.
53. Ibid., 32.
54. Amin, *New Woman*, 51.
55. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 162; Baron, *Women's Awakening*, 22.
56. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2.
57. Ibid., 2-3.

58. Ibid., 3.
59. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ix.
60. Ibid., 78-79.
61. Ibid., 79.
62. The Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1908), 1:134.
63. Ibid., 1:328.
64. Judith E. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 124.
65. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 107.
66. Ibid., 108.
67. Arnett, *Qasim Amin*, 67.
68. Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2 vols. See especially vol. 1, chapter 34.
69. Ibid., 155.
70. Florence Nightingale, *Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile, 1849-1850* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1854), 13.
71. Annie von Sommer and Samuel M. Zwemer, eds. *Our Moslem Sisters: A Cry of Need for Lands of Darkness Interpreted by Those Who Heard It* (New York: Revell, 1907), 166.
72. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 167.
73. Ibid., 167-68. For a discussion on the contemporary false correlation between the diminished status of Muslim women and veiling, also see Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil, Modesty, Privacy, and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Rasha al-Disuqi, *The Resurgent Voice of Muslim Women* (Lombard: The Foundation for Islamic Knowledge, 1999), 105-6 and 125-56; Myfawny Franks, "Crossing the Borders of Whiteness? White Muslim Women Who Wear the Hijab in Britain Today," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 5 (Sep. 2000): 917-29; Jen'nan Ghazal Read and John P. Bartkowski, "To Veil or Not To Veil? A Case Study of Identity Negotiation among Muslim Women in Austin, Texas," *Gender & Society* (June 2000). Though her book is analytically weak and grossly reductionist in several parts, al-Disuqi does provide an interesting breakdown of survey answers from 19 women at the University of California who wear the *hijab*. The women are from diverse backgrounds and were asked a number of questions about their belief in Islam. Among these questions was one asking why they wear the hijab. Overwhelmingly, the majority answer because it is a "command from God." This faith-based response is often ignored or underexamined by scholars. See Maysam J. Al-Faruqi, "Women's Self-Identity in the Qur'an and Islamic Law," in Webb, *Windows of Faith*, 72-101.
74. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 165.
75. Ibid., 163-64.
76. Ibid., 162-63.

77. Said, *Orientalism*, 3.
78. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 187.
79. *Ibid.*, 187.
80. Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Toward a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 135.
81. Franz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 37.
82. Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 140.
83. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 66.
84. *Ibid.*, 25.
85. *Ibid.*, 27-28.
86. *Ibid.*, 60.
87. Pickthall, as quoted by Peterson, trans. Amin's *Liberation of Women*.
88. For more on imperialism's genderized nature, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995); Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather, Race, Gender, and Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
89. Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 4.
90. Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 105.
91. *Ibid.*, 65.
92. Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 17-19.
93. Amin, *Aphorisms*, 15.
94. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 35-36, 55.
95. El Guindi, *Veil*, 90.
96. In Islam, God (Arabic: Allah) is not anthropomorphized and is seen as a supreme, everlasting, and eternal power. God is described in terms of such characteristics as *al-Rahman* (The Beneficent) or *al-Rahim* (The Merciful). There are 99 of these traits, also known as the Names of God, which include love, justice, majesty, and wisdom. As God is not conceptualized as male or female, the pronoun He is non-descriptive.
97. Shaykh Muhammad Maulud, *Matharat al-Qulub: Alchemy of the Heart*, trans. Shaykh Hamza Yusuf. From a lecture presented at the Islamic Study School in Hayward, California, Fall 1998.
98. This translation of 7:20 is from El Guindi, *Veil*, 73.
99. Such is the case with Maramduke Pickthall and Yusuf Ali, whose English translations are most frequently cited. Pickthall's translation of 7:20 reads as "Then Satan whispered to them that he might manifest unto them that which was hidden from them of their shame ..." Yusuf Ali's translation is similar: "Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them, bringing openly before

- their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before) ...” *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*. 3d ed., trans. Marmaduke Pickthall (Karachi: Taj Company Ltd., n.d.), 20; *The Holy Qur’an*. trans. A Yusuf Ali. (n.p.: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946), 344-45.
100. Qur’an 7:20 “But Satan suggested (evil) to them in order to reveal their hidden parts of which they were not aware until them.” *Al-Qur’an: A Contemporary Translation*. trans. Ahmed Ali (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 134.
101. El Guindi, *Veil*, 73. “Then Satan tempted them, only to reveal to them [unclothe] what was hidden – *saw’atihima* (genitals)...”
102. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*, 529.
103. Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman*. Using a hermeneutical model, Wadud deconstructs Qur’anic terms to effectively argue that the biological difference between men and women does not dictate social function. First, by illustrating the duality of human creation and that both men and women are considered *khulafa’* (moral trustees of Earth), and then by highlighting that both sexes are responsible for their own actions, she convincingly illustrates that the Qur’an does not place one sex above the other. See especially pages 17-28. Wadud also draws on several examples of women in the Qur’an to illustrate that their piety – and thus their worth – is not linked to their domestic duties. For example, Queen Bilqis of Sheba was a highly regarded woman whose wisdom is praised in Qur’an: 40-2.
104. Al-Hibri, “Introduction to Muslim Women’s Rights,” in Webb, *Windows of Faith*, 53.
105. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 10.
106. *Ibid.*, 35.
107. Peterson uses Pickthall’s translations. Amin, *Liberation of Women*, 37-38.
108. *Ibid.*, 38-39.
109. *Ibid.*, 39-41.
110. *Ibid.*, 42.
111. *Ibid.*, 43.
112. I am indebted to Jasmin Zine for highlighting this argument.