

INTRODUCTION: COLONIAL TO POSTCOLONIAL MASCULINITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Mohja Kabf

A crisis in masculinity may have catalyzed the grassroots uprising of 2011 in Tunisia—which, in turn, inspired grassroots uprisings in Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. Muhammad Bouazizi had been harassed numerous times by corrupt municipal police while pursuing his livelihood as a street vendor in an impoverished southern region of Tunisia, but the last straw was when a policewoman slapped the twenty-six-year-old man. Bouazizi set himself on fire on December 17, 2010. The photograph that onlookers took of his burning body circulated via mobile phones and social media and became a rallying image as Tunisian protestors organized around human rights and an end to police brutality in the long-standing dictatorship. Bouazizi's street vending helped him to provide, however meagerly, for his mother and siblings after the death of his father, in a country with high unemployment. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a region that is better termed 'Southwest Asia and North Africa,'¹ contains many authoritarian states with high levels of government corruption, police impunity, double-digit unemployment, underemployment, and high poverty rates. At the same time, most cultures in this region² construct 'breadwinner' as an important role for males, despite much flux in that concept, and even though women have been 'breadwinning' in increasing numbers for decades now in nearly all of these countries. The combination of these factors—authoritarian states, high unemployment, and men's sense of self that is invested in breadwinning—makes for high levels of stress in many men around the issue of their masculinity. At the other end of the Arab Spring's trajectory, the counter-revolutionary Islamist group, often mockingly known among Syrians and Iraqis as 'Da'esh' (an Arabic acronym derived from the Arabic name of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/ISIL), gains recruits in part by banking on the frustrated concepts

of masculinity of alienated men who cannot find adequate livelihoods and therefore cannot marry and can scarcely help out their natal families (this in no way means that all or even most men facing such conditions end up in extremist groups). The group provides these marginalized and jobless men with income and an outlet for efficacious action, as well as with an ideology for dominating women (Packer). In a sense, then, various anxieties around masculinity may well be at the hub of several crises in North Africa.

Grassroots uprisings during 2011 in many Arabic-speaking countries, as well as the 2009 Green Movement in Iran and the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Turkey, showed that a new wave of questioning is simmering in the millennial generation in the MENA region, questioning that touches nearly everything about the *status quo ante*—masculinity included. In Iran, “rebellious young people . . . view their bodies and the articulation of their sexuality as a site of resistance against the government” (Yaghoobi, 53). Frequently absented from Orientalist-inflected global-media accounts and from masculinist local accounts of these events, women played crucial roles in the 2011 uprisings at the grassroots level, where they started. In Egypt, Asma Mahfouz’s vlog—especially her call to assemble in Tahrir Square on January 25—helped to spark the revolution (Fahmy, 373). Women laborers were a key part of the April 6 Youth Movement, which from 2008 laid the ground for Egypt’s uprising (Naber, Fall 2011, 11). In Syria, Suheir Atassi repeatedly calling men and women together in street protests during January, February, and March 2011 laid the ground for later protest organizing in Damascus (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Syrian human rights lawyer Razan Zaitouneh, with her Violations Documentation Center (VDC), became a focal point in the uprising, for both men and women—well before Zaitouneh’s iconic status for anti-regime Syrians rose even further because of her abduction from the VDC office in Douma on December 9, 2013, reportedly by Islamist militia Jaysh al-Islam (Human Rights Watch, 2016).³ Before the Syrian uprising militarized in autumn 2011, women were leading two of the first four coalitions composed of local protest committees. Bahraini activist Maryam al-Khawaja continues to be a prominent voice for the Bahraini protest movement from abroad, her father and her sister imprisoned by the regime (Nallu). At the same time, the urgent need for continued gender struggle in the revolution arena was highlighted when eighteen women in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, protesting the still-authoritarian conditions in Egypt after the 2011 Revolution succeeded in deposing president-for-life Hosni Mubarak, were arrested and subjected to virginity tests by the interim authority. The interim authority administered the ‘test,’ or gender-based torture method targeting women, in collusion with the accusation that the women were prostitutes, a charge aimed at undermining

their protest actions (Amnesty International). This form of sexualized torture was declared illegal by a Cairo administrative court later that year (Butt and Hussein). However, the violence against women protesters continued; when the square filled on July 3, 2013, as Muhammad Morsi, Mubarak's civilian successor as president, was ousted, multiple women were subjected to mass sexual assault by men in the square (Kingsley). The testimony of a female member of Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault, a grassroots activist organization formed by Egyptian women and men in 2012, describes going into the pressing crowd with her Op-Anti-SH teammate to try to rescue a woman they had spotted being mob-assaulted, then becoming separated from her teammate and alternating between being pushed to the ground and facing suffocation or raising herself up and facing sexual assault as men tried to grope under the many layers of clothing she had worn in preparation (Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault, Testimony from an Assaulted Op-Anti-SH Member). She describes the look of horror (at the assault) of one man whose face met hers as he attempts to stop the other men. Women, whose actions and voices were initially *heard* and effectual in that rupture moment at the dawn of the uprisings, were then subjected to violent, sexualized attempts to shove them aside from its center and silence them, and the overall trajectories of many of the uprisings toward militarization ultimately marginalized the very women whose work had built the uprising.⁴ These charged moments show that in MENA as elsewhere, gender role change is (again, and continually) shifting, with some men right in step with it and others vehemently pushing back. They also underline the need to bring research on men up to speed with research on women of MENA. With its primary focus on masculinities in semiotic discourses and cultural production, this volume contributes to an aspect of that research.

Syrian queer folk and their allies were also a vital part of the early nonviolent uprising in the Syrian streets. In 2010, the Assad regime had arrested groups of gay men in sweeps in Damascus ("Gays Join the Syrian Uprising"). According to Mahmoud Hassino, who is Syrian, gay, and out, "the regime started a homophobic campaign to say that the revolution is immoral because people who own the news channels, which are supporting it, are homosexuals. They went further by saying that everyone who is active in the revolution is gay" (Luongo). Homophobia, though perhaps as present there as anywhere, was not a prominent characteristic of the nonviolent phase of the Syrian uprising. By 2012, after the uprising had begun to militarize, homophobia was evident in Syrian-grown armed rebel brigades and when, in 2013, Islamist extremists from Da'esh (ISIL) joined the armed rebellion, public executions for alleged homosexuality became

their all-too-frequent practice; one website keeps a tally (Outright Action International). In October 2017, well after the initial grassroots uprising in Egypt had been commandeered by Islamists and the military in quick succession, Egyptian authorities conducted an arrest sweep against gay men in the wake of the Cairo concert by the Lebanese band Mashrou‘ Leila, which has an openly gay member, Hamed Sinno. On one hand, the fact that the band, which “had been outspoken about LGBTQI issues in their music and public statements” (Holsiln), managed to snag a Cairo gig attended by 35,000 concertgoers is a significant indicator of ongoing change in social attitudes. On the other hand, after a photo of a concertgoer waving a rainbow flag went viral, the regime of Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi proceeded to arrest dozens on charges of ‘debauchery’ in an anti-LGBTQI sweep, an appeasement of conservative social attitudes. Change, powerful pushback—but a residual increment of change, nonetheless: these developments around heteronormative, as well as queer, male gender roles place an array of issues about masculinity at the center of current debates about the future of state and society in Southwest Asia and North Africa. This volume is about masculinity, inclusive of queerness, not centered around queerness—but MENA queer and trans issues can no longer be relegated to afterthought status in any book about masculinity anywhere.

While these recent events suggest that constructions of masculinity are in flux, what this volume suggests, in all its variety, is that masculinities are always in a process of being constructed. There is no ‘before’ that was a stable gendered environment. The early twentieth century in the Middle East and North Africa saw a swirl of older Ottoman-era and Qajar-era concepts of normative masculinity along with a plethora of new ideas reconfiguring masculinity, moving from Nahda⁵ models to masculinities under the Mandate and decolonization struggles of the mid-century, then toward the coups and dictatorships of the third quarter of the century in much of the Arabic-speaking world. Dominant norms in masculinity, and resistances to them, shifted in Turkey with the rise of the Young Turks and the inception of the modern Turkish state in 1923, and in Iran from the Qajari state’s demise and the Constitutional Revolution to the Pahlavi dynasty and then to post-Islamic Revolution changes. In the Arab world, Nahda models of masculinity themselves formed under the European colonial influence at which they chafed, and were not timeless and unchanging prior to modernity. For example, Nahda-era masculinity rigidified against more flexible (but not necessarily better) earlier attitudes toward male same-sex desires and practices, which colonizing and Orientalist discourses typically highlighted as part of the inferior nature of ‘Oriental’ males. At the other end of the century, as Frédéric Lagrange has noted, “[t]he

limited treatment of same-sex relationships in modern Arabic literature in contrast to classical literature is somewhat puzzling” (Lagrange, 174). Afsaneh Najmabadi explores a parallel shift in nineteenth-century Qajari culture, when “homoeroticism and same-sex practices came to mark Iran as backward; heteronormalization of eros and sex became a condition of “achieving modernity” (Najmabadi, 3).⁶ Besides heteronormalization, other configurations linking male identity to modernizing nationalisms began emerging over a hundred years ago. *Zeynab* (1913) by Muhammad Husayn Haykal is among the first Arabic novels, and with it Arabic national narrative right away has the trope metaphorizing a fertile woman into the land of the nation, whose honor men must protect. Our contributor Amal Amireh, in earlier work, has shown that the cost of this metaphor is paid by women, because “the national story becomes the story of possession of the land/woman by a man” (Amireh, 751) and female subjectivity is not centered in such a narrative. In Iran, nation, or vatan, is not a young woman but a mother figure whom the sons must protect (Najmabadi, 125). Different in their specifics, both tropes equally imagine the modern national citizen in a protective male role, leaving the presence of female citizens an enigma to be puzzled over. Perhaps even this is reactive to the ways in which colonial discourses themselves metaphorized the colonized territory of MENA as a (veiled) woman to be possessed; perhaps the nationalist is metaphorized as a man because of anti-colonial nationalist discourse’s will to power over a position of being victimized (emasculated) by colonialism, as theorized in numerous works by Frantz Fanon. The dichotomy of ‘tradition verses modernity,’ in any case, is outdated, or at least needs more precision, because usually what is signified by ‘tradition’ is itself a product of older shifts in masculinity.⁷ This volume hopes to problematize antecedents of masculine formations in a specific geographic region.

A word about conceptualizing and naming this geographic region is in order before proceeding further. The ‘Middle East’ is geographically meaningless as well as being unhelpfully Eurocentric. Our region is not east of, say, India, China, Russia, or Indonesia. It is a naming created by European colonialism and owes its widespread hold to the global power of colonial terminology. ‘West Asia’ or ‘Southwest Asia’ is a more geographically accurate term to pair with ‘North Africa.’ It also disorients the Orientalizing gaze, asking the reader to question the cohesion and content of what these terms name. The editors of this volume would have liked this book to be part of the interrogation of colonial and postcolonial formations that inheres in the circulation of these newer terms. We attempted to transition to using ‘Southwest Asia and North Africa’ (‘SWANA’) in mid-course during manuscript preparation. However, ‘Middle East and North Africa’

is firmly wedged into existing publishing and marketing realities in ways that proved difficult for our publisher to circumvent or ignore, so the final manuscript reverted to ‘MENA.’

Masculinity in MENA at the start of the era covered by this volume was already reactive to European imperialism and changes in world economies, and even before that always-already in flux. In fiction, a model frequently evoked by Arab writers as the granddaddy patriarch of their past appears in the characters of al-Sayid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad in Naguib Mahfouz’s *Cairo Trilogy* and Miteb al-Hadhali in Abdulrahman Munif’s *Cities of Salt*. Shaikh Khaled in Ibrahim Nasrallah’s *Time of White Horses* is another example. Mahfouz’s patriarch acquires, in film adaptation, the epithet Si al-Sayid, meaning “master the Master:” doubled masterliness. A religious variation on this patriarch is the Sufi ideal of tender-hearted spiritual knighthood, a man who behaves gently with women and can be moved to tears by pondering the Divine presence but, like Algeria’s famed Emir Abd al-Qadir (1808–1883) or Sudan’s Mahdi (1844–1885), also can jump on his actual horse, weapon in hand, ably to protect home and community in a crisis. Secular or religious, the old-school patriarchs of modern Southwest Asian and North African literary depiction have Antar⁸-like virility, bravery, and generosity; are obeyed by loyal wives and children; and are expected to defend the honor of women kin, demonstrate both forcefulness and forbearance, and model anti-colonial nationalist stances. Feminist writers tended to be less sanguine, depicting darker variations that equally, however, create old-school patriarchs as the ‘before’ figures—as evident in most of Nawal Elsaadawi’s novels (*Woman at Point Zero*, *God Dies by the Nile*, *The Fall of the Imam*). In the iconic first novel of Turkish feminist Duygu Asena, *Kadının Adı Yok* (The Woman Has No Name, 1987), the protagonist Cici’s father is the epitome of violent and abusive patriarchal authoritarianism.

These patriarchs, depicted as left over from the nineteenth century in ways this volume seeks to problematize, were represented as dwindling once the twentieth century moves forward, and the ways in which they seemed to embody masculinity were replaced with a number of other models. We see the venerable Haji Mahmoud, the patriarch at the Qajari-era beginning of Shahrnush Parsipur’s novel *Touba and the Meaning of Night* (1989), worrying over how British and Russian machinations will affect his shop, and how to consummate his wedding with the intimidating young title character, Touba (Parsipur, 18). Mid-century decades in Iran saw the emergence of new classes of urban professional men, and the reconfiguration of gendered spaces in the home, state, street, and prisons, as the work of Joanna De Groot shows. In the above-mentioned Arabic novels by Mahfouz and Munif, the evaporation of the old-school patriarchs happens

with a great deal of narrative nostalgia and ambivalence. The narratives of these male authors keep a sheen on these patriarchs, for all the insistence on their outdatedness. Miteb rides off on a white horse into the desert in *Cities of Salt* to attain mythic stature in the eyes of the entire village, and in the *Cairo Trilogy* al-Sayid is constantly described as larger than life. “What am I, compared to my father?” thinks Yasin, al-Sayid Ahmad’s son at forty during the 1930s, in *Sugar Street*, third book of the *Cairo Trilogy* (Mahfouz, *Sugar Street*, 1038), even as his aging father finds himself confined by ill health to his house, then his bed. Yet Yasin also muses about his children that “he had never wished to play the cruel role with them that his own father had with him” (Mahfouz, *Sugar Street*, 1042). Si al-Sayid has become a stereotype, and stereotypes “are resilient, get reproduced and carry social power,” as Emma Sinclair-Webb points out (Sinclair-Webb, 12). The patriarchs of old still resurface, even if they are superseded by ‘new men’ of the mid-century. Communist activist Ahmad Shawkat, grandson of the patriarch in Mahfouz’s *Cairo Trilogy*, works for a magazine called outright *The New Human* in the 1940s; he marries his editor-boss, and they wish neither for children nor a conventional life. The liberal father who, to an extent, encourages his daughter’s education is one of the urban upper- and middle-class ‘new man’ models of the mid-century Arabic-speaking world, as in Assia Djébar’s *Fantasia* (1985; trans. 1993). It opens with a scene set in the 1940s: “A little Arab girl going to school for the first time, one autumn morning, walking hand in hand with her father. A tall erect figure in a fez and a European suit . . . a teacher at the French primary school” (Djébar, *Fantasia*, 3). This mid-century ‘new man’ is marked sartorially in much of the former Ottoman Empire as secular by wearing a fez without a turban, and a suit rather than a robe; Reza Shah of Iran actually instituted clothing laws, which accompanied the emergent new forms of masculinity. The affable henpecked husband as portrayed by Dorayd Lahham in his recurring ‘Ghawar al-Tosheh’ character on Syrian state television of the 1970s, often fez-topped and placed in settings from earlier decades, expresses a comical variation on this ‘new man.’ The narrative that produces Ghawar is conservatively sympathetic to ‘new man’ bewilderment at what is seen as the growing assertiveness of women, figured by Ghawar’s shrewish wife, Fattum Hisbis. In the 1957 Egyptian musical, *al-Kumsariyat al-fatimat* (The Pretty Ticket-takers), one of many Egyptian films of that era orienting audiences to the changing realities of middle-class women’s work,⁹ male bus laborers feel in danger of losing their jobs to ‘new women.’ Women in smart bus-conductor uniforms sing a rousing nationalist number calling all ‘daughters of Egypt’ to take on new jobs for the nation. They stride exultantly to work (this, in the 1950s, when the U.S. nationalist narrative was

pushing Rosie the Riveter back into conventional domesticity). By film's end, the men neutralize the threat by marrying the 'daughters of Egypt' who then readily quit their jobs—but dozens of women apply for bus jobs the next day. Change, pushback, regrouping of patriarchy in a new form in reaction to the change, and some small net change, is the tally of the film.

The straightforwardly controlling patriarch is, however, not the only aspect of masculinity seen (often reductively) as belonging to the earlier, so-called 'traditional' period before national decolonization struggles. Legal scholar Lama Abu-Odeh describes the male "virgin by default" in her typology, a vestige of "traditional, pre-nationalist" masculinity (Abu-Odeh, 943) whose "aspects include a sense of estrangement from the other sex, shyness and embarrassment in their presence"—paradoxically combined in some men with behaviors such as harassing women on the street, watching belly dancers, and visiting prostitutes. Perhaps this virgin-by-default is just the young form of a male who morphs into the authoritarian patriarch after crossing the threshold of marriage; perhaps deflowering the virgin wife to whom he feels entitled will usher in his acquisition of grand patriarch status. Meanwhile, however, the male virgin must contend with his heritage of the passionate, chivalric lover of classical Arabic literature and in his real world must "negotiate his sexuality" within "the often violent structure of honor" (Abu-Odeh, 943). Postcolonial nation-building partially limited the violence of honor killings (often upheld in MENA during the colonial period by sexist British or French laws that bear striking overlap with the system permitting honor killing)¹⁰ through the introduction of new laws against it—whose enforcement by the postcolonial states was lackluster. Nationalist projects, Abu-Odeh says, also partially dismantle the separation of gender in the social spheres (though not in the Gulf states, which were not directly colonized), causing a transition to new normative masculinities and femininities. The predatory type 'decouples' from its virginal-twin to become a masculine type on its own, as with the protagonist in Sudanese author Tayeb Salih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), an icon of postcolonial literature. In contrast to the predator, Abu-Odeh notes the emergence of "the new 'feminized' Arab man" of the postcolonial era; he "tends to be gentle, soft-spoken . . . vulnerable to the agonies, anguish, and yearnings of love" (Abu-Odeh, 945).

In this last part, he has ample precedent in classical Arabic culture. That chivalric Arab lover of lore who elevates his love-longing to near-worship is a trope that Arabic culture gifted to Europeans, who had no such romance in literature before multiple contacts with Arabic and Persian culture through Spain, Sicily, and the Crusades. Persian literature and art is rich with the figure of Biblical/Qur'anic Joseph, a paragon of

male beauty, and with the bewildered figure of the Sufi ‘Shaykh San’an’ of Faridudin Attar’s creation, who falls in love with a Christian maiden and learns that this most dangerous love outside his faith is the love he needed to experience to break through to the next level of spirituality—a trope often reworked in Iranian modernity.

Arabic love literature is abundant and variegated, from raunchy to spiritual, but it can also be a troublesome heritage. Ahdaf Souief’s massive novel *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992) has a female protagonist whose husband is too chivalrously invested in his wife’s feminine-princess persona to have bed-rocking sex with her, so she seeks it elsewhere. On the other hand, the princess-bride femininity ideal (one among several normative femininities) can inculcate a rape-culture masculinity when a man is taught that a good woman will resist sex out of modesty, and so must be taken—and that then the experience will rouse her sexual response.¹¹ The sexual double standard survived all these postcolonial projects, in any case, even if it was modified somewhat in its stridency. Syrian poet Nizar Kabbani (1923–1998) famously attacked the double standard in iconoclastic poems from the 1950s onward advocating women’s sexual freedom.¹² Islamists also attack the extra-licit parts of the sexual double standard, by having no tolerance for the whoring characterizing Mahfouz’s patriarch al-Sayid Ahmad as well as his sons, and by expecting virginity of a man before marriage as much as a woman and so ostensibly leveling the playing field. However, Islamists bring the sexual double standard in through the back door, by offering men quantitatively more licit types of sexual outlets (in the form of polygyny, which is generally opposed by the postcolonial nationalist projects) than women have. Polyandry is not on the table (except in niche Muslim subcultures such as that of the Tuareg), so the best deal for multiple sexual outlets that women can get in the Islamist blueprint is serial monogamous marriages, with maybe an extra dash of *mut’a* (temporary marriage) on the Shi’a side of things.¹³ (In the range of divorce and remarriage routes, Muslim women in the Middle East had wider options than most women in the first three-quarters of the twentieth century in countries termed ‘Western.’) Meanwhile, the modern Iranian feminist project has gone hand in hand with “modernist embarrassment over what to do with the homoeroticism of Sufi love” says Najmabadi. She asks, “How could we reenvisage a feminism that brings out homosocial and homoerotic possibilities that earlier feminists (women and men) felt compelled to cover over . . . without denigrating the integrity and gains of early Iranian feminism?” and her question is no less pertinent to Arab feminism (Najmabadi, 237–39).

Older (but still not timeless) notions about masculinity competed with newer ideas after the social changes of the mid-to-late century and the

emergence of left-wing regimes in Iraq (1958), Syria (1963), Libya (1969), and other states, heralded by the Free Officers' Movement in Egypt taking over the state in 1952 and its key officer, Gamal Abd al-Nasser, nationalizing the Suez Canal in 1956 to widespread adulation in the Arabic-speaking world. Politicized young men with Ba'athist allegiances in Turki al-Hamad's Saudi male-entitlement coming-of-age novel *Adama* (2003) (themselves virgins by default, in a still firmly gender-segregated and sexually strict Saudi society, having only furtive glances, a stolen kiss or two, prostitutes, and the sexual double standard working for them) excitedly discuss the 1969 overthrow of Libya's King Idris as news of the Libyan Free Officers coup emerges. It's "better to have Libya governed by Nasserites than for it to remain under the control of imperialists and their reactionary traitor henchmen," one of the young men enthuses (al-Hamad, 186). Out of this second wave of anti-colonial struggle, the modern secular figure of the *fida'i* (literally self-ransomer) fighting against imperialism or Israeli occupation comes to center stage in Arab masculinity, idealized as a hero volunteering to stand bravely and selflessly against impossible odds, who is quick-tempered when it comes to nationalist pride and who can also sweet-talk a young woman into sleeping with him the night before his self-sacrificing mission for the greater good. The fiction of Ghassan Kanafani (1936–1972) often features men who fall through the cracks of that idealization, and the male protagonist of Palestinian feminist Sahar Khalifah's novel about the West Bank under Israeli occupation since 1967, *Wild Thorns* (1976), tries and fails at this ideal while the working-class pragmatist who never aims for the heroic ideal seems to provide a more enduring model of resistance to the Israeli occupation. These mid-century young ideologues typically see themselves in some part as allies of women's liberation, and see their nationalist, modernist, anti-imperialist ideologies as requiring men and women to work hand-in-hand against older gender barriers that hold the nation back. In a key transition moment of MENA neopatriarchy, however, those anti-imperialist *fida'i* types morph into male identities that provide a masculinist ideological excuse for the hypermasculine militia men of Lebanese and Algerian civil wars, or the predatory paramilitary thugs called *shabiba* cultivated by the 'anti-imperialist' regime in Syria from 1982, just as those clean-chinned, handsome officers who had led anti-colonial coups became brutal dictators-for-life of enormously corrupt police states—setting the stage for the Arab Spring, where we began.

Indeed, perhaps we end where we began because many of the liberatory, anti-colonialist, even progressive discourses in MENA countries in the twentieth century have replicated patriarchy and have hegemonized a violent model of masculinity in their methods even when eschewing them

in their embraced ideologies, and even when this neopatriarchy is more nuanced than, and different in many ways from, the older classic patriarchy. If we keep on analyzing the old-form straightforward patriarchy, we waste energy on a straw man and fail to recognize the clever twists in MENA neopatriarchy. Lisa Wedeen examines the ways in which rhetoric of state in the ‘anti-imperialist’ Assad regime of Syria “not only emphasized Assad [sic] as national patriarch, but also stressed his masculinity or manliness” (Wedeen, 54). The same state apparatuses that built up the ‘manliness’ of the modern state leader—be he Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Jaafar Nimeiry of Sudan, or any number of others—on the one hand humiliates all citizens through police-state authoritarianism, creating pressure that distorts identity for everyone, and on the other hand does so in specifically gendered ways. Many of the surrealistic short stories of Syrian writer Zakariya Tamir bring out the way in which this pressure operates in specific ways to create a sense of emasculation in some men who then turn around and dominate women in their private lives, replicating on a domestic level the politics of modern but still authoritarian neopatriarchal ‘manliness’ (although not all non-elite men compensate by doing so).¹⁴ Authoritarian states perpetuate, on the national stage, the authoritarian patriarch but in tricky modern guises, even while they may be sending the opposite message in state propaganda about modernity requiring the equality of women. Whenever new dissident or liberatory movements espouse masculinist methods, they too bode for the reproduction of the master’s tools. The study of masculinities is thus profoundly involved in the relationship of gender roles to macro-politics, and to region-wide struggles to move out from under authoritarianism.

Arab, Turkish, Kurdish, Coptic, Amazigh, Iranian, Azeri, Nubian, Assyrian, Somali, and Mizrahi men, Shirazi men of the Comoros islands, men of the Druze ethnoreligious group, and other men of MENA, may share some cultural practices—such as ritualized hospitality and generosity—although the specific rituals differ even within each group according to class and other factors. They may share a higher likelihood of kissing men on the cheek in greeting, or of wearing scent (and that goes whether straight or gay, secular or religious, young or old) in richer fragrances than is common for men in, say, Western Europe—but constructions of masculinity are contingent, multilayered, and always in a state of reconfiguring, in the MENA region no less than elsewhere. One hegemonic male type does not exist; the formation of male identities depends on many different factors including but not limited to class, ethnicity, and access to social as well as economic capital—and some kinds of male identities marginalize other types of men as much as marginalizing women. Still, in our world at

large including MENA, it “is hard to ignore the fact that most of the means of organized violence and brute force—weapons and the complex knowledge associated with them—are in the hands of men . . . most positions of power in the public sphere are held by men” (Whitehead and Barrett, 16). Those men in Tahrir Square assaulting women were not aliens from another planet whose presence is not explicable by human knowledge but ordinary men; the men trying to stop the assault were also men of MENA; it is crucial that we study how male identities are produced that led each of them to that place.

The above survey of MENA masculinities, by no means comprehensive, is obviously longer and more complex than the short, simple list of stereotypes about ‘Middle Eastern’ masculinity held by many outsiders to the region and by dominant global discourses: terrorist; fanatic; misogynist. Orientalism, as Edward Said lays it out (Said), that is, as a system of knowledge in the aid of violent imperialist power may not have caused the sexual torture of Iraqi men by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib Prison in 2004, but it contributed in specific ways to the ‘cultural awareness’ training that the soldiers received and selectively deployed in conceiving how to sexually humiliate Arab prisoners, as well as buoying in innumerable ways the policies of the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Orientalism undergirds Israeli ‘pinkwashing,’ in which the state of Israel deploys propaganda depicting its supposedly progressive stand on gay rights in a manner that veils its daily racist violence against Palestinian human rights. In the regime of Orientalism, MENA masculinities seem always to be on the wrong side of civilization; when imperialist Orientalism was anti-gay, MENA men were condemned as shockingly gay and sexually permissive, but after the sexual revolutions of the twentieth century in the U.S. and Europe, MENA men were reduced to being shockingly macho and sexually repressive. This reveals how Orientalist stereotypes are as much about projections of the ‘Other’ inside the internal identities of their producers as about realities on the ground. Of course, realities on the ground were also changing; as Lagrange remarks regarding gayness in modern Arabic literature, “if censorship has become so wary of the mention of homosexuality it is because public morality has changed” (Lagrange, 190). The problem with Orientalist stereotypes is not that they are simply untrue, but that the way they frame and construct their subjects in alliance with hegemonic power clouds conscientious searching for truths. Orientalist stereotypes of MENA masculinity¹⁵ chop up their subject unrecognizably and put him back together in grotesque Frankensteinish parodies; this leg may be true and that hand partially true, but they and everything else are affixed ass-backwardly. As Nadine Naber points out, “Orientalist

approaches . . . obscure the ways in which cultural values are shaped within historical contexts and material realities such as the pressing struggle for jobs, food, health care, dignity, and an end to the interconnected problems of harassment, violence, and state repression” (Naber 2011b). What Orientalist supremacism offers is not understanding of the subject, but the will to hate and to dominate it.

“Masculinity is neither natural nor given. Like femininity, it is a social construct” (Petee 107). How then, specifically, in this instance and that, is masculinity constructed in our region—especially in literary, cinematic, and other semiotic texts? The chapters in this multidisciplinary volume speak to each other intelligently on that question across disciplines, geographies, and historical periods. Together they examine constructions of both hegemonic and marginalized masculinities in the MENA region, through literary criticism, film studies, discourse analysis, anthropological accounts, and studies of military culture. Because this volume is multidisciplinary, each contributor contextualizes and theorizes their argument in their own field of research.

Within a queer-studies framework, Jedidiah C. Anderson’s typology—in his opening chapter, “Exotic and Benighted, or Modern yet Victimized? The Modern Predicament of the Arab Queer”—theorizes three Orientalist narratives currently colonizing the space of Arab queerness. The first, a pinkwashing narrative, renders queer Arabs uniquely and exceedingly oppressed by a homophobia that can only be remedied by being more ‘Western,’ ignoring their oppression under systems of dictatorship and occupation in which Western powers are also implicated. The second Orientalist narrative is older, dating from the era of high imperialism by European powers, and Anderson shows that it is still alive and thrashing; this is the narrative which denounces Arab homosexuality as a sign of the sordidness of Arab societies generally, and sees queerness as an inherent, and perverted, part of ‘their’ nature. The third hegemonic narrative in circulation flips this, seeing Arab queerness in equally essentialist terms, but making a positive out of it, declaring its prurient attraction to a queer Arab male body that it hypersexualizes. It bears remembering here (and elsewhere in this volume) that ‘hegemonic’ does not simply mean ‘dominant,’ it also means dominant to the extent that it is willingly reproduced even by those whose interest it does not serve. One might suggest also that while the pinkwashing narrative and the third narrative appeal, though not exclusively, to those left of center in dominant global discourses, the second narrative appeals to those right of center, with its implication that the Arab world is in need of moral discipline. There is something for everyone to exploit, in the racist smorgasbord that Anderson describes. Queer Arabs

are positioned as intensely visible for all the wrong reasons, he argues, and made hypervisible at the intersection of various “matrices of Western hegemonic power.”

It bears remembering that Britain had an ‘anti-buggery law’ from 1533, and it took a struggle from 1967 to 2013 for gay sex to be fully decriminalized in all parts of the United Kingdom (Tatchell), while same-sex sexual relationships were not criminalized in Ottoman law (*kanun*) and are not criminalized in modern Turkish law (noting that non-criminalization is not the same as social acceptance, in either period). However, being homosexual is enough to relieve a man of military service in modern Turkey. It is from an authoritative U.S. psychiatric handbook, albeit an outdated one (the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*—1968 edition), that this policy seems to base its medicalized rationale in the Turkish military. From Michel Foucault’s work in *History of Sexuality*, we perceive that discourses in Western Europe and the United States transitioned in the nineteenth century (the age of high imperialism) to considering homosexuality a medical disorder, and from Joseph Massad’s analysis in *Desiring Arabs* we know that when this medicalized rhetoric shows up in MENA, it is usually a residue of the ways in which MENA countries responded to the pressure of hegemonic European imperialist discourses to heteronormalize modernity in the early twentieth century.

After this detailed critique of imperialist grand narratives around same-sex-desiring Arabs comes Amal Amireh’s chapter, offering exactly the antidote, aiming its internal critique at grand narratives of Palestinian masculinity without letting up on the anti-imperialist analysis. Amireh’s chapter, “Of Heroes and Men: The Crisis of Masculinity in the Post-Oslo Palestinian Narrative,” teaches us how to resist the longing that some critics express for the novel that will tell ‘the great Palestinian story’ in order to appreciate alternative stories. That hegemonic, masculinist Palestinian national narrative typically posits the *fidai*, the freedom fighter, as the embodiment of both manliness and Palestinian-ness. It continues to be written in Palestinian literature after the watershed letdown of the 1993 Oslo Accords, and is also contested by other, less heroic, ways of telling. Amireh’s chapter traces the masculinist national narrative through the vast historical novels of Ibrahim Nasrallah, written in Arabic. By examining the terse, diaristic Anglophone writing of Raja Shehadeh of the Occupied West Bank, she brings to light a different sort of Palestinian masculinity, which quietly asserts its right to be heard against the heroic thundering of those who, she devastatingly reminds us, brought forth the disappointing Oslo accords. Short-story writer Raji Bathish, who edits a queer-friendly online zine, is a Palestinian citizen of the state of Israel. Amireh outlines how his

writing resists the domination of one Palestinian master-narrative of the Nakba, the moment of the loss of the bulk of the Palestinian homeland to the state of Israel in 1948. Like many of the young men and women in his cohort who took to the streets in the uprisings of 2011 in many MENA countries, Bathish opens space for questioning the masculinist master-narratives of Arab nationalism that have brought us to this pass.

The protagonist in Lebanese novelist Rashid Al-Daif's *Tistifil Meryl Streep* (2001; *Who's Afraid of Meryl Streep?*, 2014) subscribes to a narrative of domineering manhood, but the novel itself does not, Nadine Sinno argues in her contribution to this volume, "I get to deflower at least one. It's my right!": the Precariousness of Hegemonic Masculinity in Rashid Al-Daif's *Who's Afraid of Meryl Streep?*" Sinno's chapter explores the repercussions of performing a hegemonic type of masculinity, the type that Amireh's chapter has just displaced for the reader of Palestinian literature. Despite the fact that Rashoud, the protagonist of the novel that Sinno analyzes, views himself as a liberal man supporting women's emancipated status, his liberalness goes out the window when he thinks his masculinity is at stake in his marriage. Lebanon's multilingual code-switching, and the global incursions of U.S. culture, factor into Rashoud's concept of male selfhood. He finds himself both awed and threatened by actors such as Meryl Streep, whom he loves dearly but blames, at least in part, for modeling transgressive behavior that Lebanese women, including his wife, have begun to emulate—thereby sabotaging their honor and the nation itself. Rashoud's obsession with his wife's alleged promiscuity and the status of her hymen prior to marrying him ultimately leads to the disintegration of his marriage as his wife tires of being demonized and humiliated for her 'questionable' past. Along with his marriage, Rashoud loses his pride and confidence as he is cast away by a woman that he does not even respect. Unable to see his wife as anything but an extension of himself, Rashoud cannot help but think that whoever penetrates (or may have penetrated) her body has essentially violated him, sexually. He shudders at his own construction of his body as effeminate and penetratable. The novel's plot and story chip away not only at Rashoud's concept of masculinity, Sinno demonstrates, but also at his heterosexuality, revealing the fragility of his masculine construction of self. As the novel progresses, not only is Rashoud disabused of his rigid beliefs with respect to gender, sexuality, and the body but he also pays the price of enacting hegemonic masculinity. His toxic masculinity backfires, as he becomes subject to anxiety, sexual humiliation, stigmatization, and abuse—all of which he had inflicted on numerous women. Al-Daif's novel, which some readers might understandably find cringe-worthy and unsettling, echoes important, and sometimes uncomfortable, conversations that

are taking place in the Arab world and elsewhere with regard to gender performance, chastity, intimacy, sexual assault, and marriage.

It is important to note here that, in the Lebanon of the novels treated in Sinno's chapter and the following one by Kifah Hanna, accelerated change in gender roles brought on by political and economic modernity has already been going on for at least three or four generations. Al-Daif's protagonist Rashoud, for example, lives in a moment when Lebanese women divorcing, or working (in the modern and middle class sense),¹⁶ is not news; where men who do not identify as 'liberal' in the way that Rashid does are not therefore necessarily 'traditional' but may be illiberal in other, modern ways. In fact, Rashid is all about processing the anxieties residual in those several cycles of already-moving-on changes in gender roles. In "Crises of Masculinity in Huda Barakat's War Literature," Kifah Hanna argues that the Lebanese Civil War exerts pressure toward specific new variants of heteronormativity on male characters in three novels by Huda Barakat: *Hajar al-dabik* (The Stone of Laughter, 1990), *Ahl al-hawa* (Disciples of Passion, 1993), and *Sayidi wa habibi* (My Master, My Lover, 2004). Barakat's first novel, *The Stone of Laughter*, "is probably the first . . . Arabic novel with a male homosexual as main character" (Lagrange, 184). The protagonist, Khalil, is alienated not from some frozen-in-time 'traditional' Arab manhood but from "two very attractive versions of masculinity," the narrator says, that are very specific to Lebanon on the cusp of its civil war, when the novel is set. The first type of men, in the novel's words, "busy themselves shaping the destiny of an area of patent importance on the world map, concerned with people's public and private lives, even with water, with bread, with dreams, with emigration," while those in the second type "have laid down plans to fasten their hold on the upper echelons . . . in politics, in leadership, in the press" (Barakat, 12). Both types are concerned with power, with controlling large forces and wide swathes of discourses, but 'traditional' is not an accurate description of them and neither is 'conservative' quite precise enough. These new Lebanese masculinities, with their powerful hegemonic pull in different ways on the protagonists of all three novels, are post-civil-war iterations of masculinity that Barakat is peeling back for us and dissecting layer by layer. Hanna argues that Barakat's writing goes far beyond parsing available gender identities, to posit that sexual identity is ultimately fluid and indeterminate, "dispersed across 'male' and 'female' alike . . . androgynous." Hanna's reading of these novels opens up for us the possibility of imagining a "post-heteronormative future Lebanese society."

Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* is 'the great Egyptian novel,' canonical and grand as its master protagonist, Al-Sayid Ahmad, even as it sows

seeds of doubt in grand masculinity. It is not al-Sayid but his slender, elegant grandson Radwan who is the focus of Robert James Farley's chapter, "Mahfouz, al-Mutanabbi, and the Canon: Poetics of Deviance from the Masculine Nationalist Discourse of *al-Sukkariya*." Farley notes that critics have argued over whether Radwan's same-sex desire comes from pre-colonial Arab models or from Western models, and from what is called 'tradition' or from what is called 'modernity.' Anderson's chapter comes to mind, as this debate as a whole fits nicely within one of his three modes describing how same-sex-desiring Arabs are viewed. What critics have not done, Farley points out, is analyze Radwan's role in the nationalist narrative that is so central to the novel and the trilogy as a whole. On one hand, Farley argues, "we witness Radwan outside of a national discourse that appears divided on many philosophical, social, and political questions, but can unite on a masculine, heteronormative platform," feeling himself an outcast for not liking women. While his cousin's straight sexual thoughts are interwoven with nationalist themes in the interior monologues that are such a regular part of the novel's narrative pattern, Radwan's sexual interior thoughts are entirely absent, present only in the negative. On the other hand, by becoming a protégé of the aristocratic Abd al-Rahim Pasha Isa, a political bigwig, Radwan becomes the most politically influential member of his family, even finagling his father's long-delayed promotion in the civil service. The novel indirectly makes it obvious that Radwan's relationship with the Pasha has what Radwan himself calls its "nonpolitical" side, the side that he is terrified people will discover. Thus, Farley argues, "Radwan is at once an insider and outsider, political but not national." Further, Farley demonstrates that Radwan's homosexuality, rather than being rooted solely in a medicalized Western concept of 'deviance,' is intertwined with his affinity for the pre-modern corpus of Arabic-Islamic culture, placing him outside the Nahda-era narrative of heteronormative nationalism and its rationalist break with the classical past—or at least, belonging to both.

How does queer Arab masculinity construct itself in the diaspora? In "Diasporic Queer Arabs in Europe and North America: Sexual Citizenship and Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion," Nicole Fares examines the social capital available to gay Arab men as they try to maintain membership in multiple social groups (Puar), in Ahmad Danny Ramadan's novel *The Clothesline Swing* (2017) and the novella *God in Pink* by Hasa Namir (2015). Rather than use the older paradigms of 'assimilation' and 'integration' with regard to immigrants in their new country, Fares reaches for 'inclusion' and 'social cohesion.' The narrative of acceptance of LGBTQI rights as part of human rights has come at the cost of casting certain countries and religions as 'traditional and backward,' Fares points out, building on Jasbir

Puar's work in *Terrorist Assemblages*. Both the narrator of *The Clothesline Swing* and his dying lover to whom the text is addressed in the second person are Muslim Syrian men who have settled in Canada as refugees. The narrator calls himself a "*bakawati*," which means "storyteller," and refers to men who plied the craft of performing orally the folkloric epics of pre-modern Arabic culture, typically to a group of men in a public café and usually after training with another *bakawati* (the craft is dying out). *The Clothesline Swing*'s narrator creates, through the narrated text, an archive of the life that he and his partner have experienced together, a sort of family photo album in words. Point of view in *God in Pink* alternates between a young man in Iraq and the local imam to whom he reaches out for help in dealing with his gender non-binary self-identification and his attraction to men. This triggers a process of self-recognition in the imam, a husband and father, who realizes that he, too, is gender non-binary, although this term is never used in the text. Fares mines these literary texts for the possibility of retaining localized discourses of homosexuality that do not adhere to 'homonormative' global discourses, with their single story and uniform goals of outness and independence from family for all LGBTQI people.

Alessandro Columbu's contribution, "Of Knives, Mustaches and Head-gears: The Fall of the *Qabaday* in Zakariya Tamir's Latest Works," argues that new configurations of masculinity appear in stories published by Tamir in three collections: *Sanadbak* (We Shall Laugh, 1998), *al-Hisrim* (Sour Grapes, 2000) and *Taksir rukab* (Breaking Knees, 2002). While Sinno's and Hanna's chapters look at literature that reveals how the Lebanese Civil War changed male identities, Columbu examines how Tamir's stories reveal the gendered dimension of the unrelenting authoritarianism in Syria throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s, signifying a subtle shift from how gender roles are portrayed in Tamir's earlier work. The failures of nationalist and liberatory ideologies in this period, combined with persistent authoritarianism, have a castrating effect on masculinity in Tamir's stories, Columbu argues. Tamir offers crushed men who have internalized the obedience and submission demanded by the modern authoritarian state, and shows that this makes them all the more vicious and unethical in relation to women, indeed twisting masculinity into another new contortion that is no less patriarchal. Columbu points out that all the characters in Tamir's brutally surreal stories become complicit "in self-enforcing strategies of domination, deconstructing a state-versus-citizens binary opposition, but attributing an equal amount of responsibility to the state's practices of coercion and the citizens' continued, albeit hypocritical acceptance." Culpability is everywhere, Tamir's *oeuvre* seems to suggest, and Columbu's analysis shows how gendered that culpability is.

Together, the cluster of chapters focused on literature demonstrates the increasingly complex literary representations of both straight and queer masculinities—and their dynamic interactions—in modern Arabic literature, produced at home and in the diaspora. From the iconic work of Naguib Mahfouz to post-Arab Spring queer novels, nuanced and complex ideas about masculinity in the Arab world are available to those who wish to explore alternatives to Orientalist narratives. These essays map intricate faultlines in MENA masculinities that are explored in Arabic novels. Many texts in which outsiders view MENA masculinity, however, continue with their stereotyped portrayals of MENA masculinities. The next chapter, by John Tofik Karam, analyzes Orientalist images of heterosexual Middle Eastern masculinity in two mid-century cultural texts produced in North and South America. Karam draws attention to the racialization of the immigrant body, even when the protagonist is male and straight—and seeks to assimilate in his adopted country.

Karam's chapter, "Romancing Middle Eastern Men in North and South America," shows the truth of Sara Ahmed's assertion that "We cannot isolate the production of racial bodies from the gendering and sexualizing of bodies" (Ahmed, 47). In the U.S., Rodger's and Hammerstein's Broadway musical *Oklahoma!* (1955) features the comical Persian peddler Ali Hakim, a minor character. In Jorge Amado's novel, *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (Brazilian; 1958); a major male character is 'seu' Nacib, a member of Brazil's 'turcos,' as those of Syrio-Lebanese ancestry were historically called—at first pejoratively. Both characters are depicted as having "shrewd," which is to say slightly shady, business practices. Both texts enact national narratives involving ethnic, gender, and class hierarchies—but in different ways. Karam argues that while "the Middle Eastern man is contained by marriage with a rural white woman in the U.S. narrative, his sexuality must be exercised with a mulatta mistress in order to belong in the Brazilian narrative." Peddler Ali in *Oklahoma!* is comically forced into a shotgun wedding. Nacib has to transform by accepting that Gabriela, the sensual mestiza lover, is not meant for the bonds of marriage, and to let go of controlling her. Note that the 'seu' prefix affixed to Nacib's name is merely a Portugese-inflected version of 'Sayid,' the same as in 'si al-Sayid,' (Mahfouz's old patriarch), meaning 'master.' Nacib's title may evoke that imagined all-powerful patriarch for readers who recognize the roots of the term, but Nacib is not that patriarch—even if the society around him thinks he may be. "Orientalism in the southern hemisphere, like its counterparts in northern climes," Karam argues, posits Arab masculinity as alpha-macho (my term, not his), in contrast to masculinity of the civilized world which harbors a secret worry that it may have civilized manhood a little too much. Yet the novel offers

a more nuanced view of Nacib, Karam shows. Further, Nacib becomes a recognizable icon across Brazilian culture living on in multiple adaptations of the novel, while Ali Hakim of *Oklahoma!* stays in a tiny cultural niche of mainstream U.S. culture.¹⁷

Our next cluster of chapters addresses masculinity in national cinematic corpuses—the first dealing with Iran’s narrative cinema before and after its Islamic Revolution, the second with Tunisian films before and after the Bourguiba dictatorship, and the third with masculinity in Palestinian cinema. Read together, these chapters show us how war, resistance, and regime change impact the constructions and performance of masculinity, thereby highlighting the historic specificity and malleability of gender and sexuality. Kaveh Bassiri’s scope in “Tough Guys, Martyrs, Dandies, and Marginalized Men: Changing Masculine Roles in Iranian Cinema” encompasses normative and transgressive models of masculinity in the Pahlavi era (1925–1978) as well as the 1979-onward era of the Islamic Republic of Iran, surveying a rich array of films. In the military monarchy of the authoritarian Pahlavi shahs, the state encouraged pro-Western models. Films of that era portraying historical or legendary Iranian heroes such as Rostam weight them with the normative values of the state, Bassiri argues, while in action-hero films that subtly transgress the hegemonic norms of that era, the virile, lower-class ‘loveable rogue,’ or *luti*, represents “the struggles and anxieties of the lower classes” alienated from Westernizing state discourse. Elite masculinity was Westernized in dress and ideology in Pahlavi Iran, and another critique of Pahlavi discourse appears in the portrayal of the Westernized urban upper-class man as an effeminate dandy, or *fokoli*, his manliness weakened by his lame attempts to be Western. The *fokoli* had not always been seen as effeminate; it is modernity in Iran which marks him thus, recalling that, in the Qajari era, nineteenth-century Iranian culture “had other ways of naming, such as *amrad* (young adolescent male) and *mukhannas* (an adult man desiring to be an object of desire for adult men), that were not equated with effeminacy” (Najmabadi, 238). With the Islamic Revolution of 1978, Islamizing discourses replaced Westernizing discourse as the agenda of a new kind of authoritarian state; soon Iran faced war with Iraq, and hegemonic masculinity in films that adhered to the state narrative came to be represented by the unassuming citizen of modest means who sacrifices for the defense of his nation, embodying the spiritual journey toward becoming a martyr, or *shahid*. Some films attempt to capitalize on the older commercial popularity of the action-hero *luti*, converting him into an Islamic version of himself and, through his conversion journey on the screen, proselytizing cinemagoers. Typically, through love of a woman the rogue learns the spiritual value of shedding a material life for the sweet

and melancholic self-sacrifice in defense of nation, along the way “earning the higher love of God.” Not all post-revolution cinema endorses the ‘idealized Muslim male subject’ promoted by the regime, Kaveh shows; many filmmakers bring to the screen other, “subordinate and dissident masculinities, from the rebellious youth to the forgotten veteran.”

Tunisia’s Personal Status Code (PSC), passed on August 13, 1956, was a strident leap into modernity-from-above in gender equality, much like the Turkish Civil Code of 1924. The PSC was imposed by Habib Bourguiba, who would serve four terms as president and then finally give up the pretense and declare himself president for life in 1975, initiating a cult of personality in which worship of Bourguiba became embedded in the concept of modern Tunisian nationalism—in much the same way that public profession of adoration of Hafez al-Assad became a mandatory practice in Syrian nationalism, as analyzed in Wedeen). With a single swipe, in a manner that Nouri Gana says many saw as charged with neocolonial paternalism, the PSC illegalized many practices of gender iniquity—but did it eradicate them, coming as it did from the top down in an authoritarian regime? Or did it create a regime of neopatriarchy, and ensure a retrenchment of conservative reaction that could find ample fodder for implicating the PSC in Bourguiba’s neocolonialism? Gana’s chapter in this volume, “Men and Modernity in Postcolonial Tunisian Cinema,” argues that Tunisian men have never quite recovered from Bourguiba’s authoritarian paternalism, from being ‘Bourguiba’s sons.’ “Not a homogenous group,” he says, “they have been able neither to come to terms with the challenges of modernity, of which gender equality is part and parcel, nor to relinquish fully the shelter of traditional patriarchy.” Examining over a dozen Tunisian films produced from 1978 to 2009, Gana argues that “Tunisian cinema is invested in unraveling the ways in which Tunisian men are stranded in the pull of neopatriarchy even while attempting, timidly or defiantly, to break from its confines. Like Bourguiba, while they can be enlightened about the workings of patriarchy they nonetheless perpetuate it.” This confusion, straddling two contradictory regimes, “the logic of gender equality and the logic of male privilege,” creates a melancholic narrative of manhood. It is a melancholia perhaps somewhat akin to the mournful spirituality ascribed by Bassiri to the marginalized male in Iranian cinema, who seems to stand in silent reproof of dominant masculinity. Gana points out that the masculine melancholia of ‘Bourghiba’s sons’ in Tunisian film could be an incubator of more equitable futures.

Palestinian land is still under colonial-settler occupation, with Palestinians fractured into several groups inside it and in the diaspora. The term ‘postcolonial’ in its chronological sense is not yet applicable to Palestinians,

as the regime of settler colonialism still exists. Palestinian film at one time, which seems very long ago (2002), denied entry into the Oscars competition by the U.S. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences because Palestinians had no nation-state, is the subject of Sarah Hudson's chapter in this volume, "Constructions of Masculinity in Palestinian Film." Without a nation-state but with a nationalist discourse that is 'postcolonial' in the sense of resistant to colonialism, ideas of Palestinian masculinity still have undergone many of the shifts in relation to national narratives that happened in other Arabic-speaking countries during the time from the Nahda to postcolonial modernity. While Gana's study analyzes the neopatriarchal nuances of the mid-century 'new men' who are 'Bourghiba's sons' in Tunisian film, Hudson's study follows the twists and turns of Palestinian filmic narratives that cast doubt on hegemonic patriarchy in a nation without a dictator-Bourghiba parallel. Drawing on Julie Peteet's work, which emphasizes the significant impact of Israel's occupation, oppression, and daily acts of violence—including beatings, raids, and imprisonment—on the construction and performance of Palestinian masculinities, Hudson analyzes three Palestinian feature films, focusing on father-son relationships. She argues that Palestinian directors Michel Khleifi, Hany Abu Assad, and Elia Suleiman manage to critique hegemonic Palestinian masculinity while maintaining the moral-ethical superiority of the Palestinian struggle for human rights and national self-determination. Extended colonial occupation by Israel, and Palestinian resistance to it, complicates Palestinian masculinities in numerous ways, deteriorating or inverting the father-son hierarchy, for example. Israeli national discourse promotes a militaristic model of Jewish-Israeli male hypermasculinity, particularly in the illegal settlements. If, as Hudson argues, "masculinity is inextricably entwined with the state of the nation and the state of the nation is kept perpetually in limbo by Israel, then nationalist masculinities cannot bear fruit" for Palestinian men. In practical terms, on the ground, Israel 'wins' the macho context, for Palestinians are contained and constrained whether they are citizens of Israel, in diaspora, or living under brutal and intense occupation in the West Bank or, especially, Gaza. Still, Hudson argues, the films offer narratives in which Palestinians can win the moral higher ground, and do so in ways that operationalize new turns in Palestinian masculinities. Thus, Hudson's chapter links up with Amireh's in this volume, to show us another set of alternatives to the grand, hegemonically masculine, Palestinian narrative.

Two chapters that follow deepen this book's historical richness at the beginning of the century-plus span that it covers. The first researches the gendered depiction of colonizers and colonized in political caricatures in

Egypt and Britain; the second examines masculinity in Ottoman Beirut and early Egyptian nationalist discourse, looking at cultural practices, dress, work, and military roles. These texts highlight the role of the visual in fashioning ‘Self’ and ‘Other,’ particularly with regards to projecting (or denying) a specific masculine image.

In his chapter, “Gendered Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century Egyptian Nationalist Discourse,” Matthew B. Parnell analyzes cartoons and caricatures that appeared in popular British and Egyptian journals in the late nineteenth century, highlighting the gendered representations that depicted the struggle for power in Egypt. The satirical images possess potent symbolism, he demonstrates, particularly as they serve as vehicles for promoting imperial and nationalist agendas. Conceptualizing cartoons as “a visual equation to the struggle,” Parnell argues that in both the imperial and nationalist cases, the emphasis on gendered difference serves to expose, mock, and undermine the ‘Other,’ including the Other’s alleged masculinity or lack thereof. As an example, following political developments between June and August 1882, British satirical journals such as *Fun* and *Punch* depicted the khedive as an ‘emasculated’ or ‘child-like’ figure in need of pacification and guardianship—by the British. By the same token, Egyptian journals, most notably Yaqub Sannu’s *Abu naddara zarqa* (The Man with the Blue Glasses), mobilized an array of images that sought to undermine the khedival regime and protest European intervention in Egypt in addition to promoting support for the Egyptian nationalist movement. Parnell demonstrates that the Egyptian press adopted tropes of masculine crisis to belittle Isma‘il and Tawfiq in ways that were similar to the images circulated in British satirical journals. These representations highlighted the impotence and ignorance of Egypt’s rulers in the face of dominant European encroachment and nationalist resistance. In contrast to the depictions mocking khedival effeminacy or childishness, Sannu produced images of nationalist leaders, including ‘Abd al-Halim Pasha and ‘Urabi, in social scenes that feature their subscription to and performance of an ‘idealized Arab masculinity,’ wherein traits such as loyalty to the nation, courage, honor, and benevolence are central. In that sense, the cartoons that appeared in Egyptian journals both converge with and diverge from those presented by the British journals. Parnell’s text reminds us of the ways in which gendered images can serve as weapons for branding the ‘Other,’ advancing imperialist and nationalist agendas, critiquing ruling elites, and mobilizing public support. Parnell’s chapter read in conjunction with Farley’s offers a colonial backdrop for the debate that Farley outlines over how to interpret the same-sex-desiring figure of Radwan in Naguib Mahfouz’s *Sugar Street*.

Usefully contesting the phrase “crisis of masculinity” for the way it implies a prior stability in masculinity, Kathryn Kalemkerian, in her chapter, “Men at Work: The Politics of Professional Pride in Ottoman Beirut,” parses the rise of a male professional class in Beirut during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, contextualized by the *Tanzimat*, the Ottoman governmental reforms of the nineteenth century. She highlights a shift from an older form of mostly hereditary bureaucratic service in which members were seen as lifelong servants of the sultan rather than modern men rising on merit. This new white-collar class, cutting across ethnic and religious lines, was marked sartorially by the fez and by physical ‘orders’ in the form of medals and sashes that were worn with a tailcoat and tailored trousers. ‘Devotion,’ ‘Effort,’ and ‘Loyalty’ are examples of specific merits rewarded by orders; the acts that entitled a man to these epithets varied over time (the nineteenth century had already seen a shift from military to civilian values rewarded by these orders), yet all serve to construct ideals of manly virtue. One Ottoman order, introduced in 1878, was given to women, for ‘Compassion,’ usually signifying charitable work, but because it was given only to women already related to the palace or to elite men, it did not mark an emerging class. Imperial orders were bestowed on Armenian, Jewish, Greek, Christian, and Muslim men, “weaving together segments of Beirut society” whose histories are so often treated as separate, Kalemkerian argues, around the specific combination of ideas of masculinity that was becoming common to this class of men. The system of bestowing orders was a global imperial one promoted in the British, French, Ottoman, and other empires, and thus it linked these men to a system of honors recognized internationally. The era of orders peaked around 1900, until their use petered out as empires themselves faded. Bureaucratic officials were ridiculed in the press as state ideology shifted to militarism, and the erstwhile ‘new men’ became the ‘old’ men of declining forms of masculinity.

Taking with us the long historical perspective offered by Kalemkerian’s essay, we can question how long the military narratives treated in the neighboring group of chapters will last. These final three chapters analyze narratives of masculinity in the military. While the volume’s first essay focuses on the ‘external’ Western gaze to which the queer body of the MENA region is constantly subjected, the chapter by Oyman Basaran focuses on the ‘internal’ gaze that gay men must reckon with, particularly when navigating masculinist institutions. In “You Are Like a Virus: Dangerous Bodies and Military Medical Authority in Turkey,” Basaran argues that while affectionate homosocial bonding is an encouraged part of Turkish military service, military authorities see homosexual bodies as ‘dangerous/feminine,’ endangering the Armed Forces’ homosocial,

but straight, masculinity. Compulsory military service for men has been part of the modern Turkish state since 1927, embedding such service firmly into the story of modern Turkish masculinity. However, the long-standing Turkish war against the Kurdish armed struggle has diminished subscription to this ideal of Turkish masculinity, and gay men who wish to avoid the draft for various reasons have grounds to do so in their homosexuality. The catch is that the draftee's gayness must be certified by a panel of psychologists as 'gay enough' (in their eyes) to seduce other men and disrupt the military order. Bosaran's analysis reveals that a masculine gay man would not be likely to be exempted, nor would a man whose practice of same-sex desire is expressed in any but narrow stereotyped ways. Draftees seeking the exemption must exhibit the kind of behavior and appearance that military medical authorities see as homosexual, in a remarkably invasive inspection process that can include days of observation in a psychiatric ward, and anal examinations. Medical, military, and national discourses thus intersect in Turkey to fix in place a stereotype of gay men as 'feminine.'

In conversation with each other, two final chapters analyze the discourse of militarized conflict between the state and non-state actors, in Iraqi Kurdistan and Jordan respectively. "Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq," by Andrea Fischer-Tahir looks at masculinity in the personal narratives of Kurdish militia members in Iraq. Armed struggle as a part of the Kurdish movement for self-determination came to the fore in 1961 in Iraq, but the term *peshmerga* (literally, those who face death) was in use from the 1940s as a Kurdish-language parallel to the Arabic-language term *fida'i*, describing those who take up arms in the national struggle of a stateless people. From 1986 to 1989, the Iraqi state systemically attacked peshmerga and their Kurdish civilian supporters through ground and air bombardment as well as mass displacement and chemical warfare against civilian populations. The Iraqi regime used a Qur'anically derived term, the "Anfal campaign," to name these atrocities, due to Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's newfound interest in religion after he lost the Kuwait War. Anthropologist Fischer-Tahir compares constructions of masculinity in two narrative accounts of the Anfal campaign: Awat Qaramani's *Narrow Ways. The Novel Biography of Awat Qaramani. The Events of 1963–1999* (2009), and an oral account by a younger, lower-ranking peshmerga who uses the pseudonym Soris, born in 1961. Fischer-Tahir carefully explains her positionality and relationship to the Kurdish movement, and accounts for how it may play a role in her interview with Soris in terms of audience, as she examines "the situatedness of memory production" in both accounts. Arguing that Qaramani and Soris emphasize resistance

and victimhood in different ways, and paying close attention to language practices, Fischer-Tahir shows how each of their historiographies of Anfal construct hegemonic masculinity by a weave of specific relationships to concepts of honor, bravery, and decisiveness, as well as by their responses to “dealing with the experiences of defeat and harmed masculinity.”

What are the implications for masculinity of Jordanian discursive responses to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant? In “*Militarist Masculinity, Militarist Femininity: A Gendered Analysis of Jordan’s War on the Islamic State*,” Ebtihal Mahadeen examines the response of the Jordanian government and media to the heavily broadcast immolation of newfound, a Jordanian Air Force pilot who was captured by ISIL after his F-16 fighter crashed in hostile territory in Syria. The twenty-two minute video of Muadh al-Kasasbeh’s gruesome murder was played repeatedly on Arab television stations as well as on social media, causing outrage in Jordan and shock all over the world. In response to the Islamic State’s performances of violent masculinity, the discourses circulating in the Jordanian media reinforced a militarist Jordanian masculinity that was “capable of rising to the occasion” in the face of the enemy. This militaristic masculinity, often embodied by the Jordanian king and Armed Forces, was endowed with the promise to exterminate the enemy and avenge al-Kasasbeh’s murder, Mahadeen argues. Women, too played a key role in advancing this militarist masculinity through performing militarist femininities—as exemplified by the female soldiers aiding the campaign (but not directly participating in it), as well as the figure of ‘the martyr’s mother,’ who was constructed as ‘the mother of all Jordanians’ and the mother of the devastated but strong Jordanian nation. Drawing on Cynthia Enloe’s work, Mahadeen argues that “[i]f on the surface the experiences of the soldier and the mother seem different, they perform similar functions within a militarist society that uphold the ideology of militarism itself.” Mahadeen further contends that such militaristic masculinities and femininities are not new; on the contrary, she demonstrates that the social acceptance of militarism in Jordan has long existed, and that this ideology has long manifested itself in public discourse and cultural productions. However, she points out, it is at times of national crisis that militarist masculinity “truly comes to the fore,” often as a strategic means of unifying the fractured nation.

What is the purpose of this volume? José Martí (1853–1895), a founding figure of Cuba, said, “A knowledge of different literatures is the best way to free one’s self from the tyranny of any of them.” A knowledge of different masculinities may not necessarily free anyone from the actual tyranny of any of them, but may well free us from imagining masculinity immutable in the Middle East and North Africa. This volume sets before the reader a

strong set of work on masculinity in specific literatures, cinemas, and other semiotic practices in the Middle East and North Africa. Such work offers conceptual apertures for thinking our way through to more ethical configurations of masculinity and femininity. Academic scholarship takes account of knowledges and exposes gaps and provisionality within them, against the logic of any tyrannical power—secular or religious—that imagines itself grounded on foundations of absolute knowledge. Cultural Studies investigates, through multiple disciplines, the workings of power in culture, to make it all the more naked. This, so that we can be clear-sighted about power's multi-valenced workings in everyday human practices—so that we equip ourselves and our societies with knowledges, however modest and piecemeal, that can begin to redress inequity. Investigating masculinities is “organically linked” to feminist projects whose aim is social justice (Sinclair-Webb, 8). By excavating masculinities, we also unearth the ongoing resistances of marginalized identities to hegemonic masculinity—in the military, in civilian society, in sartorial symbolism. Current movements for gender justice, such as the #MeToo movement against rape culture and sexual harassment, reaffirm the value of excavating the scaffolding of hegemonic masculinity and witnessing the resistances of marginalized masculinities and femininities. When we expose, in small and specific ways, the scaffolding of hegemonic masculinist discourses, we create the potential to give power back to those who are assumed to be powerless. Patriarchy is alive and thrashing in our world in new–old ways, as the hearings for U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh highlighted. Orientalism is alive and thrashing in new–old ways, and this volume aims to trouble imperialist representations of MENA masculinities. To study the multiple and contingent formations of masculinity in culture, literature, film is to wrest away claims made about the timelessness and authoritativeness of any particular mode of masculinity, whether such claims are made by outsiders or from within the region. This study, gathering critical mass with others of its ilk on other regions as well as MENA, can help to shore up the daring needed for imagining genders and human collectives arranged in ways that are more compassionate than the arrangements of today.

Notes

- 1 We problematize the term ‘Middle East’ in the text that follows.
- 2 In much of the world, as well as in MENA, ‘breadwinning’ is, to varying degrees, historically associated with masculinity.
- 3 As of late 2019, Zaitouneh is still missing.
- 4 The international ‘#MeToo’ movement against sexual harassment is another such highly charged moment, accompanied or followed by great

- pushback, which features women's voices being heard efficaciously in a context where they have not usually been given equal weight.
- 5 The Nahda: a term referring to a period of cultural renaissance beginning roughly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Egypt and other parts of the Arabic-speaking world, encompassing philological research, literary and journalistic activity, religious reform, and Arab-nationalist political awakening. When the Nahda period ended is open to interpretation and differs depending on the country; it can be said to go on until roughly World War II, or to the era of decolonization struggles.
 - 6 For a parallel discussion on this issue in the Arabic-speaking world, see Khaled Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arabic Islamic World 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
 - 7 Every educator reading this is hereby enjoined to tell their students to think harder if they are about to use the notion of 'tradition versus modernity' to frame their course papers.
 - 8 Antar ibn Shaddad was a pre-Islamic knight and poet born in the sixth century to an aristocratic Arab father and an enslaved Ethiopian mother; his adventures, described in his own poetry and in the voluminous heroic epic that later formed around his figure (*The Epic of Antarab*), have made his name a byword for manliness in Arabic culture.
 - 9 Such as *Lawyer Madiba* (1950), *Stronger than Love* (1954), *My Wife the General Manager* (1966). See Rania Mahmoud's forthcoming analysis of the gender ideologies in these films.
 - 10 In Jordan, for example, one (Article 98) of the two laws (the other is Article 340) whose reform is needed to close the loopholes for honor killing is based on the Napoleonic Code.
 - 11 The international #MeToo movement of 2006/2017 has pointed out that this male fantasy informs the modern Hollywood film genre of romantic comedy; versions of it exist in many cultures.
 - 12 Such as Kabbani's book-length poem, *Yarwmiyat imra'a la mubaliya*, 1968. His use of a female first-person voice in this and other poems is, however, a charged topic.
 - 13 In the Gulf, divorced women do not face the same social stigma that they do in the Levant and North Africa, and female serial marriage is not infrequent.
 - 14 This is a major theme in those of his stories collected in the English translation titled *Breaking Knees*, Garnet, 2008. The 2017 dissertation of Alessandro Columbu, "Modernity and Gender Representations in the Short Stories of Zakariyya Tamir: Collapse of the Totalising Discourse of Modernity and the Evolution of Gender Roles," offers a full-length study of this dynamic in Tamir's writing.

- 15 Such as can be found in Raphael Patai's *The Arab Mind*, first published in 1973 but revived by Hatherleigh Press in the post-9/11 year of 2002.
- 16 Lower-class women have always worked outside the home—in the fields and in domestic service, for example. When people offhandedly say 'women working' they are often unconsciously focused on middle- and upper-class women.
- 17 *Oklahoma!* also erases the indigenous population, male and female, although the happy musical is set in a state that was designated as 'Indian territory' and used as a target of forced displacement of native peoples by the US government.

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