

Deconstructing Discourse:  
Gender and Neoliberal Orientalism in the Egyptian Revolution

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis will show that in Egyptian media and political discourse, women's rights rhetoric serves as a façade for anti-woman nationalism, and in American media and political discourse, neoliberal support for the revolution cloaks gendered orientalism. Each is riddled with contradictions. The juxtaposition of appropriating a pro-woman label while dismissing its substance, with the dismissal of a racist concept's label yet utilization of its substance demonstrates a grave problem in both political activism and media: indifference to probing reflection and the prioritization of a means-to-an-end attitude. This indifference and these priorities only produce short-term or surface-level solutions because they employ short-term and surface-level tactics. Consequently, revolutions do not result in the desperately desired deconstruction of hegemonic political, economic and social systems, and media does not yield in-depth investigations into the systemic problems in which the issues discussed are rooted.

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## INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Egyptian Revolution remains a widely discussed situation in political, academic, and cultural environments. Gender is often a key factor in these discussions. Yet, when referenced, it is frequently couched in stereotypical tropes such as the vulnerable female and the violent male. Rarely are these representations accompanied by comprehensive examinations of their complex histories and the social, political and economic systems at hand in both culture observed and culture observing. Rather, representations of masculinity and femininity are treated as useful tools that, when wielded effectively, can help influence the narrative of a revolution's liminal state. As is the case in the Egyptian revolution, political actors mainly reference gender when doing so generates sympathetic or inflammatory narratives.

There are few inquiries into the substantive role of gender in coverage of the revolution and in the revolution itself. Notable exceptions to this include anthropologist Saba Mahmood, whose work focuses on secular and religious politics in postcolonial states; Sophia Azeb, an Egyptian-Palestinian feminist scholar of American and Ethnic Studies; and anthropologist Farha Ghannam, whose ethnography of gender in Egypt is a key text used in this introduction. Each of these three women's work probes below the surface of both the revolution and its coverage. Mainstream Western<sup>1</sup> journalistic coverage of and commentary on the Egyptian revolution, and Egyptian political discourse and media do not. In their failure to fully interrogate the role of gender in the revolution,

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper I will use the terms "the West," "Western," and "Global North" interchangeably. These terms refer generally to North America – primarily the United States and Canada – and countries in Western Europe. Most of the "Western" sources I use, however, come from The United Kingdom and the United States.

these commentaries and discourses overlook gender as a subject yet employ gendered narratives in the hegemonic, orientalist, and colonized spaces – in this case Egypt and the revolutionary space – they occupy. Gender is therefore in both the revolution’s foreground and background; it is disregarded yet simultaneously of great importance.

I argue that it is important to understand how neoliberal Western support of the Egyptian revolution and internal Egyptian political discourse relate to each other with regard to their respective utilizations of gender, for each undermines the very movements they purport to support or represent through their respective gendered representations of Egypt. There are discrepancies between gendered or oriental discourses, and gender-based or anti-racist political action. Discourse, unsupported by action, is ideologically meaningless; discursive ideas prove nothing unless they are substantiated. However, discourse alone proves powerful in the public sphere, particularly when it shapes public opinion. This thesis will evaluate the discrepancies in discourse and practice from both the West, and from within the revolution.

On the one hand, the West supports the Egyptian revolution through a deployment of gendered orientalist imagery; Popular news sources such as *The BBC*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* published multiple articles and editorials ripe with incredulous praise of the revolution in its first months.<sup>2</sup> These approval pieces carried with them the assumption that a democratic or non-authoritarian government is a Western product and should therefore be innately un-Arab or un-Egyptian. This notion

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<sup>2</sup> “BBC Democracy Live, 2011: Cameron Urges Transition to Democracy in Egypt ‘Now,’” *BBC News*, February 2, 2011.

“Mr. Mubarak Is Put on Notice,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2011.

“The U.S. Needs to Break with Mubarak Now,” *Washington Post*, January 29, 2011.

indicates that the revolution is impressive not because it fostered national unity, but because it demonstrates the desire of an Arab nation to transcend its inherent limitations. Finally, these pieces also present a highly generalized Arab or Muslim consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Additional pieces commented on the supposed looming threat of Islam, with one *Wall Street Journal* editorial branding the Muslim Brotherhood “anti-American.”<sup>4</sup> As the revolution grew more violent and chaotic, media discourse suggested that the revolution was “bad for women,”<sup>5</sup> dichotomizing women’s rights in Egypt with American feminism. Mainstream American media’s coverage of the revolution continues to use the United States – from government policies to social movements – as its point of reference. And despite its professed support for the revolution, the United States continues to engage in trade deals that perpetuate violence against civilian protestors.

On the other hand, Egyptian political discourse deploys a rhetoric of women’s rights to define Egyptian nationalism on anti-feminist terms. Political figures express that they value female participation but do not back up their words with action. Both liberal and conservative parties consistently fail to implement comprehensive policy changes regarding gender. These failures manifest in different ways. Political bodies such as the Egyptian military, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Salafi party, have overtly impeded efforts to improve women’s lives. Other bodies like the Egyptian Social Democratic Party and the Free Egyptians Party demonstrate their commitment to women’s rights by signing several lists of demands written by Egypt’s leading feminist organizations, yet refuse to engage in multi-party political talks that would allow them the influence and

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<sup>3</sup> Ashley Crowson, “Orientalist Representations of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution in Elite US Newspaper Editorials: A Critical Discourse Analysis” (PhD diss., Kings College London, 2013), 35.

<sup>4</sup> “Egypt and the Realists,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Isobel Coleman. “Is the Arab Spring Bad for Women?” *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 20, 2011.

platform needed to advance these demands. Gender may be widely mentioned, but policy is rarely built around it.

Gender – particularly the treatment and symbolism of the female body – is a weapon of choice for many participants in the revolution. Civilian protestors, military personnel, and high-ranking political figures hurl accusations about sexual violence and gender inequality within the revolution at one another. Many of these accusations are used to discredit the revolution or to denigrate political opposition.<sup>6</sup> While these accusations claim to support women’s rights or respect the female body, they do not result in substantial political action on behalf of these rights. There are multiple interests – some of which are contradictory – embedded in the political claims about women’s rights in Egypt. Egyptian political figures utilize only the label of women’s rights for their own political gain but do not substantively advance the feminist values about which they purport to care.<sup>7</sup> In many cases, they actively impede them.

Foreign media coverage of and political commentary on the revolution from the United States and Europe have been similarly inconsistent. News publications, bloggers, and television news correspondents or anchors employ gendered and racial tropes in their reports on the revolution. Not only do critical reports and commentary on the revolution use these tropes, but sympathetic and supportive ones do as well. In this case, orientalist attitudes color the positions held by progressive politicians and news agencies that purport to support and respect the Egyptian revolution. Moreover, orientalist tropes –

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<sup>6</sup> I am referring to political accusations and accusations made largely by people (mainly men) who are not victims of sexual assault. This is entirely different from the accusations made by women’s organizations or people who have been assaulted.

<sup>7</sup> This allusion to women’s rights for other political motivations is not restricted to Egypt. The United States continues to justify interference in international affairs by claiming that women are oppressed in a target country. This was particularly the case in Afghanistan.

particularly when used in positive commentary – help justify neoliberal policies like economic-based international intervention. This form of orientalism, which I term in this paper “neoliberal orientalism,” is often expressed without recognition or awareness by those doing so. This lack of awareness is orientalism’s most dangerous quality: in its normativity, orientalism remains invisible to its perpetuators. I will unpack what I mean by “neoliberal orientalism” in the following section, *Explanation of Terms*.

This thesis will show that in Egyptian media and political discourse, women’s rights rhetoric serves as a façade for anti-woman nationalism, and in American media and political discourse, neoliberal support for the revolution cloaks gendered orientalism. Each is riddled with contradictions. The juxtaposition of appropriating a pro-woman label while dismissing its substance, with the dismissal of a racist concept’s label yet utilization of its substance demonstrates a grave problem in both political activism and media: indifference to probing reflection and the prioritization of a means-to-an-end attitude. This indifference and these priorities only produce short-term or surface-level solutions because they employ short-term and surface-level tactics. Consequently, revolutions do not result in the desperately desired deconstruction of hegemonic political, economic and social systems, and media does not yield in-depth investigations into the systemic problems in which the issues discussed are rooted.

The following examples demonstrate this larger systemic problem: patriarchy is so deeply imbedded within the cultures discussed that it remains obscured. The discourses examined are products of systems, of their environments, products of what is said and what is practiced. I use the following individuals and parties to scrutinize systems of discourse, to analyze what is said versus what is done. These individuals are



used as examples to reveal the indiscernible, to illustrate that not only do racism and sexism permeate even the most unexpected places, people, and movements, but also that they are socially, politically, and economically sanctioned.

It is difficult to detect neoliberal orientalism and the effects of claims for women's rights in politically, economically, and socially stable settings. I contend that in transitional moments or unstable settings, the media tend to express racist and sexist representations and attitudes with greater frequency. Subsequently, they are more transparent. Egypt is in the midst of a revolution, and as I will demonstrate in the following pages, this revolutionary space is a liminal one that prompts the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. The United States and Western Europe, while not socially stagnant, are not experiencing the same degree of social unrest and political upheaval as Egypt. Therefore gendered and orientalist representations and attitudes are not as overtly emphasized; they remain undetectable in their casual normativity.

### *Explanation of Terms*

#### *1. Orientalism*

Orientalism is the process of Western identification of self in opposition to a distorted exoticized Other: 'the Oriental.' While the process of identity-through-othering is not restricted to the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, these are the relational spaces addressed in most discussions of orientalism.<sup>8</sup> Orientalism is different from anti-Black racism, different from anti-indigenous racism, for example. There are specificities involved in each of these forms of racism. One of orientalism's specificities

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<sup>8</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), xv - xxx.

is the feminization of the oriental (male) subject who, although ‘semi-savage,’ is exotic, delicate, and primitive. This feminization both belittles the subject and effectively equates femaleness with degradation, creating a schism between “oriental male” activism and women’s rights.

Orientalist tropes are not restricted to Egypt, or to this specific revolution. On the contrary, they have existed for centuries. In his central text, *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains:

The difference between representations of the Orient before the last third of the eighteenth century and those after it (that is, those belonging to what I call modern Orientalism) is that range of representation expanded enormously in the later period.<sup>9</sup>

With ever-expanding transnational contact and increased forms of media and news publication, the opportunities for representation, and the pervasiveness of popular representations have grown. The same images of “Muslim men oppressing Muslim women” that Lila Abu-Lughod discusses in her essay “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others” are reproduced in a multitude of forms.<sup>10</sup> These representations are not confined to literature, periodicals, and newspapers – they permeate both Western self-conceptions and policy. The West defines “the Orient” in opposition to itself, or rather, defines itself in opposition to an “Oriental Other.” “[T]he Orient,” Said writes, “has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.” The West must actively reinforce orientalist images in order to sustain its self-identity. Yet the Orient is not merely imaginative. “The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and

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<sup>9</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104, no.3 (2002): 783-90. 784.

culture,” writes Said.<sup>11</sup> When reproduced effectively over time, representations of “the Orient” begin to tangibly manifest, in popular culture images, “credible” academic works, and in even in their influence on U.S. foreign policy. In *Orientalism*, Said states,

Representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks... The Orient as a representation in Europe is formed – or deformed – out of a more and more specific sensitivity towards a geographical region called “the East.”<sup>12</sup>

Orientalism it seems is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## 2. Neoliberalism

According to American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky, the word “neoliberalism” literally implies “a system of principles that is both new and based on classical liberal ideas.”<sup>13</sup> For Chomsky, one such classic liberal idea is the “exporting of American values.”<sup>14</sup> The word was first used to critique globalization-type policies that kept Global South countries financially dependent on international conglomerates like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The IMF and World Bank imposed structural adjustment policies on economically dependent countries. These policies, promoted as poverty reducing programs, actually perpetuate the systemic problems responsible for poverty in the first place. At its core, neoliberalism goes hand-in-hand with capitalism; its focus is the generation of profit. This motivation is precisely

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<sup>11</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 273.

<sup>13</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories, 1999), 29.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 112.

why an understanding of neoliberalism is necessary for an understanding of the Western discourse around the Egyptian revolution: international warfare generates profit.<sup>15</sup>

One of the neoliberal state's defining qualities is that it confronts political and international conflicts while failing – or perhaps avoiding – to address the systemic problems at the root of these conflicts. In her essay, “Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique,” transnational feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes both the neoliberal movement's economic motivations and its sociopolitical consequences:

Neoliberalism in the early twenty-first century is marked by market-based governance practices on the one hand (the privatization, commodification, and proliferation of difference) and authoritarian, national-security-driven penal state practices on the other. Thus, while neoliberal states facilitate mobility and cosmopolitanism (travel across borders) for some economically privileged communities, it is at the expense of the criminalization and incarceration (the holding in place) of impoverished communities.<sup>16</sup>

The discourse critical for neoliberal states' success yields a culture of neoliberalism. Neoliberal culture is characterized by its focus on individualism as it obscures collective responsibility. Neoliberalism eliminates the “social significance of racism, classism, or (hetero)sexism as institutionalized systems of power and inequality from the public domain,”<sup>17</sup> and substitutes “individual prejudice and psychological dispositions or expressions of ‘hate’ instead.”<sup>18</sup> The neoliberal lens becomes particularly dangerous when paired with the politics of representation because, as Mohanty writes,

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Bernstein, and Janet Jakobsen, eds. “What Is Neoliberalism?” *SF Online*, Gender, Justice, and Neoliberal Transformations 11 no.1-11 no.2 (2012): n. pag. *The Barnard Center for Research on Women*. Web.

<sup>16</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique,” *Signs* 38 no.4 (2013): 967-91. 970.

<sup>17</sup> Mohanty, “Transnational,” 971.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

“[t]his representational, discursive politics of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation [when] disconnected from its materialist moorings, can...be consumed more easily in institutional spaces.”<sup>19</sup>

Two of these institutional spaces are within the contemporary Western feminist and antiracist movements. The neoliberal state appropriates movements in order to advance market-based and authoritarian practices, as these movements themselves adopt neoliberal attitudes, particularly when commenting on affairs in the Global South. As Mohanty writes, “the appropriation of feminism in the expansion of the neoliberal project is also visible in the depoliticized notion of difference mobilized by neoliberal state regimes.”<sup>20</sup>

[N]eoliberal states use gender-and-development discourse to underwrite a retrenchment from radical feminist politics – delegitimizing and domesticating such politics. The state is thus made “postfeminist” before feminists achieve gender justice! ...This shift in vocabulary from feminism to postfeminism and from race (and racism) to postrace (and postracism) in popular culture was meant to signify a movement beyond “old” forms of domination and inequality like racism, sexism, and (hetero)patriarchy.<sup>21</sup>

In signifying that these “old forms of inequality” are relics of the past, the state effectively removes these issues from the larger conversation. Not only does the appropriation of feminist vocabulary undermine, as Mohanty asserts, feminist movements, but it also effectively obstructs the state’s nationalist movement. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, this is precisely what has occurred in Egypt.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 972.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 972 - 973.

### *3. Neoliberal Orientalism*

Edward Said's discussion of orientalism was largely rooted in understanding the connections between orientalism and colonialism. He examined predominantly colonial texts. *Orientalism* was published in 1979, at the beginning of the neoliberal age.

Contemporary Egypt is reflective of both colonialism and neoliberalism. While Said examined orientalism within a colonial context, I examine it within a neoliberal context. These two contexts are, however, deeply linked. Gender and sexuality play a particular role in neoliberalism, just as they played a particular role in colonialism. Their place in the Egyptian revolution is connected to their place in neoliberalism.

As previously stated, orientalism is the process of Western identification of self in opposition to a distorted exoticized 'Oriental.' Neoliberal orientalism is the discourse of opposition to an oriental subject that provides justification for Western states to build and enforce neoliberal policies like structural adjustment programs. While colonial governments blatantly controlled their colonies' economic and political systems, neoliberal governments maintain a more subtle control over these systems in the form of interest-generating loans, for example. Global South countries' social welfare and commerce policies can therefore be dictated by the neoliberal states on which they are financially dependent. Neoliberal states' influence is subtle; instead of enforcing these policies themselves, they do so through transnational institutions like the IMF and World Bank. In a less policy-driven sense, neoliberal orientalism is a contemporary orientalist outlook in which Western subjectivities adopt the persona of benevolent philanthropist and mentor as opposed to benevolent colonizer.

Neoliberal orientalism is not accidental. It is the product of socioeconomic and political influences. For example, humanistic ideals and movements mask social, political, and economic goals with orientalist representations that mobilize public response: oppressed women, starving children, violent men. These representations function as tools with which to influence public opinion for the numerous states and companies based in the Global North with significant economic or political stakes in the affairs of the Global South.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. *Liminality*

The word “liminality” originates from the Latin word *limen*, which means “threshold.” Twentieth century ethnographer Arnold van Gennep first introduced this concept in his exploration of ritual’s three phases: the “preliminal (separation or isolation), liminal (in between or transitional), and postliminal (reintegration).”<sup>23</sup> For van Gennep, the liminal state placed an individual on the threshold between separation and reintegration. Cultural anthropologist Victor Turner popularized and expanded on this idea of the liminal state in his 1967 book *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. According to Turner:

[L]iminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural

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<sup>22</sup> For example, a list of the Top 10 American Corporations Profiting from Egypt’s Military names the ten largest US Department of Defense (DOD) contracts from 2009-2011 that included military aid to Egypt. This information was acquired from the DOD’s public online archive, which provides lists of its daily contracts since 1994. As both the Top 10 list and the DOD archives reveal, foreign wars in which the US is not directly involved can be quite profitable for the country.

“Here Are the Top 10 American Corporations Profiting from Egypt’s Military,” *Khamakarpress.com*. N.p., August 17, 2013. Web.

“Contract Archive,” *Defense.gov: Contracts Archive*, United States Department of Defense, n.d. Web.

<sup>23</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960 (1925)).

From: Farha Ghannam, “Mobility, Liminality, and Embodiment in Urban Egypt,” *American Ethnologist* 38, no.4 (2011): 790-800. 792.

assertion, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.<sup>24</sup>

In his article, “The Liminal Effects of Social Movements: Red Guards and the Transformation of Identity,” sociologist Goubin Yang explains Turner’s work, writing that when “ritual subjects” are removed from the “familiar space, the routine temporal order, or the structures of moral obligations and social ties, they enter a liminal time/space...[and] the transgression of norms and conventions becomes possible.”<sup>25</sup> Simply put, the liminal state disrupts, dismantles, and upends social and bureaucratic norms. I argue that this description of the liminal state applies to that of a revolution. Liminality comes about in moments of transition – which revolutions are – and the “liminal persona,” according to Turner, is “at once no longer classified and not yet classified.”<sup>26</sup> Liminality is a crucial component of this paper precisely due to this uncertainty surrounding classification. As I will demonstrate, Egypt’s liminal state of revolution repeatedly witnesses this declassification, reclassification, and non-classification of gender.

### 5. *Gendered Tropes*

Tropes are literary devices of representation. But unlike clichés, tropes tend to control representation by attributing historically or culturally subjective meaning to the concepts and identity-based groups to which they refer. Colonial tropes and orientalist tropes link racial inferiority with the colonial subject. Gendered tropes result from similar

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<sup>24</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 97.

<sup>25</sup> Guobin Yang, “The Liminal Effects of Social Movements: Red Guards and the Transformation of Identity,” *Sociological Forum* 15, no.3 (2000): 379-406. 383.

<sup>26</sup> Turner, *The Forest*, 96.



linking based on traditional male and female roles. They are symbolically laden representations of masculinities and femininities. The “damsel in distress” is a gendered trope, as is the “emasculated man.” Gendered tropes are numerous and continue to be socially reproduced in a variety of venues, from children’s toys and video game characters to political discourse.<sup>27</sup> Tropes of femininity within an unstable revolutionary space tend to fall in two categories. The first, a more positive representation of female participation in a revolution, frames women revolutionaries as “mothers” of the cause and nation, or even married to the revolution. The second and more negative representation depicts female revolutionaries as deceitful figures defying their “natural” female roles. Political actors and foreign media implement these tropes to advance their particular narrative of the revolution. They are, as Chapter 2 will explain, valuable weapons.

### *Chapter Overview*

Chapter 1 will largely provide background information on the Egyptian revolution and urban Egyptian gender constructs. In the first section of this chapter, I will give background on the revolution and the political and cultural shifts that have accompanied it. In the second section, I will provide an overview of gender relations and roles in modern Egypt before and during the revolution. This will include a discussion of socially valued qualities and their strong association with Egyptian ideals of masculinity. In the third section, I will explore the ways in which the revolution’s liminal state has had an effect on socially encouraged gender roles. This section will discuss the reinforcement of gender roles in times of instability and transition.

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<sup>27</sup> See the website [tvtropes.org](http://tvtropes.org) for a long list of different gendered tropes in contemporary media. *Tvtropes.org*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/HomePage>>.

Chapter 2 will focus on pro-woman rhetoric and the utilization of masculinity and femininity as political tools and justification for acts of violence in the Egyptian revolution. This will primarily involve an examination of political accusations and their deployment of women's rights language. In the first section of this chapter, I will focus on the use of sexual violence in the revolution. In the second section I will discuss the post-Mubarak shift in social climate with regards to gender. The third section will continue my discussion of the revolutionary state's utilization of gender. While my discussion in Chapter 1 centers on privately encouraged gender roles, this section will center on the tropes of femininity reinforced by state bodies. The third section of the chapter will explain the benefits of reinforcing gender roles and the systemic problems involved in this beneficial relationship. In the fourth section, I will discuss Egyptian feminist organizations' work within the revolution.

Chapter 3 will focus on neoliberal orientalism and the Western media coverage of the Egyptian revolution. This coverage has consistently employed gendered tropes in descriptions of the revolution and Egyptian society as a whole. These representations intersect with the equally ubiquitous orientalist representations of revolutionaries. In the first section I will examine the ways in which mainstream Western media utilizes narratives of femininity in its coverage of the Egyptian revolution. The second section, engages the representations of masculinity most prominent in this coverage and these narratives. In the final section, I will demonstrate the ways in which the West benefits from representations of orientalized masculinities and femininities.

The paper will close with an examination of the tactical players mentioned and reiterate how these players' misrepresentations of the respective causes they claim to

support in fact exacerbate the challenges faced by these very causes. Before deconstructing these representations, however, one must understand the forces responsible for their dissemination.

## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

### *The Revolution*

January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011: the first day of the Egyptian Revolution. Masses gathered on Tahrir Square to protest President Hosni Mubarak's regime. Seventeen days after the first protestor stepped up to the square, Mubarak stepped down from his near three-decade presidency, leaving the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) temporarily in charge of the Egyptian government. The Egyptian Military led by the SCAF was popular with the protesters in the early days of the revolution. When Mubarak demanded that they join his personal State Security Forces in taking up arms against the protesters, the military refused, choosing instead to stand with their fellow citizens. In her book, *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt*, Farha Ghannam writes of the national solidarity flourishing in Cairo during the revolution's first eighteen days:

During the eighteen days that led to the demise of Mubarak's rule, Midan al-Tahrir was transformed into an epicenter of moral geography that connected Egyptians in various locations into the same political and ethical project. Despite initial clashes with the police, the demonstrators continued to grow in numbers. The police withdrew on January 28, when they were replaced by members of the army who declared that they would not shoot at the protesters.<sup>28</sup>

The removal of Mubarak's regime signified the removal of restrictive law, such as the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood, an oppositional political party; the 1998 Law 6 on thuggery and the 1967 emergency law, which essentially legalized police harassment of young Egyptian men; and intensive surveillance.<sup>29</sup> However, as the parliamentary and presidential elections approached, the military engaged in increasingly hostile

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<sup>28</sup> Farha Ghannam, *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 126.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 122.

confrontations with protestors. On June 24<sup>th</sup> 2012, Mohammed Morsi became the first democratically elected president of Egypt. Many rejoiced upon hearing this news while others remained apprehensive given Morsi's status as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>30</sup> Concern grew when, several months later, Morsi granted himself executive power, securing immunity from judicial review and protecting the disbanding of the predominantly Muslim Brotherhood upper house of parliament. Days of protests followed, leading to months of clashes between pro- and anti-Morsi Egyptians. Demonstrations against Morsi intensified, and on July 3, 2013, the Egyptian military removed Morsi from power and arrested leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood. Once in power, the SCAF reinstated some of Mubarak's most unpopular laws, such as Law 6, reverting to the same Mubarak-era policies that contributed to the criminalization of Egyptian youth. As was the case under Mubarak, the SCAF government deployed fear-mongering tactics centered on the threat of deviant masculinities<sup>31</sup> – *baltagiyya* – in order to “generate a sense of chaos that [has] justified the need for heavy policing over various spaces and groups.”<sup>32</sup> All of these developments led to further violence between pro-and anti-Morsi protesters, as well as extreme attacks by the military on public demonstrations and sit-ins. It remains unclear how or when the violence will stop.

Amidst the violence, the sitting governments – first Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood-staffed administration and then the current military regime – continue their attempts to draft a new Egyptian constitution. Ghannam writes that as time went on “the unity of the protestors was fragmented...many of the men and women who were the driving force

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<sup>30</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed under Mubarak's reign due to its powerful base and therefore credible threat to his power.

<sup>31</sup> I will discuss this construction of masculinity further in the following section: *Gender Roles in Egypt*.

<sup>32</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 123.

behind the revolution [were] increasingly excluded from the political system.”<sup>33</sup> This was particularly the case for female revolutionaries who were “largely excluded from the drafting of Egypt’s new constitution.”<sup>34</sup> A gradual exclusion of women in the revolution preceded this exclusion of women in the political sphere. Although Tahrir Square was a space of unity during the first eighteen days of the revolution – one in which “millions of men and women (young and old, Muslim and Copt, rich and poor, religious and secular) came together and saw each other as fellow citizens with similar concerns, aspirations, and goals”<sup>35</sup> – this soon began to change. Women grew increasingly unwelcome among the protests. Prior to this shift, “[w]omen had a designated space to sleep in the middle [of the square] to be fully protected.”<sup>36</sup> Female protestors could once attend demonstrations in Tahrir Square safe from harassment or assault, but many demonstrations shifted from sites of empowerment to danger zones for women. As the revolution’s climate changed, so did the nation’s gender climate; the two are unavoidably related.

### *Gender Roles in Egypt*

To truly understand the revolution’s changes and the roles gender continues to play, one must first comprehend what it meant to “do gender” in colonized Egypt, and what “doing gender” means in contemporary urban Egyptian environments; in short, the social roles and values attributed to ideal masculinities and femininities. Egyptian masculinities under British rule were conceptualized – by British colonizers – in two

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 172.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 171.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 172.

general ways, one associated with rural and the other with urban life. The rural oriental masculine subject was “rough” and behaved in, as colonial administrator Lord Edward Cecil once said, “the rather jolly ways of the peasant.”<sup>37</sup> The urban or “*effendi*” oriental masculine subject – associated with the bureaucratic elite – had an “oily, snake-like manner.”<sup>38</sup> The British colonizers viewed rural Egyptian masculinity as “native” or “natural” Egyptian masculinity, whereas they represented *effendi* masculinity as a failed – and perhaps deceitful – imitation of their own ‘civilized’ ways. Negative depictions of *effendi* masculinity and the *effendi* class intentionally tarnished well-educated Egyptians’ images, and diminished the threat they posed to British rule.<sup>39</sup> Although British colonizers ascribed these masculinities, the constructions are unavoidably part of colonialism’s legacy and therefore influence contemporary understandings and performances of masculinity. Anti-colonial masculinities developed, in many ways, in opposition to these colonial and oriental paragons. Indeed, *effendi* remains an insult in contemporary Egyptian language.<sup>40</sup>

Ghannam writes in *Live and Die Like a Man* that local contemporary constructions of gender in Cairo revolve around the notion, “*ir-raagil raagil, wis-sitt sitt*,” or “a man is a man and a woman is a woman.”<sup>41</sup> Ghannam elaborates on one construction of masculinity:

The notions of *raagil bi saheeh* or *raagil bi gad* (a real or true man) and *gada* ‘refer to a man who excels in materializing social norms that define a

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<sup>37</sup> Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 48.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 48-49.

<sup>40</sup> Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot “Mud-Slinging Egyptian Style” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 30, (1993): 189 - 192. 190.

<sup>41</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 53.

See also: Sawsan Messiri, *Ibn Al-balad: A Concept of Egyptian Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

proper man, including intelligence, valor, toughness, and decency. The adjective *gada‘na* refers to a mix of gallantry and “nobility, audacity, responsibility, generosity, vigor, and manliness.” A *gada‘* is a person “who...generally acts within the moral universe of Egyptian popular classes...[and] does not accept injustice or tyranny and usually stands for the weak against the strong.”<sup>42</sup>

Ghannam’s description, developed from her ten-year ethnographic study of the al-Zawiya neighborhood in Cairo, sheds light on a version of ideal urban Egyptian masculinity and the values and qualities essential to the acquisition of this identity. Egyptian cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity do not place these two genders in a binary. Rather, they are presented as distinct from, but not inaccessible to, one another. Ghannam clarifies this, writing, “not all men are *gid‘aan* (plural of *gada‘*) and that not all *gid‘aan* are men.”<sup>43</sup> Ideal masculine qualities such as nobility, intelligence, morality, and honor are not innately and exclusively ascribed to men.<sup>44</sup> Were that the case, ideal masculinity would be far more of an inherent male property in urban Egypt than it is. Rather, as Ghannam explains:

[B]ecause the qualities that define a proper man could be detached from the male body and reattached to other bodies, materializing social norms over and over becomes an important part of the making of proper men.<sup>45</sup>

Ghannam later adds: “Action, not gender, determines who deserves this label and who does not.”<sup>46</sup> As Ghannam demonstrates, the simple possession of a male body and one’s identity as a male-bodied person do not necessarily entitle one to the respect granted those with the qualities of *gada‘*. Individuals must constantly work to achieve and

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<sup>42</sup> Ghannam *Live and Die*, 53-54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>44</sup> See: Beth Baron, “Constructing Egyptian Honor,” in *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Berkeley: U of California, 2005), 40-56.

<sup>45</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 55.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 122.



maintain this status.<sup>47</sup> As will be discussed in the following section, the revolution's liminal state exacerbated *gada*'s unguaranteed – and thereby unstable – nature.

Although *gada* ' is seen as entirely positive and chiefly masculine, its converse qualities – *mirakhrakh* (being weak or soft), *khawal* (submissiveness), *khafeef* (overly talkative, foolish) – while seen as wholly negative, are not viewed as feminine.<sup>48</sup> They are adverse to ideals of masculinity, but this in no way makes them feminine. Rather, in their opposition to *gada* ' , they are largely undesirable qualities regardless of the gender of the person to whom they are attached. As Ghannam explains:

What is at stake is not the risk of feminization but of emasculation, of not being viewed as a real man. A proper man is not created by or through a simple binary opposition between male and female but through elaborate differentiation between modes of doing and being a man.<sup>49</sup>

One may *be* a man, but this holds little social value unless one *does* what it means to be a man. The opposition of genders is not the frame of reference for masculinity and femininity in this case; primarily masculine ideals are what matter when “doing” both urban Egyptian masculinities and femininities.

One of the ways for a man to “do masculinity” is through socially sanctioned acts of violence. A socially acceptable motivation for violence might be the preservation of a woman's honor. “Using violence to protect female relatives, especially when they are threatened sexually, is socially expected, accepted, and legitimized.”<sup>50</sup> Although the male act of “doing masculinity” is in this case reliant on the notion of a vulnerable woman, the true oppositional identity to the ideal *gid'aan* is not helpless femininity but

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<sup>47</sup> Jacob, *Working out Egypt*, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.109.

*baltagiyya*—the label for criminals and thugs.<sup>51</sup> “[T]he complex meanings that people attach to the use of physical force and its relationship to masculinity” demonstrate social importance of this opposition.<sup>52</sup> While an understanding of femininity is unimportant in this opposition – the potentially victimized female body that is to be protected is simply the site of confrontation between *gid’aan* and *baltagiyya* – its relationship to masculinity is partially a byproduct of the *gid’aan* and *baltagiyya* opposition. In addition to “social conventions, cultural meanings, legal codes, and religious discourses, force is occasionally used to support inequalities among men and women.”<sup>53</sup>

Ghannam does not explore in depth constructions of femininity in urban Egypt in her ethnography. She implies that femininity is, in many ways, irrelevant to this construction of masculinity. Although femininity does not necessarily inform masculinity, this masculine construct is central to the ideal of Egyptian femininity. A woman who embodies crucial *gada’* qualities may be deemed *gad’a* – the feminine version of *gada’* – or even *sitt bi meet raagil*, a woman who “equals a hundred men.”<sup>54</sup> Other words have similar associations. Paul Amar, professor of International and Global Studies at UC Santa Barbara, borrows Judith Halberstam’s term “female masculinities”<sup>55</sup> in his article, “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution,” to describe Egyptian female factory workers “who are

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>55</sup> Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998).

described positively as *mu'alima* and *jada'a*<sup>56</sup> (courageous, macho, masterful).<sup>57</sup> Amar writes that these women “were at the forefront of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution.”<sup>58</sup>

In colonized Egypt, another word normatively associated with – but not restricted to – masculinity was *wakil*, which, although used as “proxy” or “trustee,” literally means “one who is entrusted.”<sup>59</sup> Wilson Chacko Jacob, a scholar of History, Middle Eastern, and Islamic Studies, expands on this in his book, *Working out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870-1940*. Jacob writes:

The defense, sustenance, and advocacy of the weak and the voiceless *presumed* in the definition of *wakil* also *presumed* a conception of masculinity. Adulthood and masculinity are normatively located in the male person *at the moment* he begins to demonstrate an ability to protect and provide for others.<sup>60</sup>

Jacob’s use of the word “presumed” suggests that these associations were not fixed, but assumed. Additionally, he writes that *wakil* qualities must be demonstrated; they do not exist in a male person simply by virtue of his maleness. As Jacob’s work suggests, the possibility of a woman demonstrating these qualities and achieving “adulthood” and *gad'a* has existed for over a century in Egypt.

However, at least contemporarily, a woman can only acquire these labels if she also presents a physically female identity through her social behavior dress, marriage, and role as a mother. A woman who presents socially masculine tendencies – male gestures and clothing, for example – is alternately labeled *mistargila*. Ghannam, writes:

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<sup>56</sup> *Jada'a* is the same word as *gada'a*; it is simply transliterated differently.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Amar, “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution,” *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7, no.3 (2011): 36-70. 41.

<sup>58</sup> Amar, “Middle East Masculinity,” 41.

<sup>59</sup> Jacob, *Working out Egypt*, 53.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 56. Emphasis mine.

While the first [*gad'a*] is a type of complement [*sic*] and celebrates a woman who excels in materializing some key norms linked to masculinity, *mistargila* is a critique of a female who is trying to publicly embody men's ways of being.<sup>61</sup>

The ideal Egyptian woman strives to be *gad'a* – an achievement that gains its power from its primary association with masculinity – yet maintains a decidedly non-masculine external appearance. Lucie Ryvoza discusses this two-pronged Egyptian femininity in her article “‘I am a Whore but I will be a Good Mother’: On the Production and Consumption of the Female Body in Modern Egypt.” As Ryvoza writes, “in modern Egyptian culture, women were produced and consumed as two different things at the same time.”<sup>62</sup>

Masculinity heavily influences ideas of Egyptian womanhood. Ghannam emphasizes that while masculinity is not contingent on femininity, “women are active in the making of men,” as mothers have a crucial part in the raising of sons.<sup>63</sup> But despite this central female role, a vast inequality exists between the social values attributed to mothering and fathering:

[T]he fathers are credited for the positive conduct of their sons while mothers are usually blamed when sons fail to conform to social norms that define proper masculine conduct. Such misrecognition ensures the reproduction of inequalities that configure relationships not only between men and women but also between young and older men. It allows men to continue to be strongly associated with positive meanings and socially cherished values while women endure the burden of being associated with socially unacceptable and stigmatized meanings.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> Lucie Ryzova, “‘I am a Whore but I will be a Good Mother’: On the Production and Consumption of the Female Body in Modern Egypt,” *The Arab Studies Journal* 12/13, no.2/1 (Fall 2004/Spring 2005): 80-122. 82.

<sup>63</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 117.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 117-118.

In short, this “misrecognition” perpetuates highly gendered practices of social reproduction. This same misrecognition extends beyond familial practices of social reproduction. It also perpetuates socially sanctioned and gendered public responses to sexual harassment and violence against women in urban Egypt.

### *Gender Roles in the Liminal State*

The previous section provided an overview of Egyptian constructions of gender. The following section explores how and why revolutions impact gender constructions. Revolutions and wars occupy a liminal space that upends traditional roles; expressions of gender shift to best serve the revolution. For example, female revolutionaries’ participation in the public act of revolution blurs the separation between public and private spheres and male and female roles.<sup>65</sup> One of the common responses to this transitional and unstable state is to reinforce traditional gender roles as a way of both mobilizing support for a cause and maintaining some semblance of conventional social

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<sup>65</sup> The shifting of gender in a revolutionary space predates this revolution. A great deal of scholarly work has been done on the transgression of gender norms in revolutionary spaces, particularly in Algeria, Iran, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba. See: Cherifa Bouatta, “Feminine Militancy: Moujahidates During and After the Algerian World,” *Gender and National Identity*, ed. Valentine Moghadam, (Helsinki: United Nations University, 1994), 18 - 39. M. Charrad, *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. (Berkeley: University of California, 2001). Doria Cherifati-Merabtine, “Algeria at a Crossroads: National Liberation, Islamization and Women,” *Gender and National Identity*, ed. Valentine Moghadam, (Helsinki: United Nations University, 1994), 40-62. Mary Elaine Hegland, “Political Roles of Iranian Village Women,” *MERIP Middle East Report*, no.138, Women and Politics in the Middle East (Jan. - Feb., 1986): 14-19+46. Neil MacMaster, *Burning the Veil: The Algerian War and the 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women, 1954-62* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009). T. D. Mason, “Women's Participation in Central American Revolutions: A Theoretical Perspective,” *Comparative Political Studies* 25, no.1 (1992): 63-89. Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, “Mobilizing Women: Revolution in the Revolution,” *Latin American Perspectives* 4, no.4 (Autumn, 1977): 82-102. Julie D. Shayne, *The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2004).

structure.<sup>66</sup> Farha Ghannam, in a precursor essay to her book, writes that these transitional spaces are “fields of potentialities not only for the reinforcement of class and gender distinctions but also for their redefinition.”<sup>67</sup>

Revolutions are envisioned as primarily male spaces. Therefore revolutionary transitions and redefinitions occur on socially designated sites of masculinity. In her book *The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba*, Women’s Studies scholar Julie D. Shayne repeatedly references the “male vanguard” that dominate revolutionary spaces.<sup>68</sup> Due to the normatively assumed association between masculinity and violence, and between violence and revolution, revolutions are demarcated as masculine endeavors.<sup>69</sup> Despite revolutionary spaces’ purported monolithic “maleness,” they are in actuality ripe with the redefinition of social roles. A revolutionary space removes individuals from “familiar space, the routine temporal order, or the structures of moral obligations and social ties,” they once occupied.<sup>70</sup> With the arrival of revolution, these individuals “enter a liminal time/space...[and] the transgression of norms and conventions becomes possible.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore revolutionaries can transgress gender norms and conventions. This is particularly the case with regards to female revolutionaries, whose mere presence subverts the conception of revolutionary spaces as exclusively male.

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<sup>66</sup> Ghannam, “Mobility,” 791-792.

See: Turner, *The Forest*.

<sup>67</sup> Ghannam, “Mobility,” 792.

<sup>68</sup> Shayne, *Revolution*.

<sup>69</sup> Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 217.

<sup>70</sup> Yang, “Liminal Effects.” 383.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Female participation in revolution initially threatens the idea of mutually dependent male and female spheres, partially because, as Shayne writes, “Revolutionary movements do not in and of themselves pose challenges to patriarchal structures, especially at the micro level of the family.”<sup>72</sup> The revolutionary space copes with the intrusion of women revolutionaries by reframing female participation as an expression of conventional femininity. Shayne explains:

In...revolutionary structure, women played roles shaped by the assumptions surrounding what it means to be a woman. That is, a truly feminine being is expected to be apolitical, which was anything but accurate.”<sup>73</sup>

This repackaging, Shayne argues, is intentional and far from benign. Rather, gender is “exploited and transformed” through the participation of female revolutionaries.<sup>74</sup> Often this exploitation comes in the form of framing women’s relationships to the revolutionary cause in gendered ways, employing the positive tropes of revolutionary femininity mentioned in this paper’s *Gendered Tropes* section. Common examples of this are touting the “marriage” of female revolutionaries to the cause, or labeling them “mothers” of the revolution.<sup>75</sup> With these normative representations, women retain their “womanliness” despite participating in violent or political (read: male) activities. Although the representations shift to include less normatively feminine activity in revolution’s liminal space, they simultaneously reinforce the ideal womanhood from which they stem. “The value of women’s participation in

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<sup>72</sup> Shayne, *Revolution*, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 135. See also:

Eileen MacDonal, *Shoot the Women First* (New York: Random House, 1991).

Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

Ahdaf Soueif, *Cairo: Memoir of a City Transformed* (New York: Pantheon, 2014).

revolutionary movements was simultaneously enhanced and limited by traditional notions of femininity.”<sup>76</sup> While these traditional constructions of femininity aid the acceptance of female participation, they also bolster a more polarized conception of femininity. The socially appropriate female revolutionary and the deviant female revolutionary can be understood within Ryvoza’s dual framing of Egyptian femininity. For Ryvoza, there are “two apparently contradictory modes of [female] representation.”<sup>77</sup> The first, “the sensual female-as-body” is used to represent deviant women revolutionaries, while the second, “the woman as a social being, a potential mother of nation-builders” represents a maternal relationship with the revolution.<sup>78</sup> Both dimensions of this dual femininity are in play in the revolution’s gendered discourse.

This conception of femininity remains beyond the confines of the revolutionary space. The expanded roles for women – however rooted in traditional womanhood they may be – do not. As Shayne explains, “[T]he roles that women held were specific to the context of war and not transferable to the civilian society which followed the insurrection.” Gender is a useful restabilizing tool in a post-revolutionary state. As Shayne’s statement that revolutionary movements do not challenge the patriarchy emphasizes, constructions of ideal womanhood and masculine hegemonic structure do not, at their core, change in the course of a revolutionary movement. They are largely static and thereby useful tools for the reformation of a once-unstable society; they are the social constants because they are reinforced in the midst of the revolution. The post-

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<sup>76</sup> Shayne, *Revolution*, 160.

<sup>77</sup> Ryvoza, “I am a Whore,” 82.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



revolutionary state can, for example, emphasize normative representations of gender such as violent masculinities and healing, peaceful femininities.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 39.

## CHAPTER 2: THE USE OF GENDER IN THE REVOLUTION

In this chapter, I will discuss how key political figures and movements – primarily the SCAF and Muslim Brotherhood – have used the problem of sexual violence and gender inequality in the revolution to make accusations that serve their political goals. Public perception is critical in contemporary international conflicts due to the amount of coverage these conflicts receive. The media influences public perception with what and how it reports. Media can give a movement traction, render it invisible, or denounce it as an adversary. Media is therefore as powerful a weapon in contemporary warfare as stones, guns, and tanks. This power is not lost on the revolution’s political figures. As Arabic literary scholar Miriam Cooke explains in *Gendering War Talk*, “Postmodern wars are fought by the media but also, in a very important way, *for* the media... in the postmodern battlefield, all strive for representation”<sup>80</sup>

While political factions claim to be committed to gender equality in the revolution, they consistently impede its goals: For example, despite speaking out against sexual violence against women on several occasions, the Free Egyptians Party fails to support female leadership within its ranks. Not only did the party initially form a “Committee of Wise Men,” which, as the name suggests, excluded women,<sup>81</sup> but Ahmed Said, a member of the Free Egyptians Party’s presidential council publically stated his unwillingness to entertain the idea of female parliamentary candidates: “We are entering fierce elections and we need to win as many seats as we can, and this means there are not

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<sup>80</sup> Miriam Cooke, “~~Wo~~-Man: Retelling the War Myth.” *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993): 177-204. 181.

<sup>81</sup> Sherine Hafez, “No Longer a Bargain: Women, Masculinity, and the Egyptian Uprising,” *American Ethnologist* 39, no.1 (2012): 37-42. 40.

many women...in our lists.”<sup>82</sup> A glaring discrepancy exists between the party’s actions and its stated fundamental values, the latter of which includes “the integral role of women in society and the need to empower them in all domains, *especially in public office*.”<sup>83</sup> Although the Free Egyptians Party has also spoken out against sexual violence against women – and has made sure to implicate the Muslim Brotherhood while doing so<sup>84</sup> – it prioritizes winning parliamentary seats over ensuring equal political participation for women. Political actors like Ahmed Said may be genuinely invested in the cause of women’s rights but obstruct its advancement because they fail to address the government’s structural gender inequalities. Responses to the sexual violence increasingly highlighted in (or by) the revolution indicate the carelessness with which the government and media address gender issues.

The examples from Egyptian media I present are drawn from a limited pool of sources. They have either been translated from Arabic – leaving open the possibility of mistranslation; a dangerous prospect when analyzing language – or were originally published in English – suggesting that they were written for a foreign or Western-educated audience. I will note when a source has been translated; if no reference to translation is made, one can assume that the text was originally written in English. It is also important to note that this is not a comprehensive review of gender in Egyptian politics and media. Instead, the following examples indicate a pattern of unsubstantiated

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<sup>82</sup> Said Shehata, "Profile: Egypt's Free Egyptians Party," *BBC News: Middle East*, November 25, 2011. Web.

<sup>83</sup> Lina, El-Wardani, "Ahram Online's Idiot's Guide to Egypt's Emergent Political Landscape," *Ahram Online*, Al-Ahram Establishment, April 20, 2011. Web. Emphasis mine.

<sup>84</sup> "Free Egyptians Party Calls for Sexual Harassment Law," *A Safe World for Women*, The Safeworld International Foundation, n.d. Web.

"Free Egyptians Party," *Jadaliyya*, Arab Studies Institute, November 18, 2011. Web.

concern for women's rights within Egypt's sociopolitical climate. This pattern itself is what is under observation.

### *Sexual Violence in the Revolution*

Sexual violence – primarily perpetrated by men against women – has long been a problem in Egypt, as it is in the rest of the world. The revolutionary context made more public and generated greater attention to gender-based violence in Egypt. The revolution's first public instance of sexual violence against women occurred on March 9, 2011, when the Egyptian military stormed a peaceful sit-in in Tahrir Square that was held in protest of the military's use of violence against civilians, mere weeks after its establishment of an interim government. Armed with machetes and knives, members of the SCAF cleared the square and arrested over one hundred protestors, eighteen of whom were women. SCAF officers beat and gave electric shocks to all eighteen women, and strip-searched all but one, forcing them “to submit to ‘virginity tests,’” a practice in which someone penetrates a woman's vagina, claiming to try to determine whether or not her hymen has broken.<sup>85</sup>

Other forms of sexual violence have taken place within the revolution's protests themselves. These cases of sexual violence are widely reported in both national and foreign media, both because disclosing them does not require confrontation with the military, but also because Western women have experienced them.<sup>86</sup> The sexual violence that occurs in the midst of the revolution's public protests are essentially tactical and strategically executed public gang rapes. A publication entitled “Sexual Assault and Rape

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<sup>85</sup> “Egypt: Admission of Forced 'Virginity Tests' Must Lead to Justice,” *Amnesty.org*. May 31, 2011. Web.

<sup>86</sup> I will discuss this latter point more extensively in Chapter 3.

in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity: A Compendium of Sources 2011-2013,” produced by the El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Nazra for Feminist Studies, and the New Woman Foundation, details the methodical way in which these attacks occur:

[A] group surrounds the victims, the number increases and she is almost suffocated inside the circle, tens of hands pull her in every direction, tens of hands mess with any part of the body under siege, tens of hands strip off the victims (what they fail to remove manually, the use white weapons to remove), those surrounding her have said, according to most testimonies “do not be afraid; I’m protecting you”. Meanwhile, his hands are ravaging her body. Another says, “you are like my sister; do not be afraid”, for sexual phrases commonly used by perpetrators to kidnap a victim and rape her in an isolated area are usually not used.<sup>87</sup>

This revolution is not the first case Egypt has witnessed of mass sexual violence within a political protest. On May 25, 2005 – now known as “Black Wednesday” – women were similarly assaulted in the midst of an anti-Mubarak protest. Perpetrated by both plainclothes policemen and hired *baltagiyya*, these attacks were specifically aimed at disrupting the protests and intimidating female participants. This same tactic continues to be used within the revolution. A report from Nazra for Feminist Studies entitled “One Year of Impunity: Violations Against Women Human Rights Defenders in Egypt from August to December 2011,” states:

[A]t heart, [these] violations...are concerned with the female body as the site of the ultimate contesting power. Such violations not only aim to “break” the woman involved, to push her perpetually into the private sphere, but to signal, to an entire population, to beware the viciousness that can unfold, a message that will hopefully push everyone out of the public sphere for good.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity: A Compendium of Sources 2011-2013,” El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture; Nazra for Feminist Studies; New Woman Foundation, February 2013. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Masa Amir, “One Year of Impunity: Violations Against Women Human Rights Defenders in Egypt from August to December 2011,” *Nazra for Feminist Studies*, Creative Commons Attribution, August 2012. 4.

The use of sexual violence against women as a deterrent or destabilizing force is not novel; as the Nazra publication declares, women's bodies frequently serve as the sites on which conflicts are waged.<sup>89</sup> "Black Wednesday" was not an isolated incident in the Mubarak era. The following year, Egyptian bloggers alerted the public to group sexual assaults in downtown Cairo's holiday festivities at the end of Ramadan. As Egyptian feminist writer and activist Mariam Kirolos wrote of these assaults in a piece for *Jadaliyya*, an online journal focusing on the Arab world, "This crime continues to occur in public spaces, especially during public holidays, and lately during political protests."<sup>90</sup> Yet while the assaults themselves are not new, the political ambiguity surrounding them is. Under the Mubarak regime, there was little doubt as to who was responsible for civilian harassment and attacks: the police force and their hired thugs. But within the revolutionary space, with its upending of stable society, these same attacks are swathed in anonymity. This anonymity – the very real possibility that one's fellow citizens and revolutionaries might in an instant become one's rapist – only enhances the social climate that El-Nadeem and Nazra describe as resembling "a daily psychological war on women."<sup>91</sup> The following section explores the manifestation of sexual violence and its connection to tropes of femininity in Egypt's revolutionary and liminal context.

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<sup>89</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of the body as a site of power, see French philosopher Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

<sup>90</sup> Mariam Kirolos, "Sexual Violence in Egypt: Myths and Realities," *Jadaliyya*, Arab Studies Institute, July 16, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> "Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square." 52.

### *A Shift in Social Climate and the Use of Female Tropes*

Nazra and El-Nadeem's collections of testimonies from sexual assault survivors and witnesses illustrate perpetrators' use of female tropes to inflict psychological wounds on their victims.<sup>92</sup> These wounds engage with the female tropes made more restrictive in attempts to restabilize Egypt's revolutionary state. In this section I will first explore how female tropes manifest specifically in Egypt's liminal space. Then I will discuss how these tropes are used within the revolution.

Female participation in a revolutionary space might appear to threaten ideals of womanhood, but as Ghannam explained in *Live and Die Like a Man*, this is not necessarily the case in Egypt. A *gada* "does not accept injustice or tyranny and usually stands for the weak against the strong."<sup>93</sup> The same should be true for a *gad'a*. The demonstrations of unity in the revolution's early days imply that this was the case; women and men protested side-by-side and were initially praised by members of their communities for the same displays of *gid'aan*. Female activists embody *gada* in different ways, some of which are religiously compelled and influenced.

As the revolution progressed, the ideal woman revolutionary was redefined and her femaleness more pronounced. In March 2011's Cairo University protests demanding the replacement of the university president and deans – many of the top university administrators had political ties to the Mubarak regime – an overnight sit-in raised questions of modesty. The variety of tactics used in this particular protest demonstrates the widespread participation of women from different faiths and political groups. While many secular female protestors challenged the "social belief that it is inappropriate for a

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<sup>92</sup> It is probable that all testimonies in the Nazra and El-Nadeem publications have been translated from the original Arabic in which the interviews were likely conducted.

<sup>93</sup> Ghannam, *Live and Die*, 54.

decent woman to spend the night outside her home, and to make matters worse, in a space in which males would also be spending the night,” more religious women did not feel comfortable doing so.<sup>94</sup> All encountered some resistance from male protestors who felt that a female presence overnight could complicate or even impede the protests’ mission. Male protestors opposed to the integrated overnight sit-in provided rational heavily laden with tropes of femininity. Some initially used the impropriety angle, others contended that women’s presence would be “draining.”<sup>95</sup> If security forces stormed the sit-in, the male protestors would be responsible for protecting their female counterparts.<sup>96</sup> Secular women challenged the latter argument, asserting their self-sufficiency and equal stake in the cause. Religious women challenged the former argument and compensated for their untraditional choice to remain at the sit-in by emphasizing their traditional femaleness and respectability in other ways. A group of female university students gathered in one area of the sit-in to read the Quran together. As Nazra’s “One Year of Impunity” report states:

[T]he female students affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood decided to challenge the stereotype of the woman who sleeps outside her home by associating it with engaging in a religious activity, making it harder to argue that the women participating in the sit-in are “indecent.”<sup>97</sup>

The very fact that female students faced resistance from male supporters with a variety of political affiliations to their spending the night at the sit-in demonstrates a shift in social climate. After all, female protestors with a variety of religious and political affiliations

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<sup>94</sup> Amir, "One Year." 13.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



slept in tents in Tahrir Square during the revolution's first eighteen days.<sup>98</sup> The square had designated female areas, which were often surrounded by the occupants' male relatives. Appropriate and ideal femininity was not irrelevant – the protective presence of male relatives demonstrates this – but in this eighteen-day period, emphasized gender roles simply did not take precedence. The nation was wholly united against Mubarak.

After Mubarak's regime fell the revolution become more chaotic. This chaos prompted the reinforcement of gender roles as socially restabilizing tools. Male revolutionaries faced the threat of the liminal state's social upheaval both as a physical threat of violence, and as an emotional threat – the destabilization of certain male roles. Urban Egyptian constructions of masculinity are deeply tied to the ability to protect. A male revolutionary might be physically unable to protect the women around him. Female revolutionaries such as the secular women at the sit-in might reject his protection. Either of these instances could threaten one's sense of self, one's sense of maleness. Nazra's "One Year of Impunity" report contends that a common reaction to this threat might be anger: "Faced with women who do not conform to the typical stereotypes of 'decency' and 'complacency,' the urge to subjugate such women is magnified."<sup>99</sup> Female participation in the revolution, initially unchallenged in mainstream society, perhaps developed an association with threats to masculinity. The same actions that once won them approval and even the label of *gada* were reframed to match this threat. One of the

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<sup>98</sup> "Interview with Amal Abdel Hadi, New Woman Foundation, Egypt: 'Previous Claims That Women's Voices Should Not Be Heard, All of This Has Been Smashed during the Revolution'" *FIDH.org* International Federation for Human Rights, March 2, 2011 Web.

The Muslim Brotherhood was, however, late to the proverbial party, stopping short of calling for Mubarak's resignation until the movement had already gained traction. It is generally believed that the "old guard" Brotherhood members were initially more hesitant to fully join the revolution, but were ultimately overruled or persuaded by the vast numbers of younger members. See:

Charles M. Sennott, "Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Part 1," *GlobalPost*. February 21, 2011. Web.

<sup>99</sup> Amir, "One Year." 22.

most effective ways to accomplish this was through the sexualization of female revolutionaries or Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD), the term Nazra uses.

Women are...stigmatized, and sexualized, as “deviant” whenever they organize as women, not only by state actors, but by private citizens as well. This is as violations committed by security forces do not take place in a vacuum, but are rather cosseted by a culture that condones the violence committed, embedded with patriarchal norms about the “appropriate” roles for women. Sexuality thus becomes a tool and a weapon used by a range of actors to control women’s bodily integrity, and to hamper women’s political participation, mobility, and freedoms of association and expression.<sup>100</sup>

Many of the testimonies Nazra and El-Nadeem collected document what Nazra terms “sexuality baiting,” the “strategic manipulation of prejudices about ‘appropriate’ female roles, ascribing a negative connotation of sexuality to WHRDs.”<sup>101</sup> As “Dalia”<sup>102</sup> told Nazra: “A higher-ranking officer instructed the soldiers to leave us, telling them ‘we do not kill women,’ to which a soldier responded ‘but they are whores and Christians.’”<sup>103</sup> Similar testimonies include devaluing words like “daughter of a bitch,” “daughter of a whore,” and “slut.”<sup>104</sup>

Nazra’s accounts illustrate the members of the liminal space’s use of social justifications for committing acts of sexual violence. The most common justification seems to be a denial of the violation altogether. Nazra argues that attackers’ frequent claim of “protecting” the very women they are violating is a strategic tactic to dissuade any bystanders who truly wish to help. Not only is this strategy useful for the prevention of bystander intervention, but it also allows the attackers to adopt a reframed mantle of

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>102</sup> This is the name Nazra used for this woman. It is an alias.

<sup>103</sup> Amir "One Year." 9.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 20.

protective masculinity. These attacks are aimed at dissuading women from publicly participating in the revolution. The “strategic manipulation of prejudices about ‘appropriate’ female roles” justifies this goal. Publicly reascribed as “deviant” women who threaten Egyptian society, female revolutionaries become socially sanctioned targets of attack. The strategic “sexuality baiting” that Nazra describes is so effective that some attackers internalize its mentality and convince themselves that they are acting as protectors. An anonymous woman’s description of her attack suggests this possibility:

I felt a despair that led me to call into the man in front of me, that I was hiding behind to cover my nakedness, and whose hands were stroking my behind. I implored him, told him that I was a mother – which is true – that he was a brave and valiant man that I chose to protect me. I begged him to make way so that I can escape to the field hospital. I do not really know what drove this harasser to save me after I begged him... and I do not know how he suddenly raised his belt, beating everyone around him, frantically screaming, ‘I will protect her... I will protect her’. I do not know how his conscience was awakened, but I found myself crawling to the field hospital.<sup>105</sup>

This woman appealed to one of her attackers’ sense of masculinity and the social value ascribed to *gada’na*. She gave him the opportunity to be *gada’*, and he took it.

Gendered distinctions were not the only social differences given more attention in the revolution; the elimination of a common enemy solidified political and religious differences as well. While this section discussed conversational reinforcements of female tropes, the next section will examine political bodies’ and figures’ reinforcements and utilization of these tropes. It will also discuss the increased tension between political groups, namely the SCAF, and the Muslim Brotherhood’s political organization: the

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<sup>105</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square.” 25.

Freedom and Justice Party. State-sponsored reinforcement of feminine tropes appears most consistently in the discourse surrounding sexual violence in the revolution.<sup>106</sup>

*Political Use of Female Tropes and Responses to Sexual Violence in the Revolution*

When the revolution began, the political and activist parties involved expressed support and encouragement for the revolution's female participants. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, praised female participation in the revolution on its website, *IkhwanWeb*, commending "the sisters" as "the backbone of the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>107</sup>

This same April 4, 2011 press release also declared:

With the ousting of the dictator Mubarak and the toppling of his tyrannical regime tribute must be given to the daughters, mothers, sisters and wives of members of the Muslim Brotherhood who undoubtedly engaged in unconditionally supporting their other halves.<sup>108</sup>

The latter statement depicts women revolutionaries as support systems and emphasizes their positions within a nuclear family. However, only two months earlier, the website mentioned female revolutionaries without the framework of traditional femininity. On February 12, 2011, The Brotherhood released this statement:

The MB reminds the masses that the great revolution could not have come about without the inevitable sacrifices, referring to the young men and women who paid with their lives so that others may live in freedom.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> The Egyptian political sphere also discusses gender with regards to the committees responsible for writing the new constitution. However, I have chosen sexual violence as the lens through which to analyze the reinforcement of gendered tropes. Therefore, while the exclusion of women in the constitution writing process is relevant and important, it will not be discussed in this paper.

<sup>107</sup> "MB Female Activists Demonstrate What Won't Kill You Will Make You Stronger," *IkhwanWeb: The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English Web Site*, April 4, 2011. Web.

<sup>108</sup> "MB Female Activists Demonstrate."

<sup>109</sup> "MB Commends the People on Their Resilience and Success in Toppling Mubarak's Regime," *IkhwanWeb: The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English Web Site*, February 12, 2011. Web.

This post, along with another on February 4, which listed “women’s organizations” in a list of groups equally “united in their demand for a fundamental change in government,”<sup>110</sup> notes female participation without qualifying it with tropes of femininity. However, as the revolution began to fracture, the Muslim Brotherhood invoked feminine tropes to restabilize its social base.

The Muslim Brotherhood organization and its political branch, the Freedom and Justice Party, employed positive tropes of femininity: representing women revolutionaries favorably, despite reducing them to secondary participants. The SCAF, on the other hand, invoked largely negative tropes of femininity. This negative spin was particularly visible when the SCAF addressed the revolution’s sexual violence epidemic. In April 2012, then commander-in-chief of the SCAF, and current presidential candidate, Abdul Fattah al-Sisi responded to the public outrage over the military’s use of “virginity tests.” General Sisi defended the use of the “tests,” which he argued were done “to protect the girls from rape, and the soldiers and officers from accusations of rape.”<sup>111</sup> Sisi not only dismisses the possibility that “virginity tests” are in fact rape, but also suggests that a woman can only be raped if she is a virgin. Additionally, his statement implies that female protestors might falsely accuse soldiers of rape, thereby employing negative tropes of femininity to represent women revolutionaries as untrustworthy and deviant.

Sisi is not alone in his beliefs that female protestors bear sole responsibility for their attacks. Members of three different political groups – the SCAF, the Salafi Party,

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<sup>110</sup> “Egypt: The Time Has Come,” *IkhwanWeb: The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English Web Site*, February 4, 2011. Web.

<sup>111</sup> “Profile: Egypt's Ex-armed Forces Chief Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi,” *BBC News: Middle East*, March 26, 2014. Web.

and the Muslim Brotherhood's political party – expressed similar beliefs about women's culpability in their assaults. In March 2013, police general and Salafi Party Board Member Adel Abed Maqoud Afifi told *The New York Times* that “sometimes...a girl contributes 100 percent to her own raping when she puts herself in those conditions.”<sup>112</sup> Several weeks later, another member of the Salafi Party, Salah Abdel Salam, reiterated this opinion in *Daily News Egypt*: “The woman bears the offence [*sic*] when she chooses to protest in places filled with thugs.”<sup>113</sup> Freedom and Justice Party member Reda Al-Hefnawy agreed, saying “Women should not mingle with men during protests.”<sup>114</sup>

These initial discussions of the revolution's sexual violence placed blame on the women assaulted. Egypt's political bodies only began to refrain from blaming women when the parties started to blame one another. As tension between the parties increased, so did the use of sexual violence accusations as political tools. The SCAF, for example, did not go out of its way to publicly support women revolutionaries until it entered into conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood government. The accusatory approach was a two-way street. Both the SCAF and Muslim Brotherhood paint one another as *baltagiyya* organizations or illegitimate revolutionary forces, and both have linked the other with Mubarak's regime by pointing out the similarities in their tactics.<sup>115</sup> These methods helped tarnish the opposing party's public image.

Cairo University professor Mohammed Elmasry described the anti-Muslim Brotherhood sentiments expressed in a June 2013 article for *Jadaliyya*:

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<sup>112</sup> Mayy El Sheikh and David D. Kirkpatrick, “Rise in Sexual Assaults in Egypt Sets Off Clash Over Blame,” *New York Times*, March 25, 2013. Web.

<sup>113</sup> Rana Muhammed Tana, “Shura Council Members Blame Women for Harassment.” *Daily News Egypt*. February 11, 2013. Web.

<sup>114</sup> Tana, “Shura Council.” 2013.

<sup>115</sup> Ahmed Tharwat, “The Baltagiya and the Post Revolution Egypt,” *Insight News*, September 2, 2011.

As someone who has studied discourse for eleven years, the anti-Brotherhood, anti-Morsi propaganda is unlike anything I have ever seen, primarily because news reporters and organizations—rather than political figures—seem to spearhead the propaganda efforts.<sup>116</sup>

Most of Egypt's media – particularly its television stations – is owned by the state. The SCAF utilizes the media at its disposal to encourage public support for its interim government.<sup>117</sup> State media has, on several occasions, fabricated information in order to instigate pro-military and anti-Brotherhood acts of violence.<sup>118</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood responded to the SCAF's accusations with their own, referring to members of the military as “coup thugs”:

Coup forces' brutality did not stop...On December 28, 2013, in Damietta, about ten women were attacked, their heads badly injured. Worse still, coup thugs sexually assaulted them. These days, there have been repeated attacks on and arrest and detention of girls and women in many provinces of Egypt. All these are religious, moral and social crimes completely condemned by our Egyptian religious oriental society that respects values of chastity and honor, and where women are respected, protected and held in the highest regard.<sup>119</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood's twitter page, *IkhwanWeb*, released a similar delegitimizing accusation of anti-Morsi protestors in June 2013: “Video of #Tahrir mobs and thugs aka ‘revolutionaries’ sexually assualting [*sic*] young foreign woman, among many others.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Mohammed Elmasry, "Unpacking Anti-Muslim Brotherhood Discourse," *Jadaliyya*. Arab Studies Institute, June 28, 2013. Web.

<sup>117</sup> The military is not alone in its utilization of the media. ONTV, one of the Egypt's largest and most popular television networks, has also been highly critical of the Muslim Brotherhood. Although the network presents itself as politically independent, Egyptian billionaire and founder of the liberal Free Egyptians Party, Naguib Sawiris, owns it. Sawiris is known for speaking out against both the Mubarak and Morsi administrations.

<sup>118</sup> Amir, "One Year." 8.

Ahdaf Soueif, *Cairo: Memoir of a City Transformed* (New York: Pantheon, 2014). 79-80, 93.

<sup>119</sup> “Muslim Brotherhood Statement on Coup Forces Brutally Assaulting, Harassing Women,” *IkhwanWeb: The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English Web Site*, December 29, 2013. Web.

<sup>120</sup> @Ikhwanweb. Twitter, June 28, 2013. Web.

<<https://twitter.com/Ikhwanweb/status/350779249692651520>>.

Although they heatedly accuse one another of perpetrating sexual violence against women, SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood have taken little action to stop the violence itself. This has not gone unnoticed. As Mariam Kirolos wrote in her article, “Sexual Violence in Egypt: Myths and Realities”:

Instead of investigating such crimes and holding the perpetrators accountable, the former presidency and ruling party have exploited the number of cases to deface the opposition. Some in the opposition have also used these cases to accuse the presidency and the Muslim Brotherhood of the assaults. Neither side has solid proof and both are instrumentalizing brutality. The Freedom and Justice Party did not limit itself to using the number of cases in its political bargaining. It went further still and blatantly violated basic media ethics by publishing the details of one survivor’s assault in print and online. Such ruthless use of women’s violated bodies as political battlefields is a repulsive pattern that we must refuse at all costs.<sup>121</sup>

Nazra and El-Nadeem explicitly criticize this utilization of the violated female body for political gain. In their joint report on sexual assault, the organizations wrote:

We urge all political and revolutionary forces to realize that women’s issues are not a fleeting cause or simply a bargaining chip to be used against religiously-minded political opponents or others. Rather, they are a principal part of the revolution, of the current political ferment, and of the struggle for freedom in which women have played such a vital role and for which they have sacrificed much.<sup>122</sup>

The temporary adoption of women’s rights is not the SCAF and Brotherhood’s only flaw with regards to gender issues. While issuing press releases that state their support for women’s rights, these same parties and affiliated individuals continue to impede these rights. The Muslim Brotherhood publicly refused to support the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)’s declaration “End Violence Against Women,” due to its conflicts with Sharia law. One of the conflicts noted on *IkhwanWeb*

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<sup>121</sup> Kirolos, “Sexual Violence.” 2013.

<sup>122</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity.” 56.



was that the declaration would permit wives to file legal charges for spousal rape.<sup>123</sup> This press release called these conflicts “destructive tools meant to undermine the family as an important institution.”<sup>124</sup> In addition, the press release:

[C]all[ed] on women’s organizations to commit to their religion and morals of their communities and the foundations of good social like and not be deceived with misleading calls to decadent modernization and paths of subversive immorality.<sup>125</sup>

Revealing a similar lack of concern for women’s issues, the SCAF’s military court acquitted Ahmed Adel el-Mogy, the military doctor who sexually assaulted women revolutionaries by performing “virginity tests” on them. The acquittal proves the degree to which the SCAF is committed to combatting sexual violence against women. The preoccupation with accusations and the exploitation of ambiguity regarding responsibility for the revolutions sexual violence problem, all in order to make those accusations, redirects focus away from the real issue: gender justice. This redirection directly impedes efforts to stop the violence and address its systemic roots. The resulting displacement of responsibility permits the assaults to continue, to multiply, and to grow increasingly violent. As Nazra and El Nadeem write, “Disagreements in public discourse concerning sexual harassment and violence has made it easier for these crimes to reach such an extreme, which is now difficult to treat with direct intervention.”<sup>126</sup>

In an individual publication, Nazra reiterated its critique of this hypocrisy with fervor, stating “we will not allow our efforts to raise this issue to be exploited by any party that seeks to marginalize women, their role, or their right to be present at any public

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<sup>123</sup> “Muslim Brotherhood Statement Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles,” *IkhwanWeb: The Muslim Brotherhood’s Official English Web Site*, March 14, 2013. Web.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square.” 52.

event.”<sup>127</sup> Although the party in power has changed, the same disregard of women’s rights as a legitimate cause crucial to the nation’s success remains. Nazra and El-Nadeem highlight this consistency when discussing the sexual violence taking place under Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood regime:

[T]he use of sexual harassment or rape to scare the women so they do not participate in demonstrations is a tactic that has existed since the days of Mubarak and during the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.<sup>128</sup>

Author and activist Ahdaf Soueif points out other similarities in her book, *Cairo: Memoir of A City Transformed*, her personal account as a member of the revolution:

In Egypt, we find that the economic ideology of the Brotherhood is not very different from that of the Mubarak regime; essentially a free market, capitalist ideology that favors the corporation over the citizen and the rich over the poor.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, El-Nadeem published a note on its Facebook page vociferously condemning the patriarchal regimes and violence against women that continue to plague Egypt:

The faces have changed, but the system is the same. Oppressive. Authoritarian. Dictatorial...From Mubarak to the military junta and now the Muslim Brotherhood, torture, and in particular sexual torture, has been a constant threat to Egyptian citizens. There are several examples of this, from the case of Emad El Kabir under Mubarak’s regime, to Ahmed Rashad under the military junta of the SCAF and the case of Ayman Mehanna under the rule of the Brotherhood. From the sexual assault of women protesters and journalists under Mubarak in 2005, to SCAF’s use of so-called “virginity testing” on detained activists in March 2011, to the more recent organized sexual assault on Yasmin El Baramawy and others in places of protest under the Brotherhood, organized sexual torture continues to be used by the state as a weapon against its opponents.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Amir, “One Year.” 4.

<sup>128</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square.” 29.

<sup>129</sup> Soueif, *Cairo*, 212.

<sup>130</sup> “Sexual Torture is Systematic: From Mubarak and SCAF to the Muslim Brotherhood,” *El Nadeem*. Facebook, June 24, 2013. < [https://m.facebook.com/notes/el-nadeem/sexual-torture-is-systematic-from-mubarak-and-scaf-to-the-muslim-brotherhood/10151745825359365/?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=C](https://m.facebook.com/notes/el-nadeem/sexual-torture-is-systematic-from-mubarak-and-scaf-to-the-muslim-brotherhood/10151745825359365/?__tn__=C) >

Egypt's primary political parties may not organize to prevent sexual violence, but its feminist organizations certainly do. A number of anti-harassment groups have organized around one goal: find women being assaulted, help them escape their attackers, and aid them in seeking medical attention. Among these organizations are Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment (OpAntiSH), Tahrir Bodyguard, and *Shoft Taharosh* (I Saw Harassment). They all employ similar tactics. Nada Abdel Azim, a representative of *Shoft Taharosh*, described its methods to *Al-Tahrir Newspaper*:

[We] are divided into safety, confrontation, and follow-up teams. Coordination among groups takes place through an operation room that receives calls and directs groups to the areas where the harassment is taking place so they can intervene and save the girls. A group encircles the harassers and pushes them away, another creates a safe alley for the girl to pass through, and she is then received by the third group which provides her with clothes and first aid, if needed.<sup>131</sup>

Although these groups are often criticized for encouraging survivors to speak publicly about their assaults – one woman included a disclaimer in her testimony, saying “I know that many will not like that I wrote this about Tahrir square thinking I am trying to vandalize the image of the Egyptian revolution”<sup>132</sup> – Julie Shayne explains in *The Revolution Question* that women's movements are not responsible for dividing or undermining revolutions in a gendered way.

[W]omen demonstrate the potential to be precisely the opposite of divisive, despite the myopic visions of male leftists who fragment movements by pushing women and their potential supporters away.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity.” 61.

“Sexual Harassment in the Square: Testimonies of Sexual Attacks on January 25,” *Al-Tahrir Newspaper*, February 5, 2013, available at <http://tahrirnews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=05022013&id=e8fc23bb-277e-4758-ae73-a4d07329ceea>

<sup>132</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square and its Vicinity.” 12.

<sup>133</sup> Shayne, *Revolution*, 167.

Shayne's argument exposes how the hypocrisy of these political and revolutionary factions undermines and weakens not only the cause of women's rights, but also the revolution's nationalist cause, for one affects the other. The revolution, rooted in patriarchal social structures, is not a hospitable place for women. Concern for women's safety is not enough to make a revolution egalitarian and thereby successful. It is particularly insufficient when one of the prime motives for the concern is public perception.

### CHAPTER 3: Oriental Representations of Gender in the Revolution

The previous chapter examined the treatment of gender within Egyptian urban society, the revolution, and Egyptian political discourse. This chapter conversely examines the treatment of gender in foreign coverage and commentary on Egypt and the revolution, paying specific attention to what I term neoliberal orientalism.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, then U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made the following statement in his speech at the Overseas Security Advisory Council's 28th Annual Briefing:

[T]hose kids in Tahrir Square, they were not motivated by any religion or ideology. They were motivated by what they saw through this interconnected world, and they wanted a piece of the opportunity and a chance to get an education and have a job and have a future, and not have a corrupt government that deprived them of all of that and more. And they tweeted their ways and Facetimed their ways and talked to each other, and that's what drove that revolution.<sup>134</sup>

Kerry's point was that the protests in Tahrir Square were unrelated to the extremist or fundamentalist attitudes typically associated with the Middle East and North Africa; that on the contrary, they were inspired by global revolutions and a strong desire for better life and governance. In an attempt to support the Egyptian Revolution, Kerry does not acknowledge the protesters' individual belief systems, claiming that they were driven not by their own ideologies, but by models set elsewhere in the world. Kerry implies that the revolution was born out of mimicry. At first glance, this is not necessarily symptomatic of neoliberalism, as Kerry focuses on the large-scale motivations rather than personal ones. But his reference to the protestors as "kids" accomplishes exactly what a neoliberal

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<sup>134</sup> John Kerry, "Remarks at the Overseas Security Advisory Council's 28th Annual Briefing," *U.S. Department of State*, November 20, 2013. Web.

preoccupation with individual problems does: it trivializes their collective efforts. This trivialization separates the revolutionaries' demands from the grave systemic problems against which they protest. Additionally, while the majority of protests have been dominated by youth, "these kids" are young men and women, not children. In

*Orientalism*, Said suggests that Kerry's outlook is not an anomaly:

The Oriental is imagined to feel his world threatened by a superior civilization; yet his motives are impelled, not by some positive desire for freedom, political independence, or cultural achievement *on their own terms*, but instead by rancor or jealous malice.<sup>135</sup>

Kerry's description of the Egyptian "kids" and their desire for the opportunity, education, job, and future – logical demands – counters Said's explanation of orientalist views of "the Oriental." Kerry's words can be interpreted as the "positive desire" that Said claims is forbidden to "the Oriental." Kerry's education is Said's freedom; Kerry's opportunity, Said's political independence; Kerry's job and future, Said's cultural achievement. Kerry both negates and embodies aspects of orientalism. Does this mean that Kerry did not employ orientalist tropes in his speech? No. Despite the fact that he acknowledged the protesters' logical demands, he arguably did not present these demands as if they are on the protesters' "*own terms*." He prefaced the opportunity-education-job-future explanation by stating that the motivation came from outside of Egypt. Moreover, his suggestion that belief in a citizen's right to opportunity, education, job, and future is not an ideology hints at a perceived crudeness of the protests. Divorcing the demands that he himself said the Tahrir protesters made from the notion of a broader ideology minimizes them. It turns the narrative of this national movement and revolution into one of simple folk – simple kids – demanding their basic rights. Perhaps when Kerry said,

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<sup>135</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 249.

“they were not motivated by any religion or ideology,” he specifically meant religious or fundamentalist ideology. If so, his conflation of religion and ideology when held by Muslim people insinuates that their religion is their primary attribute. Rather than emphasizing political or social ideologies, Kerry references religion, setting up the protesters in opposition to his invoked image of Islamic terrorists. His description of the protesters affirms that, while Other, they are on a linear path towards Westernization.

Orientalist beliefs can be found in most forms of media – from public speeches by the Secretary of State, reputable newspaper articles, and scholarly works from academics to less prestigious or thoroughly vetted outlets like *The New York Post* and online blogs.

Said comments on this in his 2003 preface to *Orientalism*:

Accompanying such warmongering expertise have been the omnipresent CNNs and Fox News Channels of this world, plus myriad numbers of evangelical and right-wing radio hosts, plus innumerable tabloids and even middlebrow journals, all of them recycling the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalizations so as to stir up “America” against the foreign devil.<sup>136</sup>

Said points to intentionally negative coverage of “the Orient,” particularly in negative coverage from right wing and Republican-leaning sources. However, as Kerry’s speech demonstrates, orientalism can manifest itself just as strongly when the coverage is complimentary and the commentators Democrats. A short piece from April 2011 entitled “Demonstrate Like an Egyptian” by WNYC’s Sarah Abdurrahman, host of *On the Media in Cairo*. The title alone – a reference to a 1986 hit pop song, “Walk Like an Egyptian,” which pokes fun at the poses depicted in famous hieroglyphics – illustrates that these tropes are everywhere and they continue to stand the test of time. After describing the makeshift market established in Tahrir Square, Abdurrahman writes:

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid xx.

To look at all this, you would think they were professionals, accustomed to congregating in such massive groups calling for change. But then you have to remind yourself: they are not professionals. This is new for them. What we take so for granted in the U.S., they have only just gained, and they cherish every chance they get.<sup>137</sup>

Abdurrahman's comment, while complimentary of the protesters' organization and passion, is not dissimilar from Kerry's praise of "those kids in Tahrir Square." Both Kerry and Abdurrahman emphasize the fact that the protesters are only now accomplishing that which Westerners have been doing for years. But Egypt did not suddenly discover the art of protest. Ahdaf Soueif alludes to Egypt's long history of public protests and resistance in *Cairo*. She feels pride watching Egypt's youth settle in Tahrir and accomplish what "the older revolutionaries... have been trying [to do] since '72."<sup>138</sup> While the revolution made possible protests and political activism on a greater scale than before, it did not prompt the first mass protests ever to take place in the country. In an attempt to commend Egyptian revolutionaries for their activism and celebrate the protests as a new age of commonality between polarized East and West, Kerry and Abdurrahman render prior protests – some of which were actively anti-United States – invisible.

Kerry and Abdurrahman's respective words choices matter precisely because they are unexpected. Kerry is a member of the Democratic Party; he is a liberal politician. Abdurrahman reports for National Public Radio on WNYC, a radio station that tends to lean left. They are not the people one pictures when considering contemporary displays of racism. On the contrary, they are progressive public figures. Kerry and Abdurrahman

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<sup>137</sup> Sarah Abdurrahman, "Demonstrate Like an Egyptian," *On the Media in Cairo*, WNYC, April 8, 2011. Web.

<sup>138</sup> Soueif, *Cairo*, 19.



are surprising offenders, and the fact that they come as a surprise is symptomatic of institutionalized neoliberal orientalism.

Orientalist tropes are used to suit the Global North's needs and goals at a given time. In colonized Egypt, the colonial state needed to maintain its power. Consequently, members of the *effendi* class who sought to obtain the same education as their colonizers, thereby threatening the British colonial state's superiority, were depicted as conniving, sneaky, and small, effectively minimizing their threat. Contemporarily, the neoliberal United States is intent on "exporting American values," as Chomsky wrote, and maintaining its influence in Egypt.<sup>139</sup> As a result, the revolutionaries conceived of as pro-American through their demands for political and social change are depicted positively. The conniving *effendi* manner is reattributed to Mubarak's administration, while the revolutionaries adopt the "rough" but charming nature of the colonially depicted rural masculinities.

This demonstrates that orientalism's prominence even when the goal is to promote support, solidarity or identification with the "Other," or rather, with the "Other-who-Emulates-Us," a patronizing trajectory that locates objective modernity in Western culture. This is particularly the case in feminist orientalism.

### *Feminist Orientalism*

Charlotte Webber presents the problems with feminist orientalism in her 2001 essay "Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950." As Weber explains:

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<sup>139</sup> Chomsky, *Profit over People*, 29.

Ultimately, the belief of Western feminists in the superiority of European culture proved stronger than their belief in “global sisterhood.” Their conviction that they needed to “help” their more oppressed sisters reflected an a priori assumption that women’s seclusion signified their total helplessness, blinding them to whatever power and authority Middle Eastern women did possess.<sup>140</sup>

Weber concludes that, “Despite their sympathy for, and occasional identification with their Middle Eastern sisters, Western feminists never regarded them as equals.”<sup>141</sup>

Weber’s piece discusses the first wave Western feminist movement. While the ideologies of the more contemporary third wave of the movement have shifted, the determination of oppression on occidental terms has not, even when third wavers attempt to identify with what they perceive to be empowering.

On December 29, 2011, Sally Quinn, a journalist at the *Washington Post*, wrote an op-ed entitled “The Blue Bra Revolution.” Many news outlets covered the footage of a young woman beaten by Egyptian Riot Police but Quinn’s piece is exemplary for several reasons. Quinn’s article attempts to create an empowering narrative around this unidentified woman, however, the narrative she uses is based on the same “a priori assumption[s]” that Weber describes in “Unveiling Scheherazade.” Quinn’s piece unintentionally objectifies the female protester, uses her as a political tool, reduces her to a symbol, all of which she justifies with feminist orientalism. Quinn’s article is a *Washington Post* blog post, and she quickly discloses the nature of her subjectivity. The post is less about the woman herself and more about Quinn’s interpretation of the woman

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<sup>140</sup> Charlotte Weber, “Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950,” *Feminist Studies* 27 no.1 (2001): 125-57. 129.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 151.

and her undergarments. The first two lines of the article read: “The blue bra. That’s what did it for me.”<sup>142</sup>

Quinn adapts the experience of this unidentified Egyptian woman – described in Egyptian media as “Tahrir Girl” – into a third wave feminist, sex-positive one. She writes, “I think what got to me was that she was wearing this gorgeous, sexy bright blue bra. Underneath her abaya.”<sup>143</sup> Quinn characterizes the bra as “sexy,” and then reduces this woman to her bra. It becomes the single most important thing about her, and since it is a sexualized object, sex becomes her primary feature. In attempting to empower this woman through her interpretation of the woman’s sexuality, Quinn imposes sexuality as identity on the “girl in the blue bra.” This imposition of sexuality is just as oppressive as the prohibition of sexuality that Quinn condemns; both the imposition and prohibition rob an individual of agency and choice over her body.

Quinn juxtaposes the woman’s abaya – a loose robe that can be paired with a headscarf or face covering worn by many Muslim women in North Africa – with the blue bra, as if the two are inherently contradictory. Having already sexualized the bra, Quinn invokes the image of a decidedly asexual Muslim femininity. She describes the blue bra as “shocking” and “unexpected,” juxtaposing to what might be a normal pairing of underwear and clothing. The implicit message in her “shock” is that Muslim women have no sexuality, that they cannot be sexy, at least not in the ways with which Quinn associates sexuality.

Yet this bra could also be completely unattached to sexuality. It might simply be a bra. Quinn interprets this differently, claiming, “this person covered from head to toe

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<sup>142</sup> Sally Quinn, “The Blue Bra Revolution,” *Washington Post*, December 30, 2011.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstrated her beliefs through her choice of underwear.”<sup>144</sup> Quinn’s appropriation of the bra and her imposition of its sexuality ignores this woman’s identity and experiences.

Then Quinn speaks for the woman:

The blue bra said what I imagine her to be feeling: “I may be oppressed. I may not have rights. I may have to cover up my body and face. But you cannot destroy my womanhood. You can’t rob me of my femininity. You can’t take away my power.”<sup>145</sup>

In this narrative, the woman in question is an oppressed object. She is not oppressed because riot police are beating her, but because she “has” to wear an abaya. Quinn disregards the fact that this woman might choose to wear the abaya and choose to cover herself. The woman’s abaya could be an expression of her womanhood and her femininity. Quinn presents the bra – an article of clothing with which western feminists might be able to identify – as a powerful and mystical object, even calling it a “talismán or amulet” (a comparison evocative of classical romanticized orientalism) in a follow-up post.<sup>146</sup> The abaya, on the other hand, represents this woman’s oppression. Quinn takes one moment within a complex and multilayered revolution and simplistically classifies it as another case of Muslim women as victims of Brown Male Misogyny. Not only has she coopted this woman’s body and feelings, now she coopts her revolutionary intentions. We cannot know what this woman was protesting. Given the date of this protest – December 17, 2011 – it was more likely against the Egyptian military’s continued control of the state and increased violence against civilians, not the Muslim Brotherhood, as Quinn implies.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Sally Quinn, “The Power of a Woman,” *Washington Post*, January 6, 2012.

Following this appropriation of the woman's identity and personality, Quinn exports the blue bra. She takes the blue bra and applies it to other situations of female oppression – almost exclusively in the Middle East (the one exception being the United States Military) – as a symbol of empowerment. Her focus on Middle Eastern conflicts reinforces the idea that Arab countries are populated with violent and oppressive patriarchies nonexistent in Western civil society. With each example of a woman or group of women confronting patriarchy, Quinn states, “she should wear a blue bra.”<sup>147</sup>

Quinn elaborates on the power of the blue bra with a call to arms:

It's time for all women to own the blue bra, either a real one or one of the spirit. Let's not allow that young woman in Egypt to have been beaten, stripped and exposed in vain. Let us make her humiliation our triumph.<sup>148</sup>

She cites the case of a friend of hers, a successful professional woman who always wears “pastel lace underwear” under her pantsuits.<sup>149</sup> Quinn's friend says doing this gives her a “feeling of confidence and power.” Yet while both Quinn's friend and the female protester are wearing socially accepted and expected outer garments, Quinn only knows the motivation regarding undergarments for the former. Quinn does not know whether or not the protester wore her blue bra to bring her “confidence and power.”<sup>150</sup> Quinn's anecdote about her friend seems to imply that the key to liberation for Muslim women is the donning of Western feminine lingerie and the embracing of their female sexualities. Intentional or not, this value judgment reemphasizes the power in traditional, Western femininity. At the end of the piece, Quinn takes her advocacy for the blue bra further:

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<sup>147</sup> Quinn “Blue Bra.”

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

The great thing about it is that when women go into the workplace, or the public square, or anywhere else, the men are always going to wonder, does she have on the blue bra? Let the answer always be yes.<sup>151</sup>

For Quinn, the endgame of this type of empowerment appears to involve a heteronormative “boys will be boys” culture in which men constantly wonder about the underwear the women around them are wearing. The literal interpretation of Quinn’s argument is strange, but even her figurative point is troubling. A society in which women carry their feminism and power around like a mischievous secret, a culture in which men can only speculate as to whether women are empowered, sparks Quinn’s approval. Neither of these is conducive to the advancement of gender equality, for neither accommodates overt, unabashed feminism and empowerment. Social gender equality will not come about if feminism and empowerment are kept quietly to oneself, if their existence is uncertain. Empowerment and feminism must be loud and visible if gender equality is to be achieved. Quinn’s argument falls regrettably short of these requirements because her figurative point only involves the claim and intent of feminist activism. It provides no direction for action and effect.

Quinn’s representation of the woman likely did not stem from a conscious desire to appropriate her experience. Quinn truly seems to believe her interpretation of the video. In this way, her piece is symptomatic of orientalist culture. She does not see her piece as coopting another woman’s experience, because orientalism has led her to believe that she can write another person’s – a brown person’s – narrative. It is her version of

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

Gayatri Spivak's ironic observation of "White men saving brown women from brown men."<sup>152</sup>

As is the case with many works of orientalism, Quinn's piece tells us more about the orientalist culture in which she lives than it does about Egyptian culture or the culture of the revolution.<sup>153</sup> According to Said, orientalism is so deeply imbedded within occidental culture that many orientalists are unaware of its influence. Contemporary orientalism is not intentionally violent or oppressive. Its invisibility to those utilizing it is part of what makes it so dangerous. Said explains this in his discussion of early twentieth century British orientalists Arthur James Balfour and Lord Cromer:

That Balfour and Cromer... could strip humanity down to such ruthless cultural and racial essences was not at all an indication of their particular viciousness. Rather it was an indication of how streamlined a general doctrine had become by the time they put it to use – how streamlined and effective.<sup>154</sup>

Quinn's piece, similarly, is in no way an "indication of [her] particular viciousness." Instead, it reveals orientalism's normativity. Quinn's piece tells us nothing about the Egyptian revolution. It is a personal narrative, one that exposes one of the many ways in which orientalism is concealed: under the guise of feminism. Orientalism centers on the Self and definition of the Self in opposition to the Other; in the Blue Bra blog post, Quinn defines feminist "progress" as sexual positivism. She expresses this in opposition to what she perceives as oppressive Islamic culture. Like Kerry, she seems fond of what she perceives as Egyptian youth finally "catching up." And like Kerry's encouragement of

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<sup>152</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988): 93.

<sup>153</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 6.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

the protestors, Quinn's sexually progressive advocacy for this woman nearly obscures the neoliberal orientalism ingrained within.

Quinn says little about the violence committed against this woman, and even less about the fact that her clothes were torn off by riot police. Instead, she projects her personal interpretation of empowerment onto the woman. Admirable as her refusal to victimize the protester may be, Quinn tries so hard to ascribe some version of "sex-positivity" onto this beating that she overlooks the context of the situation. Both victimization and assumed sexual empowerment label and feminize this woman. They do so in different ways but are equally disempowering in that they rob the woman of her right to her own narrative. Quinn admits that this case intrigues her because of the bra – again, trivializing this woman with one sexualized object. She does not say a word about the man who is beaten alongside the woman in the video footage. This male protestor is curled on the ground in fetal position as a riot policeman repeatedly stomps on him with seemingly equal violence to that used against the woman. But he is a man, and violence committed by men against men is not as shocking as violence against women, particularly violence against a half-dressed woman. For Quinn, the violence seems nearly irrelevant. The sex is what captures her attention.

Quinn's pieces are an extreme example of orientalist media. While her pieces are blog posts, and therefore not held to the same standards and requirements as news articles, they are blog posts on the *Washington Post*, a reputable newspaper. That the *Washington Post* chose to publish this type of opinion piece demonstrates how easy it is for more subtle forms of orientalism to be published in a respectable piece of journalism. Quinn's piece is valuable in that it illustrates a twinning of feminist and orientalist



agendas. The extremity of her two pieces will perhaps make it easier to recognize less palpable uses of these tropes. When they appear in news articles, these understated applications of neoliberal orientalist tropes are far more dangerous than are those of Quinn.

Most news outlets that reported this woman's beating fail to mention the male protester by her side. Their coverage, while not as sensationalized as Quinn's, still does not escape orientalist and gendered tropes. CNN, the *New York Times*, and NPR refer to this woman as a "girl."<sup>155</sup> *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Atlantic*, and the *Washington Post* depict her as an adult woman.<sup>156</sup> The female protester's identity is largely characterized as "the blue bra girl" or "the girl in the blue bra" in mainstream media. Ahdaf Soueif's report for *The Guardian* is one exception, as it identifies the woman not by her bra, but instead calls her "the young woman in the blue jeans."<sup>157</sup>

Although *The Guardian* avoids titling this woman in accordance with her undergarments, Soueif's piece is littered with references to this woman's femininity and helplessness. Soueif introduces us to the woman with a physical description. "The woman is young, and slim, and fair."<sup>158</sup> While this is not necessarily a sexualized description, it emphasizes this woman's femininity. She is young, thin, and has light

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<sup>155</sup> Isobel Coleman, "'Blue Bra Girl' Rallies Egypt's Women vs. Oppression," *CNN*, December 22, 2011. David Kirkpatrick, "Egypt's Women Find Power Still Hinges on Men," *New York Times*, January 9, 2012. Kainaz Amaria, "The 'Girl In The Blue Bra,'" *National Public Radio*, December 21, 2011.

<sup>156</sup> Ahdaf Soueif, "Image of Unknown Woman Beaten by Egypt's Military Echoes around World," *The Guardian*, December 18, 2011.

D. Parvaz, "Egypt's Feminists Prepare for a Long Battle," *Al Jazeera English*, February 7, 2012.

Max Fisher, "A Photo That Encapsulates the Horror of Egypt's Crackdown," *The Atlantic*, December 18, 2011.

Melissa Bell, "Egyptian 'Blue Bra' Rescuer Interviewed by Activists (Video)," *Washington Post*, December 22, 2011.

Quinn, "Blue Bra."

Quinn, "Power."

<sup>157</sup> Soueif, "Image."

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

skin. Soueif continues with this theme, suggesting that the woman is “unresisting – maybe she’s fainted” and points out her “bare delicate arms.”<sup>159</sup> Soueif employs this woman’s femininity to demonstrate the Egyptian military’s use of violence against protesters. By emphasizing the woman’s classic femininity – her frail helplessness – Soueif highlights the police’s indiscriminate violence against even the “weakest” protesters. Quinn and Soueif utilize gendered stereotypes to describe the beating of a female protester in order to advance a larger point in keeping with their respective narratives of choice. For Quinn, the point seems to be identifying Islamic patriarchy, and the countervailing seeds of female sexual empowerment latent in Egyptian society. For Soueif, it seems to be the brutality of the Egyptian riot police. In both cases, the female body is feminized and reappropriated to serve a particular narrative.

The gendered and racialized tropes that Quinn and Soueif employ are not new, nor are they restricted to Egypt. On the contrary, the representations of and emphasis on gender in war and revolution are part of a long lineage of orientalist depictions of Middle Eastern people and conflicts. Foreign analyses and reports of conflicts in the global south, in an attempt to disassociate the West from violence and project that violence onto the “Other,” often utilize the notion of “a culture of violence” to explain away complex conflicts. Simon Springer explains this projection of violence onto the “Other” in his essay, “Culture of Violence or Violent Orientalism? Neoliberalism and Imagining the ‘Savage Other’ in Post-Transitional Cambodia.” Springer writes:

[T]he culture of violence thesis simplistically reduces this [the context of the conflict] to a linear relationship where ‘culture’ alone is viewed as the

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

basis for violence in Cambodian society...the culture of violence thesis is...a sweeping caricature shot through with Orientalist imaginaries.<sup>160</sup>

Springer goes on to explain that orientalism is “a form of paranoia that feeds on cartographies of fear by producing ‘our’ own world negatively through the construction of a perverse ‘other.’”<sup>161</sup> That is, when the West positively (actively) constructs the “Savage Other,” it implicitly defines itself in the “negative” space. The use of orientalism and othering is not restricted to Eastern Asia. Springer adds, “in the context of the ‘war on terror,’ ‘African,’ ‘Asian’ and ‘Islamic’ cultures are said to be inherently violent.”<sup>162</sup> This can be seen in coverage of the Egyptian revolution. Media tends to discuss Egypt, a North African and predominantly Islamic country, with an orientalist framework.<sup>163</sup>

Quinn demonstrates this by displacing the repression of women onto Egyptian culture. It is symptomatic of the Other and therefore not a Western problem. This is the very colonization of experience that Chandra Mohanty discusses in her essay, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse.” The Western feminist “production of this ‘third-world difference’” and “discursive homogenization” that Mohanty describes stems from the same oppositional and othering gaze as orientalism.<sup>164</sup> Mohanty explains these terms further, critiquing the “image of an ‘average third-world woman.’” According to Mohanty,

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<sup>160</sup> Simon Springer, "Culture of Violence or Violent Orientalism? Neoliberalisation and Imagining the ‘Savage Other’ in Post-transitional Cambodia." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34, no.3 (2009): 305-19. 306.

<sup>161</sup> Springer, “Culture of Violence.” 308.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Just as there are a variety of representations of oriental femininities, there are a variety of representations of oriental masculinities, only some of which link oriental masculinity to violence. See the following section, Orientalized Masculinities.

<sup>164</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse,” *Feminist Review* 30 (1988): 61-88. 63.

[The] average third-world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being ‘third world’ (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This... is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the ‘freedom’ to make their own decisions.<sup>165</sup>

Interestingly, Quinn, while placing herself in opposition to the woman in the blue bra with her orientalist depiction of the woman’s circumstances, also extends her image of Western feminism to this woman. Quinn still projects an image, but rather than projecting an oppositional one, she projects a mirror of herself and her feminism. Her projection serves the same function as an oppositional image would – the assertion of her liberated Western woman-ness of which Mohanty writes – but it takes a neoliberal approach, claiming to empower when in actuality, it renders the woman invisible, effectively rendering the space she occupies fair game for discursive manipulation. As Mohanty explains, “western feminists alone become the true ‘subjects’ of this counter-history [or in this case, mirror-history]. Third-world women, on the other hand, never rise above the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status.”<sup>166</sup> At the very core of representations like Quinn’s is what Mohanty aptly terms “ethnocentric universality.”<sup>167</sup>

The attempt to reproduce one’s version of feminism through one’s perception of Muslim women demonstrates the deep link between orientalist analyses and the utilization of essentialized gender roles in discussions – both scholarly and within media – of Global South conflicts, namely, the Egyptian revolution. Mohanty describes the victimizing representation of Muslim women, writing, “*all* Arab and Muslim women

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 80.

[are] seen to constitute a homogenous oppressed group...Arabs and Muslims, it appears, don't change at all.<sup>168</sup>

Again, these gendered representations of women in conflict are part of a long tradition of generating narratives that justify international intervention. In her 2004 article, "Media Images of Women During War: Vehicles of Patriarchy's Agenda?" Adhis Chetty argues, "The circumstances of war forcefully highlight human vulnerability, but the media's presentation of this vulnerability tends to be gendered."<sup>169</sup> Women are hyper-feminized to enhance their helplessness. The cry to save "women and children" makes clear who the truly weak parties are (and equates women with children). Chetty also writes: "women and children are still used as pawns by the media to perpetuate the agendas of hegemonic forces in society."<sup>170</sup> The media manipulation and use of a victimized figure that Chetty describes in her article here is identical to Soueif's treatment of the "young woman in the blue jeans." While one depiction of a sympathetic character might not make a liberal Western audience slightly more inclined to support international intervention, repeated exposure to these images and representations can. The individuals producing these representations participate – wittingly or unwittingly – in the neoliberal orientalist project. Soueif, an Egyptian feminist nationalist who opposes American intervention likely did not intend to perpetuate neoliberal orientalism. Soueif, perhaps even more so than Kerry and Abdurrahman, is an unexpected offender. Her reproduction of orientalist imagery demonstrates yet again, its invisibly widespread influence.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>169</sup> Adhis Chetty, "Media Images of Women during War: Vehicles of Patriarchy's Agenda?" *Agenda Feminist Media* 59, Women in War (2004): 32-41. 38.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

Tropes of femininity are often accompanied by tropes of oppositional masculinity. In the case of Soueif and the “young woman in the blue jeans,” the oppositional masculinity at play is the Egyptian military’s brute force and violence against protesters. For Quinn, it is the threat of Islamist male control over women’s bodies. However, oriental masculine and feminine tropes are not merely placed in opposition to each other. They are also placed in opposition to the West. Just as orientalized femininity can give the false assurance that gender inequality and violence against women are afflictions of the “Other,” orientalized masculinity allows for the overall assertion of Western civilized society. As Paul Amar asserts in “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution:”

Orientalism was a mask behind which or through which more revolutionary and oppositional subjects could be constituted and through which the eroticized gaze of the colonizer could be subverted and recoded.<sup>171</sup>

The following section explores this intersection of orientalist “recoding” with constructions of masculinity.

### *Orientalized Masculinities*

In “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution,” Amar questions the consistent deployment of a “version of masculinity studies to explain violence in and from the Middle East.”<sup>172</sup> Amar points to a longstanding literary, journalistic, media, and scholarly tradition of conflating violence

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<sup>171</sup> Amar, “Middle East Masculinities.” 52.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 38.

not only with maleness,<sup>173</sup> but also with racialized maleness – in this case, a “racialized Middle Eastern maleness.”<sup>174</sup> While there are many other tropes of oriental masculinities, the dominant gendered and orientalist narratives of the revolution link oriental masculinity to misogyny and violence. Relics of the British colonial construction of *effendi* masculinities remain, as was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, but are less prominent. This section will focus primarily on violent representations of oriental masculinities because they are most frequently deployed in Western news and commentary on the Egyptian revolution.

Most of the pieces written about the woman beaten by riot police focus on the woman’s femininity. However, an article in *The Atlantic* by Max Fisher, entitled “A Photo That Encapsulates the Horror of Egypt’s Crackdown,” emphasizes instead the police’s brutal masculinity.<sup>175</sup> “[T]here is something especially barbaric about this photo,” Fisher writes. His use of the word “barbaric” denotes uncivilized behavior. Said uses this word periodically throughout *Orientalism* as an example of the ways in which early orientalists viewed the Oriental Other. As he writes towards the beginning of the book, “Islam [came] to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians.”<sup>176</sup> Fisher’s use of the word “barbaric” cannot be taken in isolation from the legacy of the association between Islam and “the barbaric.” It matters little if Fisher did or did not use this word in order to assert his own identity as civilized, even unconsciously. What matters is the effect his words have. Words hold power, particularly

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<sup>173</sup> See: Sut Jhally, Susan Ericsson, Sanjay Talreja, Jackson Katz, and Jeremy Earp. *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity* (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1999). Miedzian, Myriam, *Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link between Masculinity and Violence* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

<sup>174</sup> Amar, “Middle East Masculinities.” 38.

<sup>175</sup> Fisher “A Photo.”

<sup>176</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 59.

when they are words and identities that have been racially charged for centuries. Fisher's use of oriental tropes makes him complicit in the perpetuation of orientalism.

In Orientalist traditions, brown, particularly Muslim, masculinities are presented as oppositional to Western masculinities. Islamic Studies scholar, Amanullah De Sony, implicates Edward Said in this tradition in his book, *The Crisis of Islamic Masculinities*:

Studies that used Said's Orientalism as a key research method tend to strengthen the divide between the 'East' and the 'West' using a postmodern, postcolonial argument to create some form of legitimacy.<sup>177</sup>

De Sony adds that constructions of Muslim masculinities are stripped of their complexities and pluralities not only when placed in opposition to Western masculinities, but also when examined in isolation. "Discussions surrounding Muslim men are," De Sony writes, "limited to essentialized forms of masculinity – either ideal or reviled, but usually always relating to an Islamic patriarchal society."<sup>178</sup> Indeed, the image of oppressive Islamic patriarchy is central to constructions of oriental masculinities.

However, representations of Islamic patriarchy come in a variety of forms, some more heavily affiliated with violence than others. Mohanty critiques Fran Hosken's 1981 piece, "Female Genital Mutilation and Human Rights," which centers on female genital cutting in Africa and the Middle East. Mohanty cites Hosken, saying "'male sexual politics' in Africa and around the world 'share the same political goal: to assure female dependence and subservience by any and all means.'"<sup>179</sup> One of Hosken's particularly loaded statements declares that the goal of female genital cutting is 'to mutilate the sexual

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<sup>177</sup> Amanullah De Sony, *Crisis of Islamic Masculinities* (S.I.: Bloomsbury, 2015). 6.

<sup>178</sup> De Sony, *Crisis*, 3.

<sup>179</sup> Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes." 66.



pleasure and satisfaction of woman.”<sup>180</sup> As Mohanty points out, this depiction posits the “African Male” as brutish, sexually controlling savage. Similarly, Said cites nineteenth century French writer Chateaubriand’s description of the “Oriental Arab” as “civilized man fallen into a savage state.”<sup>181</sup> Interestingly, the darker, black male figure is permanently savage, whereas the brown male figure was once civilized – the proof is in Ancient Egypt – but has “fallen” into savagery. This suggests a spectrum of savagery based on color. Black Africa, then, is far more foreign and impossible to identify with than Arab, Brown Africa. Anticolonial activist and writer Frantz Fanon hints at this spectrum in *Black Skin, White Masks*, writing, “the more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets – i.e., the closer he comes to becoming a true human being.”<sup>182</sup> Hence, the blacker the subject is, the less human, and the whiter the subject, the more human.

In “Middle East Masculinity Studies” Paul Amar deconstructs the ways in which the media has further linked violence with Middle Eastern masculinity. While masculinities and violence are often paired together, they are not synonymous with one another, nor is their pairing exclusive to the Middle East or North Africa. Yet the binary opposition between Occident and Orient, civilized and savage, displaces onto brown cultures the cross-cultural tendency towards the promotion of violent masculinities. If

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

While this is true in many cases of female genital cutting, there are numerous forms and degrees. Some are simply akin to the plastic surgery known as Labiaplasty, while others involve far more invasive. However, this practice is not homogenous in the many countries and cultures in which it is performed. It should be examined in its own right, not used to reinforce depictions of the violent man of color. Additionally, although the presumption is often that female genital cutting is done to ensure that only men experience sexual pleasure, women are the ones who almost exclusively perform the procedure. Women, not men, commit the violence in this procedure.

"Female Genital Mutilation." *WHO*. World Health Organization, February 2013. Web.

<sup>181</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 171.

<sup>182</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 1986). 2.

violent masculinity is an oriental characteristic, it cannot be a problem afflicting the West, because Western subjectivity relies upon being the anti-oriental. Gayatri Spivak's observational phrase, "white men saving brown women from brown men," is a useful framework to examine the West's displacement of violence onto the oriental subject. In this framework, "brown men," (the oriental male subject) are violent and oppressive forces that "white men" (the West) must oppose. The presence of "brown women" (the oriental female subject) provides the justification for this opposition, coloring the oriental male from whom they must be saved as "bad," and the Western 'savior' as "good." This Occident-Orient binary, which labels the West "good," mandates that the West cannot be "bad," and is therefore devoid of the violence and oppression belonging to the "bad" oriental subject. Amar rephrases Spivak's expression as "the rescue or cultivation of securitized human subjects, particularly those of sexualized gender and racialized class."<sup>183</sup> The displacement of violent masculinities goes hand-in-hand with the displacement of gender inequality discussed in the previous section.

The displacement of violence onto an oppositional masculinity is reproduced most noticeably in international military conflicts, especially when enemy models of masculinity are racially distinctive from one another. Feminist philosopher Sara Ruddick explains this in her essay, "Notes Towards a Feminist Peace Politics."

Typically, masculinities are divided between the enemy and "our troops." "We" are the just warrior-protectors. By contrast, a particularly malignant form of swaggering masculinity – a criminal, sexualized aggression – is attributed to the enemy. When enemy males are racialized predators from whom innocent countries or women-and-children need protection, they become killable killers, ready to be burned and buried in their trenches.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Amar, "Middle East Masculinities." 39.

<sup>184</sup> Sara Ruddick, "Notes Towards a Feminist Peace Politics" in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993): 109-127. 112.

Ruddick writes that militaries deliberately instill the concept of a racialized enemy's violent masculinity in order to "spur fighting."<sup>185</sup> The attribution of violence to the Othered masculinity justifies any and all military action "our troops" might take. In this dichotomy of masculinity, Western "warrior-protectors" are not simply blameless for acts of violence – they are incapable of enacting the "criminalized, sexual aggression" ascribed to their enemies. Consequently, criminal or sexual violence are not pervasive problems in the West. Like their perpetrators, these problems are distinctly "Other."

This displacement is also apparent in Western descriptions of the sexual violence in the Egyptian revolution. As I briefly noted in Chapter 2, the mass assaults within protests likely garnered more international attention than the "virginity tests" because white Western women were attacked as well. The media surrounding CBS reporter Lara Logan's assault demonstrates the sensationalized ways in which these assaults are reported, and their heavy reliance on Orientalist tropes of masculinity. Logan, a South African-born white and blond woman was assaulted on February 11, 2011, the very day that Mubarak relinquished his presidency. Logan was reporting on the public jubilation when she was separated from her crew and attacked by male protesters using nearly identical tactics to the ones explained in Chapter 2. Eventually a group of female protestors enveloped Logan, bringing her to the safety of then-nonviolent military members. This assault provided ready material for orientalist tropes of savage brown men lusting after civilized white women. These tropes appeared in many different media reports and accounts of Logan's assault, but are most identifiable in *The New York Post's* version. On February 16, 2011, the day Logan was released from the hospital, *The New*

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

*York Post*'s front page held a photo of Logan with male Egyptian protestors behind her. Its headline reads "ANIMALS."<sup>186</sup> The following day, February 17, the *Post*'s front page held the same picture, this time with the headline: "White House tells Egypt...FIND THE BEASTS."<sup>187</sup> These two headlines dehumanize Logan's attackers, reducing them to savage animals and reinforcing the representation of violent (brown) masculinities.

The media used similar representations when reporting on other Western women's assaults, as did the survivors themselves. Natasha Smith, a young British journalist visiting Cairo in the summer of 2012 in hopes of making a documentary about the revolution, also employed these representations. Smith was attacked in the same fashion as Logan and the anonymous Egyptian women whose testimonies were discussed in Chapter 2. In her blog post describing the assault, Smith writes "Men began to rip off my clothes. I was stripped naked. Their insatiable appetite to hurt me heightened. These men, hundreds of them, had turned from humans to animals."<sup>188</sup> Smith continues: "All I could see was leering faces, more and more faces sneering and jeering as I was tossed around like fresh meat among starving lions."<sup>189</sup> Smith's later statement about the rumor instigating her attack exhibits her explicit use of words denoting ethnicity. "But if that was the case, [if rumors had been spread and people believed that she was a foreign spy] it was only really used as a pretext, an excuse, to molest and violate a blonde young Western girl."<sup>190</sup> These comments reiterate the orientalist trope of brown men coveting

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<sup>186</sup> *The New York Post* A1. February 16, 2011.

<sup>187</sup> *The New York Post* A1. February 17, 2011.

<sup>188</sup> Natasha J. Smith, "Please God. Make It Stop," *Natasha Smith*. N.p., June 26, 2012. Web.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

Daily Mail Reporter, "'Please God, Make It Stop!' British Female Journalist, 21, Describes Horrific Sexual Assault in Egypt's Tahrir Square after Election Result," *Mail Online*, Associated Newspapers, June 28, 2012. Web.

white women's bodies. Although Smith was simply relaying her testimony and describing her personal experience, the words she chose for this description are the same words *The New York Post* used, the same words that have been used for centuries when describing men of color. This further demonstrates that how ingrained the representations are in the Western social world; even when expressing something *in our own words*, we can never truly use words that belong to us. Language has a history, and words are laden with hegemonic associations. This is the inescapable nature of orientalism.

The focus on gender not only allows for the displacement of societal problems. It also occludes the complexities of the conflicts and revolutions onto which the problems are displaced, even using pseudo-psychological explanations to do so. Amar points to the *New York Times* as a particularly consistent perpetrator of these gendered representations.

According to Amar,

[I]t was only natural for the *Times*, when revolution began in Tunisia in 2011, to trace the revolt's origins back to the frustrated masculinities of the two men they deemed to be the instigators of this new kind of uprising: Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, who invented his social network supposedly because his girlfriend dumped him, and Mohamed Bouazizi, the self-immolated fruit-vendor and martyr... whose pride was gravely shamed when the policewoman would not let him "yank back his apples."<sup>191</sup>

The attribution of violence to this "racialized Middle Eastern maleness" obscures the political, economic, and social nuances of the situation and resembles the masking of goals with humanist causes discussed in the Introduction. These orientalized masculinities are valuable tools, and it is their value that places them within a neoliberal orientalist framework. The following section will discuss how states benefit from and utilized these valuable oriental and gendered tropes.

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<sup>191</sup> Amar, "Middle East Masculinities." 38.

Kareem Fahim, "Slap to a Man's Pride Set off Tumult in Tunisia," *New York Times*, January 21, 2011

*How the West Benefits*

Paul Amar succinctly explains in “Middle East Masculinity Studies” how the state employs oriental representations of violent masculinities:

[A]ccounts of masculine norms and socialization processes that generate domestic violence can be utilized to increase repressive interventions by the state in racialized and immigrant communities in ways that increase gendered violence and economic marginality. Studies of male youth self-organization and militarization can feed the extension of gang injunction legislation, the mainstreaming of counter insurgency policing policies, and the re-segregation and re-racialization of social space...[These policies] never resolve root questions of gender and sexual justice.<sup>192</sup>

Like the structural adjustment policies enforced by the IMF and World Bank, the policies Amar describes do little to deconstruct social issues’ roots, and instead expand government – or international powers’ – control over vulnerable populations. Khaled Shaalan, writer for *Jadaliyya*, writes:

The failure of Western media and pundits to both recognize and project the nuances of the current conflict in Egypt through their negligence of people’s agency in shaping the political outcomes is both pathetic and shameful. It is pathetic because it indicates the degree to which Western intellectual circles—especially those profiteering from Western policymaking bodies—remain willfully entrapped in an outdated and out-of-touch Orientalist worldview of the region.<sup>193</sup>

With the current state of affairs, Western powers – in both the public and private sectors – need not take responsibility for the extended and often-negative impact they continue to have on countries in the Global South. Neoliberalism separates all social ills from their institutionalized roots. It isolates the symptoms of a systemic problem, addressing only what lies on the surface in a manner akin to treating a bullet wound with a Band-Aid.

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<sup>192</sup> Amar, “Middle East Masculinities.” 45-45.

<sup>193</sup> Khaled Shaalan, “Why the Western Media Are Getting Egypt Wrong.” *Jadaliyya*, Arab Studies Institute, July 3, 2013. Web.

And yet, its ineffectiveness at solving a problem is precisely what makes it an effective capitalist tool. For example, although the United States calls for peace in Egypt, it continues to benefit from the violence. The United States sells an enormous amount of weaponry to the Egyptian military, and as was reported in *Jadaliyya* in 2011, the US government “grants the Egyptian army an annual 1.3 billion USD in aid through its Foreign Military Financing program.”<sup>194</sup> The military is therefore both reliant on and indebted to the United States, and will continue to be so.

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<sup>194</sup> Zeinab Abul-Magd, "The Army and the Economy in Egypt." *Jadaliyya*, Arab Studies Institute, December 23, 2011. Web.

## CONCLUSION

Said asserts that orientalism is not a conspiracy.<sup>195</sup> I disagree. Most participants in the neoliberal orientalist conspiracy are unwitting members, but this is because they choose to be. The choice of the masses to remain benighted and benefit from their willful ignorance feeds the neoliberal orientalist machine. Sally Quinn and John Kerry are not conscious conspirators in the oppression of others. But this does not mean they are not culpable of permitting and even perpetuating this oppression. And if they are, we all are. Similarly, General Sisi might not actively wish to oppress female Egyptian citizens. But he participates in and advocates for systems that do. Sisi, Quinn, and Kerry have in common their myopia and the narrow lenses through which they evaluate the world.

As long as this myopia and these narrow frames dominate mainstream opinion, so long as individuals are limited to specific roles based on gender, race, sexuality, and any other differences deemed socially divisive, revolutions will fail. This has always been particularly apparent with regards to gender, as Julie Shayne iterates in *The Revolution*

*Question:*

[R]evolutionary movements are organized in one of two ways, “the ‘woman-in-the-family’ or patriarchal model of revolution, and the ‘women’s emancipation’ or modernizing model”... The woman-in-the-family model of revolution tends to equate national liberation and discourse to patriarchal values, while, the contrasting women’s emancipation model postulates that the emancipation of women is a fundamental part of a socialist revolution. In the former, women are reduced to mothers of the revolution rather than actual revolutionaries, while in the latter women are often left with promises unmet.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 345.

<sup>196</sup> Shayne, *Revolution*, 9.



The SCAF and Muslim Brotherhood embody this “woman-in-the-family” patriarchal model. Progressive neoliberals like Quinn and Kerry embody aspects of the “women’s emancipation” or “modernizing” model. As was demonstrated in Chapter 2, the SCAF and the Brotherhood attempted to contain female participation in accordance with a patriarchal society. As was demonstrated in Chapter 3, the neoliberal agenda advocates on the surface for female emancipation, but fails to follow through. Neither approach addresses the systemic problem of gender inequality and consequently, neither approach successfully reconfigures a more equal social order.

Just as *wakil* and *gad’a* must be substantiated with actions in order for an individual to earn these titles, political figures must act to substantiate their claims of concern for women’s rights to earn the label ascription of women’s rights advocates. *Gad’a* is available to men and women – despite being normatively associated with the former – as long as an individual behaves in accordance with its values. Similarly, the role of women’s rights advocate is available to anyone – secular liberals and conservative Islamists alike – as long as they actively fight for women’s rights. Smaller and less influential – at least for the moment – groups understand the comprehensive approach that must be taken for a revolution to truly revolt against the hegemonic social order.

Nazra and El Nadeem insist upon this in every report they publish:

[W]omen’s issues are, first and foremost, political issues in the broadest sense, which includes, in addition to political institutions, agents, and roles, the general social framework within which political actors operate, and that in turn, sets the boundaries of this framework with their actions. This perspective is based on the division of social roles on a class and gender basis. Political actors, both men and women, do not operate in a vacuum, but in the shadow of a patriarchal, classist social reality that both

limits and determines their political actions, and creates opportunities and risks for all actors, not only women.<sup>197</sup>

I argue that *individuals* do not operate in a vacuum. Even if they are not themselves political actors, they exist, as we all do, “in the shadows” of these social systems that determine their actions. This is not restricted to the overtly political sphere. As I argued in my analysis of Natasha Smith’s word choice, we are all influenced by dominant discourse. I make no conclusive claim here, other than the necessity of reflection. I can only end with a question: What does it mean to claim an understanding of or allyship for feminist and anti-racist causes in an environmental context that is both revolutionary and reiterative of centuries-old forms of oppression?

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<sup>197</sup> “Sexual Assault and Rape in Tahrir Square.” 50-51.

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