Leila Ahmed

WOMEN AND GENDER IN ISLAM
Historical Roots of a Modern Debate

Yale University Press New Haven & London

Published with assistance from the foundation established in memory of Calvin Chapin of the Class of 1788, Yale College.

Copyright © 1992 by Yale University.
All rights reserved.
This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Designed by Jill Breitbarth.
Set in Sabon type by Brevis Press, Bethany, Connecticut.
Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ahmed, Leila.
Women and gender in Islam : historical roots of a modern debate / Leila Ahmed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-300-04942-0 (cloth)
978-0-300-05583-2 (pbk.)
1. Women—Arab countries—Social conditions. 2. Sexism—Arab countries—History. 3. Women, Muslim—Attitudes. 4. Feminism—Arab countries. I. Title.
HQ1784.A67 1992
305.48'6971—dc20 91-26901
CIP

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

20 19 18 17 16

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii
Introduction 1

PART 1
The Pre-Islamic Middle East 9

Chapter 1 Mesopotamia 11
Chapter 2 The Mediterranean Middle East 25

PART 2
Founding Discourses 39

Chapter 3 Women and the Rise of Islam 41
Chapter 4 The Transitional Age 64
Chapter 5 Elaboration of the Founding Discourses 79
Chapter 6 Medieval Islam 102

PART 3
New Discourses 125

Chapter 7 Social and Intellectual Change 127
Chapter 8 The Discourse of the Veil 144

Chapter 9 The First Feminists 169
Chapter 10 Divergent Voices 189
Chapter 11 The Struggle for the Future 208
Conclusion 235
Notes 249
Index 280

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I WORKED ON THIS BOOK FOR MANY YEARS, AND I AM indebted to numerous people and institutions. Colleagues and students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, especially in women's studies and Near Eastern studies, provided a challenging and supportive intellectual community and also generously allowed me the leaves that enabled me to carry the project forward. I am very grateful to the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and to the Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College, for fellowships that were critical to my being able to complete it. Colleagues in the Five College community and at numerous campuses where I have presented ideas in one way or another related to this book provided stimulating and provocative discussions that challenged and broadened my thinking. I particularly benefited from seminars at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, the Pembroke Center at Brown University, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, the Near Eastern Studies Program at Cornell University, and the Noun Symposium at Grinnell College.

My debt to the work of others, in Middle Eastern

Chapter 11

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FUTURE

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY the roles of Egyptian women underwent massive expansion and transformation. Women entered all arenas of white-collar and professional work, including aeronautics, engineering, big business, and politics—even becoming members of parliament. The only positions they have not occupied are judge and head of state. The nature and variety of their participation in the economy, in political life, and in the visible, dominant culture are now enormously complex. That participation, plus their numbers in the work force and the economic necessity that most middle-class families find their income to be, along with the man's, complicates, alters, and informs the discourse on women. The complexity arising from the changed social reality within the borders of the country is augmented by further dimensions of complexity arising from realities beyond the national borders—for example, Egypt's relationship to the West and the increased importance of regional and transregional forces. All of these affect the local situation in a variety of ways. The wealth of the oil states since the 1960s, for instance, has meant job opportunities for women as well as men, and perhaps it has

also meant the greater influence of Islam as a social idiom, another matter with an important impact on women. Similarly, the Iranian revolution and the spread of Islam as a political idiom in the Middle East and further afield, as in Pakistan, has potential implications for the situation in Egypt (and, indeed, in other Arab and Muslim countries). All these elements play a part in shaping today's discourses, in the Arab world generally and in Egypt. Only a full-length study focusing exclusively on these decades could adequately represent the complexity of the current reality and its discourses. Here I explore some major trends.

The 1952 revolution in Egypt inaugurated a new age for women by virtue of both its commitment to social egalitarianism and its proclaimed position on women. The first portent of the new socially egalitarian direction the government would take came with the Land Reform Law, issued in September 1952, limiting land ownership to two hundred fedans per person. The chief object of the law was to break the power of the landowners, two thousand of whom had owned 20 percent of the agricultural land before the revolution; at the same time, the further stipulations of the law that the surplus land was to be distributed among landless and small peasants also announced the intention of the government to pursue a policy of egalitarianism. After 1956, when the government had consolidated itself, it embraced "Arab Socialism" and embarked on a series of measures indicating its commitment to social and economic egalitarianism and to economic reform under state control, such as nationalization of foreign business interests and all big businesses in the industrial sector of the economy, rent control, minimum wage laws, and the introduction of social services. These measures eventually altered the class structure in Egypt in fundamental ways, in effect dissipating the old elite and drawing a new and broader segment of the population into the middle classes.

This transformation was as important for women as it was for men. The state proclaimed itself committed to opening the doors of opportunity to all its citizens, actively defined to include women. The National Charter, drafted and approved by the National Congress in 1962 (a charter reorganizing the political and constitutional life of the country), proclaimed that women and men should be considered equal working partners. The goals of socialism and social freedom could not be realized except "through an equal opportunity for every citizen to obtain a fair share of the national wealth"; and all citizens had the right and the obligation to work, women as well as men. "Woman must be regarded as equal to man and must, therefore, shed the remaining shackles that impede her free movement, so that she might take a constructive and profound part in the shaping of

life."[1] Already, in 1956, the state had granted women the vote and the right to run for political office. By 1957 two women had been elected to the national assembly, and by 1962 a woman, Dr. Hikmat Abu Zaid, had been appointed minister of social affairs by Nasser.

Educational policy and the government's forcefully egalitarian actions in that arena were undoubtedly of enormous importance in bringing about change and expansion in women's roles. The first steps were a governmental decree in 1952 making primary education free and compulsory for all between the ages of six and twelve and the policy of coeducation at the primary level, which was thenceforth followed.[2] In the following years education was declared free at all levels, including the university level. Entry into coeducational departments at the universities was competitive, based on grades and regardless of sex. The state provided financial assistance to those in need, as well as to outstanding students in recognition of their excellence. It also virtually guaranteed employment to university graduates, adding a further incentive to the pursuit of a degree.

Additional incentives were scarcely needed. The demand for education for both girls and boys, women and men, particularly in urban areas, was immense. The supply could not meet the demand. Facilities and teachers served more than one daily shift, and the student-teacher ratio was stretched to the utmost.[3] As a result, whereas in 1952 only 45 percent of primary-school-age children attended school, by 1960 the figure had risen to 65 percent, and by 1967, to 80 percent. Thereafter, enrollment for both sexes dropped slightly, probably reflecting the congestion in the educational system and the increase of state spending on arms after the 1967 defeat by Israel. Female enrollment continued to rise faster than male enrollment, however, and the gap between the two rates gradually decreased, stabilizing by the 1970s at all levels to about two males to one female.[4]

The most dramatic increase in women's participation in education occurred in higher education—at universities and other institutes of higher education. Women's enrollment rose rapidly and at a much faster pace than men's. The ratio of males to females, which had stood at 13.2 to 1 in 1953–54, was 1.8 to 1 in 1976. In 1953–54 there were 6,121 women attending universities and institutes of higher education, and by 1962 this figure had risen to 19,762. By 1980 some 154,000 women held university degrees, and women degree-holders constituted a quarter of the university graduates in the nation.[5]

Women's access to education resulted in a radical change in the number of employed women and their pattern of employment. Women had formed 4 percent of the wage labor force in 1962, and the majority of those 618,000 women had been illiterate rural workers engaged in agricultural work. By 1982 over 15 percent of Egyptian women, or one million people, were in formal employment outside the home, with the majority concentrated in urban areas. The entry of educated women into the labor force accounts almost entirely for the increase.[6] The greatest proportion of them were found in professional, technical, and scientific fields, women holding 26 percent of such employment in the country. Teaching and health-related work were the foremost growth occupations, and clerical work and the civil service also significantly expanded as fields of employment for women. But women penetrate virtually all professions, notably aeronautics, engineering, politics, agriculture, medicine, law, journalism, film, business, radio, and television (radio and television being the ones in which women have achieved notable prominence).

In spite of these distinctly positive developments, Egypt's economic and population problems meant that the state fell far short of its objective of eliminating illiteracy. To begin with, some segments of the population were better served by the system than others. Urban areas, for instance, tended to be better provided with educational facilities than rural areas. Moreover, the educational system continued in some degree to perpetuate class bias by favoring the better-off as against the poorest classes, both urban and rural, for families at the lower economic level were often unable to provide children with books and clothes long past the age of six, and they even needed the child's financial contribution to help support the family. Nor were the benefits of the kind that primary education offered in terms of the labor the child was expected to perform, such as helping with agricultural work, entirely obvious.[7]

In this situation girls, for whom the benefits of education were even less obvious than for boys, tended to be held back from school at a higher rate than boys, particularly in rural areas. Literacy figures since the 1950s show improvement but also indicate the size of the illiteracy problem with which Egypt has to contend, and reveal the gap between female and male literacy rates. Overall, the illiteracy rate for the population dropped from about 70 percent to 56 percent between 1960 and 1976, male illiteracy dropping from 56 percent to 43 percent and female illiteracy from 84 percent to 71 percent.[8]

One important factor modifying the fight against illiteracy has been the rate of population growth: as educational programs expanded, so too did the population, rising from twenty-six million to thirty-eight million between 1960 and 1976. Passing the forty million mark in the early 1980s, it is growing at a rate of about 2.3 percent per year, nearly one million

additional people annually.[9] The expansion of educational facilities has not kept pace.

Not until after the revolution did the state begin to take steps to control population growth by promoting birth control, opening the first family planning clinics in 1955. The government championed family planning through the 1960s, until the 1967 war, after which increased spending on arms led to the curtailment of funding in this area, as in others. Although in the early 1970s a government adviser declared that the threat from population growth was as great as the threat from Egypt's Zionist enemies,[10] and Sadat declared his support for family planning, it was not until late in the decade that funding for the programs again became available and a network of 3,675 clinics was established nationwide. Although the coverage is far from complete, it is considerably more extensive than in most developing countries. Nonetheless, birth control methods are still not widely adopted, estimates suggesting that no more than 5 percent to 8 percent of couples use them.[11] The reasons for this have never been adequately studied. The service may be inadequate: perhaps the clinics are not disseminating information widely or efficiently enough, for example, and perhaps they do not have the support of an adequate publicity campaign. It is possible that many believe (wrongly) that birth control is contrary to Islamic precepts.

Then, too, couples may not wish to limit fertility. The fairly high infant mortality rate (119 deaths per 1,000 births in 1967 and probably a higher rate in the countryside) and the wish to ensure that there will be surviving children are among many reasons to have large families. Children offer security against disability or old age, and the additional labor they provide can be significant, particularly in rural areas. Given the current legal situation, which allows men easy divorce, women may see additional children as psychologically likely to bind the man and to make divorce financially onerous, for a father is required to support his children. Studies on Egypt and elsewhere distinctly suggest a strong link between literacy and limited fertility, those on Egypt showing a correlation between more extensive use of contraceptives and smaller families among educated, urban couples.[12] But as population growth outstrips the rate of increase in literacy, the solution seems to lie in vastly increased expenditures on both educational and birth control programs, a solution that, given Egypt's somewhat bleak economic situation, seems at present scarcely feasible.

Thus an illiteracy rate that remains high because the education campaign cannot keep up with population growth coexists with the expansion of education and opportunities for a significant segment of the population, a

segment large enough for real social and cultural change for both women and men to be effected. It has been estimated that increasing and equalizing educational opportunities, enlarging the pool of the literate and allowing new groups to send their children to school, thus enabling them to enter professional and white-collar occupations, markedly transformed the Egyptian class structure. In the first two decades after the revolution, it has been suggested, Egyptian society witnessed a social fluidity and upward mobility unequaled in any other period in this century.[13]

Higher educational attainment, upward social mobility among both men and women, and women's increasing presence in the urban work force have intersected with another concurrent demographic change: migration. Like many developing countries, Egypt has experienced substantial migration from rural to urban areas in the last decades, due, among other reasons, to population growth and overcrowding in rural areas, where there is little room for expansion in agricultural employment, and to education and the raised expectations it creates, for the kinds of employment and amenities considered suitable are not available in rural areas. Between 1960 and 1976 the population of Egypt doubled, while that of its urban centers—chiefly Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez—tripled. Cairo in particular, the capital and the largest city in the Middle East, grew rapidly, nearly doubling its population between 1960 and 1976 (from 4.8 million to 8.0 million). In addition to laborers in search of work, and their families, sizable numbers of students also arrived (200,000 in 1975, for instance), often accompanied by family members and job seekers.[14] The population density of Cairo is now greater than New York's, although Cairo is not a city of high-rise buildings—a fact that may suggest something of its teeming overcrowdedness. Although this enormous swelling in the city's population is due in part to natural increase, the influx from rural areas is clearly substantial. Some Cairenes naturally regard these developments with apprehension. Not only are the physical facilities of the city strained, but also, Cairenes lament, this flood of migrants, to whom they critically refer as "rural hoards," are arriving at such a rate that instead of the city urbanizing the migrant peasantry the latter is ruralizing the city, overwhelming the mores of the city with those of village life.[15]

Together these trends in education, the broadening base of literacy, and upward social mobility meant that a significantly broadened segment of the population was increasingly politicized.[16] They meant, too, that this broadened segment of the population, drawn from rural as well as urban backgrounds and constituting the emergent middle classes, helped shape mainstream culture and its discourses on all the levels at which they man-

ifest themselves, in literature, politics, and thought and in the language of custom and dress. Not only were mainstream culture and its discourses now being articulated from a broader social base but they were for the first time in many centuries also being shaped by significant numbers of women.[17] Television, film, and literature, as well as styles of dress, reflected the altered demography of cultural production and of the production of mainstream discourses.

With respect to women and the issue of women the cultural productions and discourses from the 1950s to the 1980s appear to fall into two distinct phases. The first phase was marked by a lively feminism, finding expression in organizational activities and in literary forms that showed a critical consciousness of the politics of male domination in psychological and other realms not previously explored. Whereas the first feminists of the century had addressed themselves primarily to contesting and attempting to reform the overt, formally sanctioned injustices to women enshrined in the law and in accepted social practices, by the 1960s and 1970s, in addition to continuing the battle to institute reform in the Personal Status Laws (the laws governing marriage), women now began to make visible the covert, unofficial aggressions and manipulations, both psychological and physical, to which they were subject and to address themselves to and organize around taboo issues, such as contraception and clitoridectomy.[18] Research currently under way indicates that in terms of formal and informal organizational activities as well as in literary terms, the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were an era of dynamic feminism.[19]

In literature the generation of women who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s produced a number of feminist writers, most from the urban middle classes, who addressed themselves to articulating the psychological manipulations of middle-class life, as well as to attacking the casual destruction of women permitted by the culture. Among the many writers who could be included in this group, two stand out as masters of the precise revelation of the discrete and destructive androcentric practices of the middle classes: Alifa Rifaat and Andrée Chedid. Rifaat's stories are ironic, cool, and merciless, dissecting with annihilating precision the culturally sanctioned destructive egotism of the Egyptian male. Chedid, with an equally seeing eye and more open mourning, chronicles the exploitation and abuse of women. The first writer, it may be noted, is of Muslim background and writes in Arabic, the other of Christian background and writes in French—but insofar as culturally sanctioned practices go, there is little difference in the abuse of women each presents as regarded as permissible by the community depicted, Muslim or Christian.

Besides addressing situations involving psychological aggression against women, Chedid also concerns herself with issues of child marriage and that grand, culturally sanctioned savagery, the murder of women for "honor." In her novel *From Sleep Unbound (Le Sommeil délivré)*, for example, a novel about a teenage girl married against her will to a middle-aged man, the story of the murdered Sayeda, though only briefly mentioned, occupies a central place in literary and psychological terms. Sayeda, a widow, is seen one evening by a palm grove, talking to a man, which casts shame on her. "The father and brother lost their heads. They killed her."[20]

In exposing hidden physical abuses, whether culturally sanctioned and openly performed, like the practice of clitoridectomy, or culturally invisible, furtively committed, and denied abuses, such as the sexual abuse of children, no writer has played a more important and eloquent role than Nawal El-Saadawi—nor has any feminist been more outspoken and done more to challenge the misogynist and androcentric practices of the culture. In more recent novels El-Saadawi has also dealt with such issues as prostitution and illegitimacy, as well as the psychological abuse of women.

Even this naming of the unnamed and invisible inhumanities toward women exposes no more than a fraction of the pervasive cruelties to which they may be subjected. Countless semisanctioned practices and unsanctioned but routine practices—many still unnoticed and unrecorded—are visited on women. Brief items such as the findings of a 1946 report on women workers at the Mahalla al-kubra spinning and weaving factory, which notes that 90 percent of the women there suffered from tuberculosis, hint at the textually invisible and largely unchronicled deprivations and inhumanities to which girls and women are subject.[21] Of course, not only women suffer from tuberculosis, malnutrition, and ill-treatment. The problems of poverty and human rights are generalized, affecting boys and men as well as girls and women in much of the Middle East. But among the economically deprived, females are routinely more deprived and more abused than males. Attitudes that permit the ill-treatment and unjust treatment of women in the law courts permit, in a continuum, their casual and systemic deprivation and ill-treatment in other ways and in informal domains.

It must be noted, however, that the existence of numerous and invisible practices destructive of women within Egyptian society does not mean that the generality of Egyptian or Muslim or Arab men can be assumed to be more brutal to women or more misogynist than Western men are. To read Nawal El-Saadawi's *Hidden Face of Eve* with its graphic exposures of the appalling abuses of women and girls that she encountered as a medical

doctor, including cases of incest, and to conclude therefrom that it represents the lot of the generality of Egyptian women, which must consequently indeed be terrible, would be about as valid a reaction as if someone from an Arab culture reading works on rape or incest in the United States or books in one way or another focused on exposing extremes of misogynist conduct there concluded that the books described the common lot of American women, who were consequently deeply to be pitied.

Writers of the generation here discussed, then, took feminist discourse forward and into explorations and exposés of the sexual politics of domination and the victimization of women in the informal and personal realms of life. This overt concern with feminism seems distinctly absent among women of the succeeding generation, women coming of age in the 1970s and 1980s. It is among women of this succeeding generation—women of the second phase—that the use of the veil is most prevalent.

Over the middle decades of the century the veil, whether a covering for face or head, virtually disappeared from the Egyptian urban scene—though not from small towns and rural areas, where wearing a veil as a headdress continued to be the norm. Already abandoned before the Nasser era by the upper and middle classes of Cairo and other cities, it became rare to see the veil in urban areas after the revolution and its espousal of women's place as citizen and worker, except in popular quarters, and even there it was growing uncommon.

Investigators commonly fix on 1967, the year that Egypt was defeated by Israel, as the moment after which Islamism began to take hold. People seeking to make sense of the defeat, which had come as a shock, came up with a variety of explanations—that the military had grown elitist, corrupt, and bureaucratic, for example, or that Egypt was underdeveloped technologically. Investigators claim that one reason in particular found a general resonance: God had abandoned Egypt and allowed it to be defeated because the Egyptians had abandoned God. A vision of the Virgin Mary appeared, perhaps manifesting this mood of religiosity, in a small church in a suburb of Cairo marking the site of the holy family's resting place in their flight to Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians, Christian and Muslim alike, flocked to see the vision, which continued to appear for several months. The Coptic clergy declared that the vision meant Mary was saying, "I know, Egyptians, you are very sad because you can no longer visit Jerusalem, and that is why I come to you instead."[22]

Another consequence of the defeat was the people's loss of faith in Nasser and in his entire secularist ideology and his "socialist" program, which

were now judged to have been failures. The defeat came at a difficult moment for the government. For a variety of reasons the economy was in difficulties. The expense of the Yemeni War (1962–67) and the waste, mismanagement, and corruption that plagued some of the schemes at home, plus the long-term nature of some of the projects, which needed more time to give returns, all contributed to Egypt's finding itself in economic straits by 1964–65. The defeat of 1967 meant not only the burden of coping with the refugees from towns in the canal zone—about half a million of them—the expense of rebuilding the region, and the doubling of the military budget for arms replacement but also the weakening of the Nasser government: having lost the confidence of the people, it was no longer in a position to impose unpopular and austere economic measures. Those last years of the Nasser government consequently marked a turning point in Egyptian internal economic policies. The government began to make concessions to the affluent and powerful classes and to retreat from its socialist policies—a retreat that became flagrantly obvious after Nasser's death in 1969 and through the 1970s under Sadat.

Islamist groups grew stronger and more widespread in the 1970s and have continued to gain ground since, as has their visible emblem, Islamic dress, for both men and women—though the dress is more obvious and perhaps more widespread among women. A variety of factors have contributed to the spread of these groups and the new type of Islamic outlook. Sadat, who was under attack from Nasserists and leftists as the government retreated from socialist commitments, actively encouraged the Muslim Brethren (perhaps urged to do so by Saudi Arabia) so that it might serve as a base of opposition to his opponents. He permitted the Brethren to resume their activities, which Nasser had banned, and their publications soon reached a wide audience and helped disseminate the religious idiom as the idiom of political discourse. Furthermore, as their publications turned to criticizing not only Nasserism and communism but also Sadat's policies, particularly after the treaty with Israel, their religious idiom also became the language of political dissent and discontent. With other discourses of opposition silenced—leftist publications had been banned—the Islamic idiom became the only available vehicle of dissent. Once allowed to gain popularity and legitimacy, the Islamist position was difficult to limit: Sadat could take action against leftists and Nasserists, but once the Islamists had gained ground, he could not afford to lay himself open to the charge of being anti-Islamic. Sadat himself began to use the idiom of religion to gain support and legitimacy, declaring himself committed to a state based on the twin pillars of Iman (faith) and ʿIlm (science).[23]

In addition, external political interests doubtless played a direct part in fostering Islam as the medium of political discourse and as the language of social being. It was rumored, for instance, that Saudi Arabia and Libya used their oil wealth in Egypt and in other parts of the Middle East to boost the membership of Islamic groups as well as to promote the adoption of Islamic dress. Men and women said they were offered sums of money to affiliate with Islamic groups or to persuade others to do so. Some women related that they had been offered a small sum for every woman they persuaded to wear a veil, and rumors circulated of men who threatened to divorce their wives if they did not adopt Islamic dress.[24]

Conditions meanwhile were such as to breed discontent. The government had embarked on the Infitah, or open-door, policy and had promulgated a series of new laws, including ones that offered concessionary terms to foreign investors, the object of which was ostensibly to encourage foreign investments, both Western and Arab, and to promote growth. In practice, the concessions led to foreign investments lucrative only to foreigners and to a few Egyptian middlemen, in nonproductive areas like tourism, banking, and fast foods—Kentucky Fried Chicken and Wimpy's, for example—and to the flooding of the country with luxury and consumer goods to the detriment of the local textile, clothing, and tobacco industries. Some Egyptians made huge fortunes, particularly individuals connected with the government and in a position to maneuver matters to their and their foreign partners' advantage. Abuses and corruption, and ostentatious consumerism among some, were rife. A few major scandals exposing such deals rocked the country. In one of them an archaeologist, Dr. Nᶜimat Fuad, a woman, emerged as the national hero who single-handedly publicized and succeeded eventually in bringing about the cancellation of one such scheme. The deal, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, involved a foreign property-development company and a newly formed Egyptian tourist company that acquired land near the pyramids at concessionary rates to develop a giant tourist complex along the lines of Disneyland. But for Fuad, this archaeologically rich area would have been destroyed, and a Disneyland-type development would have permanently loomed at the side of the Sphinx and the pyramids.[25]

A sense that corruption and moral breakdown were rife and were associated with foreigners, Arab and Western, began to be common among some Egyptians. This laxity was felt to be affecting personal as well as business mores. An unfamiliar and culturally offensive mixing of the sexes—drinking, dating, sex—were seen as in vogue. Rumor even suggested that in the pervasive materialist atmosphere respectable women were augmenting their income by selling sexual favors to wealthy Arabs.[26]

Besides retreating from a commitment to the lower half of society and to the democratization of opportunity, the government, in adopting the open-door policy, also veered away from the Soviet Union in favor of alignment with the West and conservative Arab oil-states and accommodation with Israel. The scandals involving corrupt Egyptian middlemen implicated Arab oil wealth as often as other foreign interests. Arabs were given rights to acquire property, and tourism from Arab oil-states increased, and with it more conspicuous consumerism.

The relaxation of restrictions, including restrictions on emigration, benefited some Egyptians of the professional classes, who left Egypt for the Arab oil-states, generally for a limited period of years. By 1980 an estimated one and a half million Egyptians worked abroad in the Arab world. Perhaps as many as a third of these were women, mostly professionals (teachers, nurses) but also domestics and nannies.[27] The government encouraged this migration in the belief that it would ease unemployment and earn Egypt much-needed hard currency. It did achieve the latter—remittances from Egyptian workers abroad soon became Egypt's major source of hard currency—but it did not reduce unemployment, bringing about rather a brain drain, for the most skilled and employable left, not the unemployed. (The repercussions of this brain drain, particularly its impact on education, have yet to be gauged.)[28] Returning workers, whose salaries vastly exceeded earnings for the same work at home, joined the ranks of conspicuous consumers, acquiring televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines. The markets of Cairo and Port Said filled with dazzling consumer items far beyond the reach of the majority of Egyptians.

While the open-door policy brought sudden wealth for a few, along with the spectacle of blatant corruption and avid consumerism, most Egyptians experienced its negative effects, exacerbated by the state's retreat from internal development and the public sector. These were high inflation; serious shortages, particularly in housing; low wages; reduced employment prospects; and poor working conditions. Matriculations at the university continued at the previous high rate and even increased—whereas the public sector, the chief source of employment, was cut back. The results were delays in employment, poor salaries and working conditions, and, for the educated, the increasing likelihood of unemployment. Sadat's promise of an "era of prosperity" and his assertion that every Egyptian would have a villa and a car was an extravagant and wildly unrealistic fantasy. Exem-

plifying the trend were the food riots when bread subsidies were cut in 1977: Sadat characterized the riots as "an uprising of thieves" and as a communist conspiracy, but the editor of the influential paper *Al-ahram,* which had previously supported the open-door policy, began to write critical editorials. The open-door policy had been such a success, the editor noted sarcastically, that plenty of German, Dutch, and Danish beer and foreign cigarettes were available and that an abundance of Kentucky Fried Chicken and other foreign fast-food chains were rapidly changing the eating habits of ordinary Egyptians, giving them a taste for hamburger instead of *ful* (beans). In other editorials he commented on the flaunting of waste and wealth in the midst of suffering.[29]

Veiling first made its appearance among university students in major urban centers, such as Cairo, Alexandria, and Assiut, and it is among these students and young professionals of both sexes that formal or informal affiliation with the Islamist trend, indicated outwardly by veiling among women, became most prevalent. Although the term *veiling* is commonly used in English to refer to the new "Islamic" dress—and in Arabic the women are referred to as *mutahajibat,* "veiled ones"—the clothing that women wear often in fact does not include a veil in the sense of a face covering, but rather includes a variety of styles of headgear and a variety of coverings for the face, which mask it to a greater or lesser degree—if worn at all. The garments, of whatever style, are intended to conform to the Islamic requirement that dress be modest, that is, not sexually enticing; the mandate applies to both men and women. It is generally taken to mean robes or loose-fitting, long-sleeved, ankle-length garments that do not reveal the contours of the body. Both men and women conforming to this code have developed styles of dress that are essentially quite new, neither the traditional dress of Egypt nor the dress of any other part of the Arab world, or the West, though they often combine features of all three. Although called Islamic dress (*al-ziyy al-islami*), the term means that they fulfill the Islamic requirement of modesty, not that they derived, as a style of clothing, from an Islamic society of the past.

Accordingly, men complying with the requirement of modesty may wear Arabian-style robes (rather than Egyptian robes), sandals, and sometimes a long scarf on the head, or they may wear baggy trousers and loose shirts.[30] Women wear robes in a variety of styles, all of which resemble Western styles more than they do traditional peasant dress, except that the skirts are ankle length and the sleeves long. With the robes they wear an assortment of headgear, ranging from scarves, hats, and bonnets to what might

be described as wimples and fabric balaclavas; and some of them, depending on how they personally interpret the requirement for modesty, wear face veils, which again come in a variety of styles and degrees of thickness and length. Finally, some also wear gloves. The use of this last item is somewhat bizarre, for there were no gloves in Arabia in Muhammad's day, when the requirements for modesty of dress were set, but perhaps their wearers interpret the Islamic requirement as intending women to appropriate the latest inventions of modernity in the service of modesty.

The streets of Cairo consequently present a somewhat motley appearance. Many styles of female Islamic attire are seen there, that is, in addition to the Western-style clothing that some still wear—Western styles for women were always to some extent and are nowadays in particular interpreted conservatively in the sense of avoiding the display of bare flesh. One observer described the scene: "One is struck by the number of women wearing costumes rather similar to those of Catholic nuns before Vatican II, although their flowing dresses, coifs and long wimples are usually in light rather than dark colors. Occasionally the old-fashioned yashmak, or face veil, is also seen, though this is rarer. Other women wear pantsuits, often with long jackets and a wimple, or at least a large kerchief on their heads, leaving only the face and hands uncovered."[31] That al-ziyy al-islami does not resemble traditional dress, even though traditional dress fulfills all the requirements of Islamic modesty, is perhaps as significant a fact about it as any other. In modern times traditional dress has come to be confined to the lower classes and the peasantry; traditional dress therefore identifies the wearer as from these classes, whereas al-ziyy al-islami, which might be seen as a democratic dress, erases class origins.

Studies indicate that youth and a high educational achievement characterize adherents of the new Islamist trend. For men, who have been more fully studied and about whom we have more information, the age at which they joined an Islamic group was typically between seventeen and twenty-six, whereas university women in Islamic dress were generally in their late teens to early twenties, rarely older.[32] Women and men alike had generally attended or were attending university, often in the fields—medicine, engineering, military sciences, pharmaceutics—that require the highest grades to get into, though some are graduates of secondary or technical schools.

Two further factors emerge as crucial variables among the young people affiliated, formally or informally, with the contemporary Islamic movement: they are for the most part members of the new middle classes and, more typically, of the lower middle class and often have a rural background

or come from families that have recently migrated to urban centers. (Class in these studies was determined by a combination of indicators, including the parents' level of education and type of employment.)

A study conducted among veiled and unveiled women at Cairo University, based on responses from about two hundred women from each group, clearly shows a direct correlation between veiling and a lower level of education in both parents, to the point that the educational level of the parents was a strong predictor of whether the daughter would be veiled. Thus a considerably larger proportion of fathers of veiled women had not progressed beyond basic literacy, or at best intermediate education, compared to the fathers of unveiled women, who more commonly were graduates of a secondary school or university. Similarly, a significantly larger proportion of the mothers of veiled women had had minimal schooling or were illiterate compared to the mothers of unveiled women (67 percent as against 47 percent). Importantly, the majority of veiled students (77 percent) came from families in which other women were veiled, and for a large proportion (82 percent) this included the mother.[33] That is to say, for the majority adoption of al-ziyy al-islami entailed not innovation and conformity to new, socially accepted codes of dress but, on the contrary, adoption of a "modern" version of the conventions of dress they and their families were accustomed to.

These findings regarding class and educational background also hold good for men affiliating with Islamic groups. As for the veiled university students, the men had typically attained or were in process of attaining a higher educational level than their father, and the mother was likely to be either illiterate or to have had minimal schooling. Mothers of men and women alike were important sources of "traditional" and "Islamic" values. The "typical" male member of an Islamic group, for example, had parents who were born in rural villages and who had retained, "particularly the mother, village manners and values" and had acquired from the mother "a strong dose of religion and tradition."[34]

Taken together, these studies suggest a number of commonalities in the psychosocial composition of people affiliating with the Islamic trend, in the problems confronting them, and in the strategies to which they resort to cope with them. Typically they are educationally and professionally upwardly mobile—or at least with the abilities and aspirations of the upwardly mobile, though society threatens to frustrate their aspirations—and are confronting bewildering, anonymous, cosmopolitan city life for the first time, a city life in which vivid inequalities, consumerism and materialism, foreign mores, and unscrupulous business practices linked to the foreign

presence, whether Western or Arab, are glaringly apparent. The women are generally the first generation of women in their family to emerge socially into a sexually integrated world—where men and women are intermingled on the university campuses, in the crowded transport system, and in the professions. In the face of such stresses and novelties, preserving the conventions of dress that prevail in the family at home while adopting the version of that dress that proclaims educational and professional upward mobility appears above all to be a practical coping strategy, enabling women to negotiate in the new world while affirming the traditional values of their upbringing.

Joining Islamic groups or, as is the case for most women, informally affiliating with the trend, then, evidently carries the comfort of bringing the values of home and childhood to the city and its foreign and morally overwhelming ways. This psychological and social dimension appears to be among the most important elements underlying the trend. Inner ease and resolution, often described as a feeling of peace, of centeredness, brought about by the formal or public aligning of oneself with Islam, are prominent features of women's and men's accounts of why they made that alignment and how they feel about it.[35] Affiliation with Islamism also brought comfort by providing a sense of community. Men's groups, which have a formal organization, place great emphasis on brotherhood, mutual support, and sharing and in effect function as extended families—an aspect that is especially attractive to uprooted individuals in an alien environment.[36] Though less likely to be formally organized into groups, the informal sisterhood is doubtless likely to offer a similar sense of community, mutual support, and commonality of values.

Essentially, the adoption of Islamic dress and the affiliation with Islamism express an affirmation of ethical and social customs—particularly with regard to mixing with the opposite sex—that those adopting the dress and affiliation are comfortable with and accustomed to. For women Islamic dress also appears to bring a variety of distinct practical advantages. On the simplest, most material level, it is economical. Women adopting Islamic dress are saved the expense of acquiring fashionable clothes and having more than two or three outfits. The dress also protects them from male harassment. In responding to a questionnaire women stated that wearing Islamic dress resulted in a marked difference in the way they were treated in public places.[37]

These practical advantages partially explain why university and professional women in particular adopt Islamic dress—women who daily venture onto coeducational campuses and into sexually integrated work places on

crowded public transport in cities in which, given the strong rural origin of much of the population, sexually integrated social space is still an alien, uncomfortable social reality for both women and men. Thus the ritual invocation through dress of the notion of segregation places the integrated reality in a framework that defuses it of stress and impropriety. At the same time it declares women's presence in public space to be in no way a challenge to or a violation of the Islamic sociocultural ethic.

The dress has a number of other decidedly practical advantages. For example, the fact that wearing it signals the wearer's adherence to an Islamic moral and sexual code has the paradoxical effect, as some women have attested, of allowing them to strike up friendships with men and be seen with them without the fear that they will be dubbed immoral or their reputations damaged. Women declare that they avoided being seen in conversation with a man before adopting Islamic dress, but now they feel free to study with men in their classes or even walk with them to the station without any cost to their reputation.[38] In an age in which arranged marriages are disappearing and women need find their own marriage partners, clothes that enable women to socialize with men to some degree and at the same time indicate their adherence to a strict moral code (which makes them attractive as wives) are advantageous in very tangible ways.

In adopting Islamic dress, then, women are in effect "carving out legitimate public space for themselves," as one analyst of the phenomenon put it, and public space is by this means being redefined to accommodate women.[39] The adoption of the dress does not declare women's place to be in the home but, on the contrary, legitimizes their presence outside it. Consequently, it appears that the prevalence of the Islamic mode among women coming of age in the 1970s and 1980s—women of the second phase—cannot be seen as a retreat from the affirmations of female autonomy and subjectivity made by the generation of women who immediately preceded them. Although the voice of overt feminism and perhaps even feminist consciousness may be absent, the entry of women into the university, the professions, and public space in unprecedentedly large numbers and the availability of education and professional occupations to women from a far broader segment of the population than before cannot be construed as regressive, however apparently conservative the uniform they wear to accomplish these moves comfortably.

Moreover, it appears that the particular language adopted in pursuit of goals of female autonomy and subjectivity, be this the idiom of "feminism" and "Western" dress or that of "Islam" and the "veil," is to an important degree, in these two recent generations as in past generations, a function of class and the urban-rural divisions of society. The pursuit of these goals in terms of the language of Western dress, secularism, and explicit "feminism" was evidently typical predominantly of the urban middle classes—and consequently "feminism" as a political movement may perhaps justly be described as "elitist or sectional, and cut off from the grass roots of society"—whereas women's pursuit of those same goals in the language of Islamism and the veil appears to represent the quest for autonomy at the grass-roots level.[40] To that extent, the criticism that the older generation of urban middle-class feminists is directing at the new generation of women and their "return to the veil" is yet another version of the old class warfare. One way of describing the process that has led in recent decades to the emergence of Islamic dress and affiliations with Islamism as a dominant discourse of social being is in terms of its marking a broad demographic change—a change that has democratized mainstream culture and mores and led to the rise and gradual predominance of a vocabulary of dress and social being defined from below, by the emergent middle classes, rather than by the formerly culturally dominant upper and middle classes. This change to a sociocultural vernacular is facilitating the assimilation of the newly urban, newly educated middle classes to modernity and to a sexually integrated social reality. From this perspective Islamic dress can be seen as the uniform, not of reaction, but of transition; it can be seen, not as a return to traditional dress, but as the adoption of Western dress—with modifications to make it acceptable to the wearer's notions of propriety. Far from indicating that the wearers remain fixed in the world of tradition and the past, then, Islamic dress is the uniform of arrival, signaling entrance into, and determination to move forward in, modernity.

Viewed as expressing personal and familial mores, habits of dress, and ethics and as reflecting the layperson's understanding of Islam, veiling and the Islamist trend offer the preceding generation of feminists and other critics no better ground for denouncing them than Amin or Sha'rawi had to attack the veil. Unfortunately, however, establishment Islam (institutional and legal Islam) articulates a different Islam from the ethical message that the layperson justifiably hears or reads in the Quran, and unfortunately, that Islam, intolerant of all understandings of the religion except its own, which is authoritarian, implacably androcentric, and hostile to women, has been and continues to be the established version of Islam, the Islam of the politically powerful. These profoundly different meanings of Islam both exist simultaneously, the personal meaning as a source of ethical and spiritual comfort for those raised within traditional backgrounds and

the political and historical meaning as the system of law and government imposed by the politically dominant; and these meanings are at the root of the profoundly different views of Islam held by the preceding generation of feminists and the current generation of women adopting Islamic dress. They are seeing and arguing about two different Islams.

That a profound gulf separates lay Islam, the Islam to which women are declaring their allegiance by affiliating with Islamism, from establishment Islam is a subject that has received little investigation. In discussions women's adoption of Islamic dress is commonly assumed to denote an affiliation with "conservative" ethical and social habits, and discussants generally also assume that the affiliation automatically connotes support for male dominance and female subservience. Consequently, investigations into the possible "feminist" positions taken by women adopting Islamic dress—positions supportive of female autonomy and equality articulated in terms totally different from the language of Western and Western-affiliated feminism—have yet to be conducted.

Among the few systematic investigations of "veiled" women's views on the roles of women is the one done by Zeinab Radwan and her associates, cited above. Radwan questioned both veiled and unveiled university students on a range of questions relating to women's education and women's roles in the home and in marriage, in the workplace, and in public and political life. The results of the inquiry indicate, as Radwan stresses, that veiled women are consistently more conservative and less "feminist" than their unveiled sisters. For example, more unveiled than veiled women believed that women's education was important (93 percent and 88 percent respectively), and more unveiled than veiled women believed that women had the right to pursue education to the highest levels (98 percent and 92 percent). Similarly, on the question of whether women might work outside the home, more unveiled than veiled women agreed that such work was acceptable (95 percent and 88 percent), and more unveiled than veiled women said they themselves would work on graduating (88 percent and 77 percent). On the matter of women's work, it is worth noting, the responses from both groups suggest that a gap existed between what the women said they believed in general and what they said was appropriate for themselves. Thus a majority in both groups agreed with the proposition that the purpose of educating women was to enable them to be good wives (54 percent of the unveiled and 76 percent of the veiled), and only a small minority in either group thought that the purpose was to prepare women for jobs (5 percent and 2 percent); at the same time, a large majority in both groups, as I just noted, not only agreed that women were entitled to work if they wished or needed to but also stated that they themselves would seek jobs. Both groups thought the most appropriate work for women was in education (43 percent among the unveiled and 51 among the veiled), followed by medicine (excluding nursing; 31 percent of the unveiled and 48 percent of the veiled).[41]

With regard to political life, again more unveiled women than veiled believed women and men should have the same rights and duties in public life (81 percent and 53 percent), and more unveiled than veiled agreed that women should have the right to occupy the highest positions in the land (90 percent and 63 percent). Asked whether there should be equality between women and men in marriage, 66 percent of unveiled women and 38 percent of veiled women agreed that there should.[42]

Radwan is correct, then, in pointing out in her report that veiled women's responses were consistently more conservative and less feminist. But these figures are, if anything, even more striking for the *similarities* they reveal between the two groups of women, veiled and unveiled, and for their indication that the overwhelming majority of veiled women support women's rights to education and to work, that a majority support equality in public life and equal political rights, and that a substantial proportion even support equality in marriage. In all these matters veiled women's views do not conform to the conventional notion of them as committed to the view that women's place is in the home nor to the view that women are second-class citizens without political rights or rights to paid employment outside the home. Even though the majority agreed with the proposition that the purpose of educating women was to make them better wives, the sum of their responses on matters of women's roles and rights indicates that most were consistently *for* education, *for* the right to employment, *for* avenues of professional achievement being open to women, and *for* equal political rights, with only the matter of equality in the marital relationship failing to be supported by more than half the veiled women investigated.

Not only do these responses not conform to the notion that women's place is in the home, identified with traditional Islam, but they do not conform with the views of women encoded in the shariʿa, although they do accord with some interpretations of the role of women put forward by the Muslim Brethren and others, like Zeinab al-Ghazali. Muslim canon law as conventionally interpreted and as legally in force in Egypt today permits polygamy and easy divorce for men, among other things. Given the notion of the different rights of men and women within marriage articulated in these legal ideas, what place is there for any belief among veiled women, let alone among 38 percent of them, in marital equality?

This disparity between the views of veiled women and those of the shariʿa and Islam as conventionally interpreted suggests that perhaps these women have only a vague idea regarding the technicalities enshrined in establishment Islam and the shariʿa with respect to women and are relying on their own understanding of and feelings about Islam in forming their ideas, or perhaps they are aware of the technicalities of traditional interpretations but contest them—as Zeinab al-Ghazali did with respect to her own life. Some activities being pursued by some veiled women, such as reclaiming of the right to attend prayer in mosques, appear to support the view that some veiled women are to some extent challenging the practices of establishment Islam with respect to women. But little research is available on some Muslim women's return to the mosques and its significance.

The questionnaire unfortunately did not ask the women about their views on conventional and legal Islamic interpretations of polygamy or the male right to divorce and women's general lack of rights in the commonly practiced forms of marriage. They were asked, however, whether they would approve an across-the-board imposition of shariʿa law as part of a package designed to elevate society to "a higher level of Islamic consciousness" (the package would also include improved religious education for children and adults). Sixty-seven percent of the veiled women agreed to the introduction of a general program of reform that included the imposition of shariʿa law. Astonishingly, as many as 52.7 percent of the unveiled women also agreed to this proposal.

Given the openness of the veiled women to the idea of women's having jobs, holding high political office, having access to all levels of education, and sharing equality in political and civil matters and even, for a substantial number of them, in marriage, this endorsement of shariʿa law seems to connote a faith in the inherent justice of Islam and a faith that this justice must be reflected in the laws of Islam, plus a vagueness as to what the shariʿa might in fact be. The willingness of unveiled women to endorse the imposition of shariʿa law is even more striking given the distinctly "feminist" views and the views on women's autonomy that the majority of the unveiled women expressed. The findings of Radwan and her survey group appear to indicate that the belief that Islam is fundamentally just and that that justice must inhere somewhere in its laws, combined with a vagueness as to the content of Islamic law, is not confined to veiled women but rather prevails among the young female population more generally. Unfortunately, neither group was asked to state their understanding of shariʿa law regarding women. Nor were they asked, more simply, how they would view being married to a man who chose to take additional wives.

That women, veiled and unveiled, are vague as to the technical content of Islamic law and doctrine would not in fact be a surprising finding. Investigators of men's groups report that typically they found a core of vagueness in men's ideas about the technicalities of Islam. They report that not only did the broad membership of Islamic male organizations often seem "poorly informed about many doctrinal matters" despite a passionate dedication to religion but that the most overtly and militantly political men among them were also poorly informed. Even such politically central members of men's Islamic associations as those arrested in connection with the assassination of a cabinet minister in 1977 appeared to be not "particularly knowledgeable about the technicalities of their religion" and, despite having strong feelings on political matters, not to have clear ideas about their political objectives or programs.[43] One analyst who conducted interviews among Islamic militants reports:

> When the militants are persuaded to spell out their ideology, attitudes, and feelings, the listener comes away with an overall clear impression of what they are against but with only a vague, though colorful, impression of what they would do if they were in power. They have deep-seated hostility towards the West, Communism, and Israel. Any ruler who deals with or befriends any of them would be betraying Islam. Excessive wealth, extravagance, severe poverty, exploitation, and usury have no place in a truly Muslim society. They disapprove of nearly all the regimes in the Arab and Muslim worlds. They attribute many of the decadent aspects of behavior in Egypt either to Western influence or to the squandering of oil money, and they firmly believe that should "true Islam" be implemented, Egypt and the Muslim World would be independent, free, prosperous, just, and righteous societies.[44]

Like the young women, the young men affiliating with Islam are hearing its ethical voice, a voice insistently enjoining Muslims to act justly and fairly, and constantly reiterating the equal humanity of all. The voice they hear is the voice virtually ignored by the framers of establishment Islam (see chaps. 4 and 5), which is the technical, legal, doctrinal Islam about which they seem so little informed.

If the political circumstances were right, if the societies of the Middle East were politically stable and committed to democratic pluralism, to respect for the individual, and to freedom of expression and ideas, this emergence of a generation of educated young people, some of whom are attentive to the ethical, humane voice of Islam and some of whom are not particularly committed to the religious idiom or to veiling and are ready

to explore other avenues of thought among the varieties available to citizens of the modern world, could mark a moment of important transformation and intellectual revolution. It could signal the beginning of a period in which the dictates and assumptions of establishment Islam are fundamentally questioned, a period in which explorations and reformulations of the Islamic heritage could lead to a reconceptualization of Islam as a religion and as a system of law and even perhaps to its becoming as intellectually open a system as, for many, Christianity is in many countries today.

Unfortunately, the political circumstances are not right. Unfortunately, too, young people's psychosocial but doctrinally uninformed affiliation with Islam is open to cooptation by groups who, in contrast to the young people, have the unambiguous political intention of instituting authoritarian theocratic political systems committed to the enforcement of establishment Islam in the full panoply of its unmitigatedly androcentric doctrinal and legal rulings. There is no ambiguity within establishment Islam and its laws on the treatment of men and women, on the proper precedence in all matters of men over women, or on their different, and women's distinctly inferior, rights before the law. Nor is there any doubt or ambiguity about the willingness of establishment Islam, yesterday or today—once ensconced in political power—to eliminate those who challenge its authority or its particular understanding of Islam, including other Muslims intent on heeding the ethical over the doctrinal voice.

For this reason the alarm with which many Arab women, including feminist women, view the Islamist trend and the return of the veil is justified. It would be unreasonable to fault the young women of today for adopting Islamic dress, as if the dress were intrinsically oppressive—which is how the veil, at least, was viewed by the former colonial powers and by members of the indigenous upper and middle classes who assimilated colonial views. It would be even more unreasonable to fault them for adopting Islamic dress as a means of affirming the ethical and social habits they are accustomed to while they pursue their education and professional careers in an alien, anomic, sexually integrated world. In fact, the emergence of women capable of forging a path of political, educational, professional, and economic autonomy for themselves, as veiled women are doing, pragmatically invoking an idiom intelligible and meaningful to the majority within their societies, in itself represents a moment of perhaps unprecedented potential for Muslim women. Yet without their particularly intending to, their affiliation with a cultural and ethical Islamism lends support and strength to Islamist political forces which, if successful in realizing their objectives, would institute authoritarian theocratic states that would undoubtedly have a devastatingly negative impact on women.

The controls on women, the limitations on their participation in the economy, their exclusion from many fields of activity in their society, including politics, their subjection to a code of law with fundamental inequalities and, worse, systematic cruelty—all were features of many previous Muslim societies, just as they are features of theocratic societies and groups politically committed to Islamization today. Indeed, the modern Muslim state, able to make use of the mechanisms and technologies of the West, from passports to computerized accounts, is in a position to enforce its laws and to police women with unprecedented vigilance. Women's freedom of movement within the areas in which they reside, women's dress, women's rights to travel and to work and to choose where to work, are strictly supervised and controlled in several Middle Eastern countries today, most stringently in Saudi Arabia but elsewhere as well, not only by the regular police force but also by a "moral" police, whose special functions include watching over how women dress and where they go and enforcing such laws as those that prohibit women from driving cars, wearing short sleeves, or appearing in the street bareheaded. Women in such countries, by law subject to the authority of individual men and thus practically the prisoners of guardians, parents, and husbands, are also captives of the state.

In many Arab countries men, too, if they are political dissidents, may be controlled, deprived of freedoms, and ill-treated and abused in various ways by the state. For both men and women the human rights situation, and the absence of freedoms and political rights, renders most Arab societies today bleak places to live, even "culturally and politically desolate and oppressive," to use the words of an Arab émigré.[45] Women, however, can be oppressed and deprived of rights not just for being dissidents but merely for being women. The abuses of and controls over men are generally meted out covertly, but the controls meted out to women, their incarceration at home and in their countries, their deprivation of the right to work and earn a living, to participate politically, or to see their children if divorced, are generally not covert but the explicit laws of the land. That is to say, the citizens in many Muslim states need protection from the state; human rights and political rights are areas that need crucial reform, but reform in these areas alone would not be enough to eliminate the oppression of women or give them the necessary protection from either the state or the individual men to whom the state gives control over much of women's lives.

States in which Islamic groups have recently seized power and reinstituted Islamic laws have thus far invariably enacted laws imposing severe new restrictions on women and sometimes also laws resulting in savage injustice and inhumanity toward women. Laws imposing restrictions on women and giving men increased control over "their" women are typically among the first "Islamic" measures introduced by such groups upon coming to power. This is not surprising. Widespread discontent and frustration invariably form pronounced elements in the societies in which Islamic groups are able to seize power; and imposing restrictions on women, limiting their access to education or jobs—and thus increasing the availability of both for men as well as increasing the availability of women's domestic and personal services to men—and giving men increased control over "their" women are easy and obvious ways to distract and appease men's discontent and temporarily alleviate economic distress.

For examples of what might occur for women following the seizure of power by Islamist groups one must turn for the present to countries outside the Arab Middle East: Iran and Pakistan. Studies of Iranian women in postrevolutionary Iran confirm the documented reports of Haleh Afshar, who has devoted several works to investigating the plight of Iranian women.[46] The laws instituted in Iran after the Islamic revolution, in Afshar's words, have deprived Iranian women of "most of their hard-earned civil rights and . . . reduced them to the status of privatised sex objects required by the new religious order to be at the disposal of their husbands at all times."[47] Immediately upon taking power, Ayatollah Khomeini began a campaign to "drive women back into the sphere of domesticity." Within months women had been redefined as "unequal" and "impetuous" and biologically and naturally inferior. "Their mere presence in public was described as 'seditious'" and "they were required to don the Islamic *hijab*, covering them from top to toe and to return to the home" (258). Defiance of the rule to wear the hijab was punishable by seventy-four lashes. Worse still, the promulgation of such decrees created an atmosphere licensing male aggression toward women: some fanatical groups attacked with knives and guns women whom they considered inadequately covered (264–65).

The new laws of Iran do not admit women's evidence in court unless corroborated by men. Women who insist on giving evidence are assumed (according to Afshar's account) to be lying and are liable to punishment for slander. Women judges were dismissed and women barred from attending law schools, and they are not admitted to scientific and most technological university faculties. They have been subjected also to a campaign intended to drive them out of office jobs, and they are discouraged from working outside areas regarded as appropriate to women, such as nursing and education. They have not been formally banned from the labor market, but this is not surprising given Iran's enormous losses in war and the shortage of manpower.

Gains made before the revolution in matters of marriage were revoked. The permissible age for girls to marry was dropped from eighteen to thirteen, and fathers and paternal relatives regained the right to have custody of children in case of divorce or the death of the father, boys at two and girls at seven, and husbands regained the right to bar their wives from employment (269). The male right to be polygamous and to divorce at will was fully restored, resulting, among other things, in "an epidemic of often short-lived, polygamous marriages; frequently between older men taking a younger bride for a fling and retaining the old one for work" (273). Although Iran is a Shiite country, whereas Arab Middle Eastern countries are predominantly Sunni, the differences between the two branches of establishment Islam in many matters affecting women, including such rulings as those mentioned above, are minimal.

The same kinds of ideas were beginning to be implemented in Sunni Pakistan under Gen. Zia ul-Huq, who seized power and declared martial law in 1977. Ul-Huq announced his intention to Islamize the penal code and to move toward Islamization generally. In 1980 he issued the first of a series of directives ordering all women government employees to veil. Consequently, not only were they compelled to wear a veil or lose their jobs but all men became, in effect, judges of women's modesty. Male aggression toward women in matters of dress was implicitly legitimized, and the harassment of women at work and in the streets increased.

Researchers have found that in Pakistan "the vilification of women increased . . . in direct proportion to the spouting of self-righteous declarations of a new Islamic order." Television programs, for instance, increasingly depicted women as "the root and cause of corruption" and as "those who forced poor men into accepting bribes, smuggling or pilfering funds," and they depicted working women as the cause of "lax morality and the disintegration of family and social values."[48] The views of a prominent Islamist in the government regarding the place of women in Muslim society were aired on television and in the press. These included his beliefs that women and non-Muslims should be debarred from all decision-making bodies, that "all working women should be retired and pensioned off,"

and that women should "never leave the confines of their homes except in emergencies," and that no one should be punished for rape until total absence of female visibility had been achieved in society.[49]

The idea of a separate university education for women began to be given priority, the government proposing to upgrade the women's colleges of home economics to university status—the object of this move being, women activists believed, to push women into subjects, such as home economics, considered suitable for them and to deny them places in mainstream universities teaching mainstream subjects. The move thus responded to male protests that women were taking up places at the country's better universities that should be freed up for men.[50]

Islamization of the penal code, introduced in 1979, and in particular the laws governing the conviction and punishment for adultery and rape, also had some appalling consequences for women. Four adult male Muslim eyewitnesses were required to convict anyone of adultery or rape, and the testimony of women for either was excluded. Women who accuse men of rape or who become pregnant are thus open to punishment for adultery, while men go unpunished for lack of evidence. The researchers whose work I report here cite a number of cases of monstrous brutality and injustice meted out by the Islamic courts under the penal code.

All the above laws and decrees, those of both Iran and Pakistan, directly reflect or are entirely compatible with shariʿa views as interpreted by establishment Islam. There is every reason to believe that any government declaring itself committed to Islamization, along either Sunni or Shia lines, would introduce similar laws for women.

Sixty-seven percent of the veiled university students responding to the questionnaire in Egypt agreed to the proposal that shariʿa law should become the law of the land, and 53 percent of the unveiled women agreed. It is surely extremely doubtful that either group has any idea of the extremes of control, exclusion, injustice, and indeed brutality that can be, in the present order of things, legitimately meted out to women in the name of Islam.

CONCLUSION

IN THE DISCOURSES OF GEOPOLITICS THE REEMERGENT veil is an emblem of many things, prominent among which is its meaning as the rejection of the West. But when one considers why the veil has this meaning in the late twentieth century, it becomes obvious that, ironically, it was the discourses of the West, and specifically the discourse of colonial domination, that in the first place determined the meaning of the veil in geopolitical discourses and thereby set the terms for its emergence as a symbol of resistance. In other words, the reemergent veil attests, by virtue of its very power as a symbol of resistance, to the uncontested hegemonic diffusion of the discourses of the West in our age. And it attests to the fact that, at least as regards the Islamic world, the discourses of resistance and rejection are inextricably informed by the languages and ideas developed and disseminated by the West to no less a degree than are the languages of those openly advocating emulation of the West or those who, like Frantz Fanon or Nawal El-Saadawi, are critical of the West but nonetheless ground themselves in intellectual assumptions and political ideas, including a belief in the rights of the individual, formulated by

on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 167.

2. *Annuaire Statistique: 1932–33* (Cairo, 1934), table 5; Ruth F. Woodsmall, *The Study of the Role of Women: Their Activities and Organisations in Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria, October 1954–August 1955,* directed by Woodsmall with the assistance of Charlotte Johnson (New York: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, 1956), 25 (quotation); Ijlal Khalifa, *Al-haraka al-nisaʾiyya al-haditha: qissat al-marʾa al-ʿarabiyya ʿala ard misr* (Cairo: Al-matbaʿa al-ʿarabiyya al-haditha, 1973), 25.
3. Charles Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 55.
4. Ibid., 261n2. For a discussion of this debate see Giora Eliraz, "Egyptian Intellectuals and Women's Emancipation, 1919–1939," *Asian and African Studies* 16 (1982): 95–120.
5. Soha Abdel Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society, 1899–1987* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1987), 102.
6. Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century,* 262, 71.
7. Mona Hammam, "Women and Industrial Work in Egypt: The Chubra el-Kheima Case," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1980): 55; P. J. Vatiokis, *The History of Egypt from Muhammad Ali to Sadat* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 324; Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century,* 62.
8. Robert Mabro and Samir Radwan, *The Industrialisation of Egypt, 1939–1973: Policy and Performance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 28; Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-Century,* 60, 262.
9. Vatiokis, *History of Egypt,* 329.
10. Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 73; hereafter cited in the text.
11. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment, 1922–1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 236.
12. See Mitchell, *Society of Muslim Brothers,* chap. 7.
13. Selma Botman, "Women's Participation in Radical Politics in Egypt, 1939–52," in *Khamsin: Women in the Middle East* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 22. See also Botman, *The Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939–1970* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1988).
14. Ahmed Abdulla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt, 1923–73* (London: Al-Saqi Books, 1985), 241–42n40.
15. Botman, "Women's Participation in Radical Politics," 23 (quotations), 20.
16. Valerie J. Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist: Zeinab al-Ghazali," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East,* ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 234; hereafter cited in the text.
17. Zeinab al-Ghazali, *Ayam min hayati* (Cairo: Dar al-shuruq, n.d.), 26. Chap. 2 of the work, meticulously translated by Hoffman (whose translation often coincides with mine), is presented after Hoffman's account of her interview with al-Ghazali in "Islamic Activist."

18. Al-Ghazali, *Ayam min hayati,* 37.
19. Ibid., 35–40.
20. Ibid., 39.
21. Cynthia Nelson, "The Voices of Doria Shafik: Feminist Consciousness in Egypt, 1940–1960," *Feminist Issues* 6, no. 2 (1986): 16; hereafter cited in the text.
22. Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society, 1945–1981* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 84–90.

Chapter 11: The Struggle for the Future

1. Ghulam Nabi Saqib, *Modernisation and Muslim Education in Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey: A Comparative Study* (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1977), 233, 237; *The Charter* (Cairo: U.A.R. Information Department, 1962), 57, 84.
2. Primary education had been declared compulsory by previous governments, in the 1920s and again in the 1940s, but little had been done to implement general education. Amir Boktor, *The Development and Expansion of Education in the United Arab Republic* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1963), 27.
3. In the 1970s more than 60 percent of the primary schools operated more than one shift, and there were about forty students per teacher. Khalid Ikram, *Egypt: Economic Management in a Period of Transition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 118.
4. Mahmud A. Fakhsh, "The Consequences of the Introduction and Spread of Modern Education: Education and National Integration in Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16, no. 2 (1980): 45; Ikram, *Egypt,* 117, 130.
5. Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiled Activism: Egyptian Women in the Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Femmes de la Méditerranée Peuples Meditérranéens* 22–23 (January–June 1983): 84; Fahim I. Qubain, *Education and Science in the Arab World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 71; Saqib, *Modernisation and Muslim Education,* 254; Ikram, *Egypt,* 130.
6. Ikram, *Egypt,* 119; Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 34, 35, 195n48; Sullivan, "Women and Work in Egypt," in *Women and Work in the Arab World,* ed. Sullivan and Karima Koraysem, Cairo Working Papers in Social Science, vol. 4, monograph 4 (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1981), 14, 29–33, 37; and Peter C. Dodd, "Youth and Women's Emancipation in the U.A.R.," *Middle East Journal* 22, no. 2 (1968): 161. Over the same period agricultural employment, once the major occupation for women, reportedly declined, probably because of urban migration. Figures are inexact, however, for women not employed full time tend not to be counted, and most women worked on their own farms. Indeed, the figures with respect to working women, including those in agriculture and domestic service, are generally unreliable, because there is a pronounced tendency to underreport female workers. The women employed in industry increased from 3 percent (1961) to 11 percent (1971) of the work

force, although clerical work mostly accounted for the increase. Sullivan, "Women and Work in Egypt," 17–18.

7. Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil, "Educational Expansion and Income Distribution in Egypt, 1952–57," in *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Egypt,* ed. Robert L. Tignor and Gouda Abdel-Khalek (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), 355.
8. Ikram, *Egypt,* 110, 130.
9. John Waterbury, *Egypt: Burdens of the Past, Options for the Future* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 78; Ikram, *Egypt,* 105.
10. See Waterbury, *Egypt,* 61.
11. Ikram, *Egypt,* 110–11.
12. Waterbury, *Egypt,* 58, 56; Ahmad Taha Ahmad, *Al-mar'a kifahha wa ʿamalha* (Cairo: Dar al-jamahir, 1964), 156–58.
13. See, in particular, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Social Mobility and Income Distribution in Egypt, 1952–1977," in *Political Economy of Income Distribution,* ed. Tignor and Abdel-Khalek, 381.
14. Ikram, *Egypt,* 142, 113, 145.
15. Waterbury, *Egypt,* 127–28; see also Ikram, *Egypt,* 148–49.
16. See Fakhsh, "Consequences of Modern Education," 49–51.
17. In the fifty years from the late 1920s to the late 1970s literacy for males rose from about 19 percent to 57 percent, and for women it rose from a near-negligible 4 percent to about 30 percent; by the end of the period over half of all males and nearly a third of all females were literate. Amir Boktor, *School and Society in the Valley of the Nile* (Cairo: Elias Modern Press, 1936), 104; Sullivan, "Women and Work in Egypt," 24, 26; and also Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life,* 34.
18. Aziza Husein, a veteran worker for family planning and on other issues concerning women, describes how the Family Planning Association began in the 1970s a systematic effort to reform the Personal Status Laws and drafted a document making some changes helpful to women, whose passage was facilitated by Sadat. After his death the amendment was struck from the law and later reinstituted in modified form. Husein, "Recent Amendments to Egypt's Personal Status Law," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East,* ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 230.
19. Mervat Hatem, of Howard University, is currently working on a book covering this period.
20. Andrée Chedid, *From Sleep Unbound,* trans. Sharon Spencer (London: Serpent's Tail, 1987), 80. The critique of male dominance in the twentieth century has come from Arab men as well as women. See, e.g., Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41n51.
21. Joel Beinin and Zackary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 271.

22. Nazih N. M. Ayubi, "The Political Revival of Islam: The Case of Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 4 (1980): 490.
23. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Notes and Preliminary Findings," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 4 (1980): 426.
24. John Alden Williams, "A Return to the Veil in Egypt," *Middle East Review* 11, no. 3 (1979): 53.
25. Waterbury, *Egypt,* 151.
26. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *The New Arab Social Order* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press; London: Croom Helm, 1982), 18.
27. Ibid., 92–93; and Sullivan, "Women and Work in Egypt," 34.
28. See Ibrahim, *New Arab Social Order,* chap. 4, for some discussion of this.
29. Ibid., 89; Fouad Ajami, "The Open Door Economy: Its Roots and Welfare Consequences," in *Political Economy of Income Distribution,* ed. Tignor and Abdel-Khalek, 505.
30. For further descriptions see Ayubi, "Political Revival of Islam," 494; and Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Social Problems* 28, no. 4 (1981): 474.
31. Williams, "Return to the Veil in Egypt," 49–50.
32. Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Islamic Groups," 438.
33. Zeinab ʿAbdel Mejid Radwan, *Thahirat al-hijab bayn al-jamʿiyyat* ([Cairo]: Almarkaz al-qawmi lil-buhuth al-ijtimaʿiyya wa'l-jina'iyya, 1982), 40, 42, 37, 40, 81–82.
34. Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Islamic Groups," 21.
35. Fifty percent of the women gave inner peace as the principal effect of adopting Islamic dress. Other responses were that wearing Islamic dress put an end to their being harassed in public places by men (19.5 percent) and that people treated them with new respect (20 percent). Radwan, *Thahirat al-hijab,* 92.
36. Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Islamic Groups," 448.
37. Safia K. Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections: Working Middle-Class Women in Egypt," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East,* ed. Fernea, 69; Radwan, *Thahirat al-hijab,* 92.
38. Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections," 69.
39. El Guindi, "Veiled Activism," 87–88.
40. Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy,* 137, thus defines, with considerable persuasiveness, all dominant political movements in Arab societies in this century prior to the emergence of Islamism. See also ibid., chap. 9.
41. Radwan, *Thahirat al-hijab,* 94, 99, 104, 95, 101.
42. Ibid., 112, 107, 113.
43. Ayubi, "Political Revival of Islam," 493–94; Ibrahim, *New Arab Social Order,* 21.
44. Ibrahim, *New Arab Social Order,* 22. See also his "Anatomy of Islamic Groups." For a succinct and evocative account of the vague and pregnant uto-

pianism and promise of Islamic fundamentalism see Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy,* chap. 9, esp. pp. 139–47.

45. Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy,* 155.
46. Afshar's further studies pertinent to this subject (in addition to the work cited in the following pages) include "The Iranian Theocracy," in *Iran: A Revolution in Turmoil,* ed. Afshar (London: Macmillan, 1985), 220–44; and "Khomeini's Teachings and Their Implications for Iranian Women," in *The Shadow of Islam,* ed. A. Tabari and N. Yeganeh (London: Zed Press, 1982), 75–90, a collection that has other useful articles on the subject. Further useful studies of women in contemporary Islamic republics include Farah Azari, ed., *Women of Iran: The Conflict with Fundamentalist Islam* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983); Eliz Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny, Appeasement, and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1892); Guity Nashat, ed., *Women and Revolution in Iran* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983); Val Moghedem, "Women, Work and Ideology in the Islamic Republic," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 2 (1988); Patricia J. Higgins, "Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal, Social, and Ideological Changes," *Signs* 10, no. 31 (1985): 477–95; and Minou Reeves, *Female Warriors of Allah* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988). There are numerous works on Islamism, or the Islamic Revival; among the most useful are Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982); R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1985); Fred Halliday and Hamza Alavi, eds., *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988); Sheeren Hunter, ed., *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989); James P. Piscatori, *Islam in the Political Process,* ed. Piscatori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
47. Haleh Afshar, "Women, State and Ideology in Iran," *Third World Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1985): 256; hereafter cited in the text.
48. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 82.
49. Ibid., 83–84.
50. Ibid., 89.

Conclusion

1. Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), xi.
2. I just referred to Orientalism's reproducing—and thereby also endorsing, even if inadvertently, in its own account of Islam—dominant Islam's view of itself as the sole possible and only legitimate version of Islam. Orientalism is most

familiar as the West's mode of representing, and misrepresenting, the Islamic world as a domain of otherness and inferiority; it is also familiar as a field of domination. But it should be noted that the discourses of Orientalism and those of establishment Islam are androcentric discourses of domination and that consequently in some ways they complement or endorse each other, even as in other ways they are at war.

3. For critiques of the politics of Western or white feminism and women of the non-Western world and women of color see Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987); and bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).
4. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 137–38, 14, 31.
5. T. N. Madan, "Anthropology as Cultural Reaffirmation" (The first of three papers delivered as the William Allan Neilson Lectures at Smith College, Northampton, Mass., October 1990), 5–6.