



Seeking Masculinities in the Middle East:

An Anthropology of Power and Absence

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In the current state of the world, there can hardly be a more pressing object of analysis than the Middle East. As the birthplace of Islam as well as Judaism and Christianity, this area is rife with patriarchal approaches to spirituality. As one of the most dangerous parts of the planet, currently engaged in the second of recent hot wars between the U.S. and so-called terrorists, it is also an area that has until recently been quite low on the priorities for study and analysis. This means that we are abundantly cursed with stereotypical representations of the peoples of this area, with half-informed punditry about such ideas as the "Muslim mind," and with many self-serving portraits of the Islamic faith. Also, and most seriously, in my opinion, there have been quite a few truly insulting predictions made by purported scholars of the Middle East about the nature of a great clash of civilizations; the clash seems to me to stem from misunderstandings by the West rather than from some eternal quality of a fantasized "Islam." In a manner similar to the creation of the dangerous sex-obsessed Negro male in the post-emancipation American south, we have now constructed a fantastic and beastly figure out of the swarthy Muslim male, once again dangerous to the propriety of the Euro-American, to the propriety of the Christian, and to the ostensibly civilized Western world.

Does everything have to occur at least twice, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce?

Islam as a faith and a practice has been repeatedly and increasingly linked to terrorism, and terror is almost exclusively the work of men. What then is the connection between the religion, political acts of violence, and masculinity? To start off on the right foot, we need to clarify the relationship between Islam and what is so frequently called fundamentalism in Western media sources. I argue, as do many others, that it is inappropriate and inaccurate to use the term fundamentalism to describe political movements in Islam. My preference is "Islamist" for the following reasons.

Fundamentalism appeared first in the United States between 1910 and 1919, through publications and conferences of the World Christian Fundamentals Association. In the 1920s the movement moved beyond its millenarian origins and took of the characteristics that we use to define fundamentalism today. Hawley and Proudfoot (1994) describe it as

a form of militant religion that opposes the modernist, liberal forces unleashed in Western society since the

Enlightenment, in favor of a return to a notional past in which people are held to have experienced no tension between secular and religious loyalties, and in which the authority of scripture defined a community where truth was undiluted by the relativity of knowledge (p. 16-7).

This return to basics is hence a response to the conditions that arise from modernity and its dislocations. This has held true in each subsequent appearance of the phenomenon of religious neo-orthodoxy, whether fundamentalist or Islamist. For example, Hawley and Proudfoot (1994) further argue that “[i]n Khomeini’s Iranian revolution, many of the principal traits of American fundamentalism were visible: antimodernism¹, antiliberalism, the intent to return to a religious golden age when scripture held sway, and a social base composed of people who felt alienated and displaced by the groups they deemed responsible for the Western-style secular reconstruction of society” (p. 17). Such claims are but half-right, since Khomeini claimed many of the principles of modernism, but distinctly opposed its consumerist, secular qualities. But an examination of Iran’s 1979 constitution does not find a document that would satisfy only religious fundamentalists – it is, as Humphries (1999) says, a mixture of theocratic piety and a democratic welfare state (p. 36). It is in many ways, quintessentially postmodern.

Fundamentalists are deeply concerned with boundary definition, needing to clarify differences from others external to the group as well as those inside the group who stray through mistakes or through deliberate apostasy. These internal error-makers are some of the major enemies perceived by fundamentalists. Yet, Karen McCarthy Brown (1994) has argued, there always remains another internal enemy --

the ever available yet ever alien “opposite sex”. . . women’s behavior is regarded not only as being symptomatic of cosmic dislocation but as being its cause. Embodying the other that is at once intimate and ubiquitous, women serve as a fine canvas on which to project feelings of general besetment. They are close enough to serve as targets, yet pervasive enough to symbolize the cosmic dimensions of the challenge (Hawley and Proudfoot [discussing Brown’s work] p.27).

This parallels arguments I have made elsewhere about the gender revanchist directions of men worldwide who perceive themselves as losing control in an increasingly confusing world. So many then blame women, who have often benefited in some very public ways from incursions of Western-oriented modernity, and seek to regain the control they believe they have lost to those women. This phenomenon has become a cross-cultural patriarchal response in this [post]modern period to the

unfulfilled promises of Western Enlightenment modernity. Brown (1994) describes it in the following way:

Gender roles are the most basic building blocks of social organization. Gender roles, along with the important distinction between child and adult, are the social categories that the child learns first and that loom largest in the child’s world. Firming up the boundaries by stressing the differences between these social domains thus recreates the security and manageability of a child’s world. Keeping women, about whom we have such deeply ambivalent feelings, clearly under the control of men makes the world seem more orderly and more comprehensible.

With men at the helm, the power of the flesh is kept in its place. The clean, daylight powers of reason and spirit are in charge, and we -- men and women alike -- at some level, feel safer (p. 189).

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While the phenomenon is hardly unique to the Arab-Muslim world, it is a good basis for understanding the conditions there, where post-colonial idealism once had produced high hopes for change. But the promises were not kept, and social transformations did not take place as expected or predicted. In fact, things seemed to go worse and worse. Independence segued into economic neo-colonialism, and cultural pride was squelched by cultural imperialism from the continually dominant Western Europe and United States. It is owing to such circumstances that Olivier Roy attributes *The Failure of Political Islam* (1994), to those who wonder about the turn toward Islamist solutions to the problems of North Africa and the Middle East.

Roy (1994) argues that the emergence of Islamist movements is a rational response to modernity. Far from “being a strange irruption of an irrational, archaic phenomenon,” he believes that the call to follow sharia is “as old as Islam itself, yet still new because it has never been fulfilled” (p. 4), and still remains a primary focus of Islamist discourses. The other focus emerges as a more recent phenomenon, described by Roy as rooted in the anti-imperialist perspectives of those who led the fight against colonialism. This opposition was eventually transformed by circumstance and time into a more virulent,

over-arching anti-Westernism (as distinct from anti-modernism), at least for a vocal few. Nevertheless it turned out that struggle against the imperialist order was insufficient in the aftermath of independence since the capitalist West found more insidious ways to keep the ex-colonies still within its grasp, just under a different hierarchical order, though one disguised by a titular freedom from direct control.

But Islamists are not anachronistic, rural folk (with the exception of the Taliban, and possibly some of their remnants in Northwestern Pakistan). Roy correctly sees them as urban, and quintessentially modern, in spite of their anti-Western views. He calls their ideology "militant rationalism" (p. 21), demonstrating that the modern, rationalist, urban mode has pervaded Islam. "Modernity," Roy says (1994), "creeps into Muslim countries regardless of Islam, and the Islamists themselves play a part in this secularization of the religion" (p. 22). He makes a good case for Islamist movements being modernist as well as being a response to modernity itself.

Modernization occurred, but outside any conceptual framework: it happened through rural exodus, emigration, consumption, the change in family behavior (a lower birthrate), but also through the cinema, music, clothing, satellite antennas, that is, through the globalization of culture. It also occurred through the establishment of states, that, fragile, corrupt, and clientele oriented though

they may be, are nonetheless profoundly new in their method of legitimization, their social base, and their division into territories frozen by international agreements. Protest against the West, which includes contesting the existing states, is on the same order as Western ecology or anti-immigrant arguments: they are arguments one propounds when it is too late (p. 23).

I would argue, in fact, following Hinnells (1995), that the entire Islamist enterprise

smacks of post-modernity, as a nostalgic reclamation of a mythic past, utilizing the most modern of tools (media, electronic technology, computers), in the most modern of locations (urban centers, universities). Advocates of Islamist movements use images out of reconstructed memories of a mythic past to cope with the difficulties of the hyper-alienated present. I would also argue that patriarchy, as both an individual expression and as a social phenomenon, is being reinterpreted, reinvented to meet

the specific exigencies of current conditions. Mervat Hatem (1998), examining the Egyptian case of the Muslim Brotherhood (the 'original' political Islamist movement), argues that they

have their own interpretation of modernity. Conservative modern views of gender sit well with conservative Islamist views. . . . In their discussion of an Islamic society, Islamists are unequivocal in declaring the importance of science, reason, professional education, and technology in the building of the new society. Since the Islamist groups and their discourses have been part of the historical development of modern society in Egypt, it is not surprising that the Islamist, oppositional, discourse is very modernist. It accepts the nuclear family and the modern systems of education and training as the basis of its alternative Islamic society (p. 97).

Essentially, Islamist discourses are concerned with the reconstruction of the relation of the religious human being to a complex social, economic and political order often devoid of the spiritual. Part of this reconstruction is the relationship between women and men, which has elements in all three - the social, the economic and the political. Let us turn now to one writer's attempt to delineate the process of this reconstruction in North Africa.

On Neopatriarchy as a Conceptual Tool

One of the questions that requires examination is how patriarchy is changing over time. How is the ideology of patriarchal structure responding to the complexities and transformations of the contemporary world? This is addressed by Hisham Sharabi in *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (1988). In this work, Sharabi builds on a tradition of theorists of colonialism and its aftermath, many of whom wrote about the French experience in North Africa (see Fanon 1961, 1967; Memmi 1965). These earlier theorists studied the relationship between the colonized individual's identity and his/her subjugation to the colonial authority. Writing before the advent of gender studies, when 'man' was still a generic term, Fanon and Memmi stepped around the edges of the implications of being conquered had for gendered identity². In the forefront were racial/ethnic, even national forms of identity; racism crushed 'men' without a real sense of how that process affected men and women differently. Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice* (1968) had also delved into this realm, making the masculinity of the black male in the United States the concrete issue; women, black or white, were tools for Cleaver to displace the power of the white male. Sex and sexuality, and rape, were features of the struggles among skin colors, classes and ethnicities. Cleaver's work approached the ways some view the colonial experience today, where self, identity, sex and sexuality, gender and

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ideology are all intertwined (see Nandy 1983; Stoler 1991; Jolly and MacIntyre 1989; Ahmed 1992; Kandiyoti 1994).

Sharabi (1988) focuses on the ways in which patriarchal structures of family and society have metamorphosed in response to the complex pressures of the modern world. He argues correctly that the pristine form of patriarchy, associated with nomadic tribes, is long since gone, having undergone several transformations (p. 26ff). Its current form is a deformed "modern" consequence of the colonial experience. Indeed, the search for meaning, the attempt to make sense of their condition in the world leads toward a retrenchment of the patriarchal structure. As Sharabi puts it, the neopatriarchal society's "most pervasive characteristic is a kind of generalized, persistent, and seemingly insurmountable impotence: it is incapable of performing as an integrated social or political system, as an economy, or as a military structure" (p. 6-7).

Sharabi's idea of impotence is central to my sense of the attitude and overall feeling among Middle Eastern citizens I have encountered in fieldwork and after. The linkage, following Cleaver, between social power and sexual power is clear in this terminology, while the term 'powerlessness' in society, in the economy, or in politics simply would not express the connection to masculinity as well. Impotence: the inability to be strong, to keep it up, to stand; according to the OED, it is the "want [as in lack] of strength or power to perform, utter inability or weakness, helplessness"; and, of course, "complete absence of sexual power, usually said of the male."

It is a sense of gendered helplessness that so pervades the self-perception of many Arab/Muslim men. Their inability to be men, to be powerful, to be appropriately gendered as masculine beings is a general preoccupation. It is this that leads to the constant 'revanchist' theme of regaining control over women, who have broken the bonds of tradition, and who are perceived to have been threatening men even beyond the levels of the social, economic and political world. The last refuge from the impotence of the macro level of society is, it seems, a return to a fantasy of traditional patriarchal control within one's own family; however that 'traditional' control has been reinterpreted, as it necessarily must have been. Central to all forms of neo-orthodoxy has been an attempt to reestablish patriarchal power, keeping in mind that the definition of such power has been modified for each historical moment (Hinnells 1995). We are incapable of recreating what is past in toto, however much we try; that is the reasoning behind Sharabi's neopatriarchy, a changed, even 'deformed' contemporary manifestation of an older social form (p. 4).

Roy and Sharabi work well together to portray the historical development of post-colonial disappointment with the

Western orientation that stayed behind as the colonizers were packed off. Sharabi, writing in the eighties before the crisis in Algeria of the nineties, the rise (and more recent tempering) of the anti-Western, anti-government activity of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, and before the rise and fall of the Afghani Taliban, still saw Islamist movements as "absolutist," as "oppressive," and as "authoritarian" (1988:11). He did not see much here of the modernist response that Roy takes as central to his argument. But Roy wrote later, and his ideas are in some sense more respectful of this creative, challenging, and indigenous response to modernity. On the other hand, Sharabi is aware of the patriarchal nature of the movement, which Roy overlooks, taking the structures of economy and politics as key. But underneath Roy's arguments, there is still a current that shows a consciousness of the disruptive effects of these structural changes on the sex and gender order. Examining the following quotations from Roy (1994), one finds many of the themes I find most salient, particularly his full awareness of the importance of youth, education and sexuality in the overall picture.

The Islamists ... transform what was previously a reflection of one's degraded self-image into a source of dignity.

One minor but important aspect of the success of Islamism is precisely that it offers frustrated youth a justification for their frustration. Western acculturation has not freed up mores, or else has made pleasure financially inaccessible. Value is still attached to a girl's virginity, but age at marriage is rising, and the young are more promiscuous than they ever were in traditional society: everything is coed, from schools and universities to housing and transportation; temptation is reinforced by the model of sexual freedom conveyed through television, films, magazines, but also by experiences of and stories about life in the West. Impoverishment and overpopulation make it difficult for young people to have independent lives. Pleasure is only for the rich. The Islamists present a defense of chastity and virtue, a defense that is in fact widely divergent from a certain art de vivre inherent in Muslim civilization. They transform what was previously a reflection of one's degraded self-image into a source of dignity (p. 56).

This is exactly what appears to be going on throughout the Muslim/Arab world of North Africa, the Middle East, now Central Asia and reaching into Southeast Asia. All the themes are there: unemployment for the educated,

the impossibility of attaining dreams offered by Western media and advertisement, the discontent with a distorted sex/gender order, anger at the West, the Zionists, the Americans, the rich and powerful, and a deep-seated pull toward their religion as the one last possible source of validity and rightness. The people most affected, and men in particular, hope to become the future elite, maybe even the leaders of their countries. As Karen Brown (1994) puts it:

Fundamentalism is not primarily a religion of the marginalized, as some have argued. Its more salient feature is that it develops among people caught off balance. Hence, fundamentalist groups often arise in situations where social, cultural, and economic power is up for grabs. . . far from being essentially marginal to the societies in which they exist, fundamentalists are often directly involved in the political and economic issues of their time and place. And they often have a significant, if precarious, stake in them (Brown 1994:190).

The question, then, is about whether the citizens of the Arab-Muslim world are caught off balance. Let us then turn to examine the conditions of gendered lives in some of the leading nations of the area.

Gender, Social Change, and Middle Eastern Economy and Politics

Years hence, if my suspicion is correct, we will look back on the latter half of the 20th century as a time of change as profound for the Muslim world as the Protestant Reformation was for Christendom. Like the printing press in the sixteenth century, the combination of mass education and mass communications is transforming this world, a broad geographical crescent stretching from North Africa through Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and across the Indonesian archipelago. In unprecedentedly large numbers, the faithful -- whether in the vast cosmopolitan city of Istanbul or in Oman's tiny, remote al-Hamra oasis -- are examining and debating the fundamentals of Muslim belief and practice in ways that their less self-conscious predecessors would never have imagined. This highly deliberate examination of the faith is what constitutes the Islamic Reformation (Eickelman 1998, p. 82).

One part of this Reformation includes the re-examination of gender ideologies in light of pressures from the West, transformations in a changing economy, new sources of knowledge from global information technology, new desires for consumables due to cultural imperialism that has reached a stunning level. All of these are producing movement, if not movements, inside the nations that seek to protect their very essence from the transforma-

tions Eickelman describes. The forces are unrelenting, powerfully shaping new ideas and manipulating old ones, generating creative responses in reaction to the great change, responses that slavishly mimic new styles, as well as others that are more interested in selective intermingling of the new and the old. And the relations between women and men are at the heart of the debate. While largely couched in terms of what women should be and not be, the debate is really about a reformation of the gender order, because what women are doing now is a powerfully influential factor of what men will be called upon to do next. That is one reason so many discourses on gender seem to concentrate on women. But often, the discussion is not really about women, but about the system of gendered power in which men maintain a sense of identity conceived in opposition to women. But since the discourse is primarily about women, that is where we must begin.

Yvonne Haddad (1983) has described some of the factors that constitute the discourse on women in the Islamic world, arguing a dialectic between internal and external factors. The internal factors are the economic, political and cultural policies of the state, the legislation concerning personal status law, the kind of opportunities in education and employment that exist for women, and the "dominant belief that national liberation should take precedence over liberation of women, since the latter would lead both to subservience to the West through consumerism and to the degradation of women." The external factors, Haddad argues, are the perception by Muslims of Western judgment of Islamic family institutions, the pressures from Western dominated transnational institutions (such as the UN and the IMF), the changing lives of Western women, and the backlash against Western feminism (p. 3). In her discussion of these factors, she gives the clear impression that, while there are of course variations among Islamic nations, these factors are shared across the board. I agree. The growth of a global system has made it possible, even necessary, to think in such wide-ranging generalities that display little respect for national—and cultural—borders. The global system of corporate power, alongside the spread of information technologies, has changed all that. In their introduction to a collection on gender in Southeast Asia (effectively the 'other end' of the Muslim world from Morocco), Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz (1995) make comparable assertions:

We argue that indigenous notions bearing on masculinity and femininity, on gender equality and complementarity, and on various criteria of prestige and stigma are being reworked in dynamic postcolonial contexts . . . Postcolonial forces of dislocation, ethnic heterogeneity, nation-building, and international business have blurred,

confused, and made problematic cultural understandings of what it means to be male or female in local societies, the more general point being that consent to gender meanings increasingly gives way to contestation . . . Processes of state and nation formation, global economic restructuring, and overseas labor migration have created fluid geographies of gender, race, and class that cut across national boundaries. As a consequence, just as postcolonial subjects are increasingly hard put to balance the decentering and recentering forces of cultural and national upheavals, so too are cultural understandings of what it means to be male and female increasingly blurred, varied, and problematic (pp. 2, 4-5, 8).

These are exactly the conditions that produce tensions between "tradition," that is, local meanings, and "modernity," that is, the transnational, cross-cultural socio-economic environment that brings similar problems to so many diverse peoples. The increasing power of the transnational provides the intense pressures that force the hand of those who perceive themselves as carrying the burden of local meanings and values. These people, often spiritual leaders, sometimes politicians, share a perception that the forces of global capital are invading and inappropriately transforming their cultural heritage, and hence, their very identity. And they are absolutely correct in that perception. Increasingly, the elites in each urban center across the planet are living more and more like the elites of New York, Paris, and London, while those who inhabit the realms of national cultural traditions are finding themselves isolated and alienated from the rewards of a global economy, while in need of protection from the insidious effects of its cultural values (Athanasios 1996, p. 220). As has been discussed earlier, the escape valve for such a powerful contradiction lies in the basic "family values" that are being touted in so many political circumstances. The carriers of those values are usually seen as being women, in charge of the transmission of culture to the young (Hijab 1988, p. 13; Jaber 1997, p. 118). Ultimately, it is perceived that women can be, in fact must be the saviors of cultural heritage³.

Since the 1970s and the Islamic resurgence, Islamists have insisted that in contrast to the tendency to modernize (equated with westernizing and secularizing) society and Islam, the real task at hand is, or should be, the Islamization or re-Islamization of society. For Islamists, the primary threat of the West is cultural rather than political or economic (though there are definitely problems in both these areas as well). Cultural dependency robs one of faith and identity and thus destroys Islam and the Islamic community (*umma*) far more effectively than political rule. Women and the family have been identified as pivotal in this contest. Women, therefore, are regarded as the primary culture bearers, "as the main-

tainers of the tradition, relegated to the task of being the last bastion against foreign penetration" (Haddad and Esposito 1998, p. xvi. The quotation is the authors quoting themselves from their introduction, p.21).

That is what Brown was talking about when she said that safeguarding women makes us all "at some level, feel safer." The battle, as Haddad and Esposito suggest, is between economic modernization and cultural secularization; many want the first without the second. This quite effectively would lead to the reconstruction of the public/private dichotomy between the sexes, thereby modernizing the public through links to global economy while protecting the private world where our 'real' cultural identity is nurtured and passed on. Historical continuity and cultural heritage are preserved in the latter, providing the basis for an oppositional stance to total Westernization (Jaber 1997, p. 110).

The result is a doubled tension over the very real transformations in women's lives, doubled, that is, over and above the 'normal' dislocations and uncertainties that are affecting men. Hence, there is a gendered response to the life-changing events that crop up on the path to this modern world.

Men, while not necessarily happy about it all, can take it; they're men, after all and that's what men do. Great changes have happened before, and men have weathered them all. But this time, the change is reaching into the private realm. Anita Weiss (1994) puts it this way:

The combination of the new international division of labour and the global telecommunications revolution is having a more penetrating effect on social norms within Muslim society than any external force ever had. Earlier political and economic upheavals such as the Crusades and the dawn of imperialism and colonialism had greater effects on men in Muslim societies with little reverberations on women and the domestic sphere (p. 128).

Since the defining characteristic of masculinity is seen in its oppositional status relative to women, that difference must be preserved. Women must be protected. The family must be protected.

But that is not what is happening, wherever one looks

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across the globe. For even in the Muslim world, as Yvonne Haddad (1998) points out:

modernization in fact has had a serious impact on women's lives and their relation in the family. Since the 1970s, several new factors intensified the process of change. These include the dramatic economic fluctuations of the 1970s and 1980s; the increase in labor migration (especially of young males); women's participation in salaried work, state ideology, and politics; the growth of the popularity of the Islamist movement; and international input such as the UN studies and recommendations and Western feminist demands (p.7).

Here we find many of the themes in the discourses of Arab/Muslim men. Their awareness of and concern over these transformations of their society is quite undeniable. The changes already have had an impact upon them, and will continue to do so for some time to come. The task for many of these men is to work out some sort of arrangement that could preserve their position; the resulting negotiations over cultural preservation take many forms. Weiss (1994), speaking about the Muslim world in general, argues that a "reallocation of obligations is occurring" between men and women, which "result[s] in a redistribution of gender-based rights and obligations" (p. 127-8).

Yvonne Haddad (1998), reflecting on the work in Arabic of Lebanese writer Mustafa Hijazi, discusses some of the ways in which men and women are working out a system of interconnected opposition. Hijazi points out that there are class based differences in roles for women: working class people carve a sharp differentiation, exaggerating man's status, strength,

and aggressiveness, which necessitates that the woman be weak and oppressed: "She is transformed into a utensil for his self-pleasure with no regard for her wishes and desires. She dies in her psyche that he may gain the illusion of life; she is crushed that he may gain the illusion of life; she is crushed that he may gain the mirage of self-fulfillment" (p. 11, quoting Hijazi). Hijazi may be exaggerating for effect here, but the struggle he describes is clear. One sees it quite distinctly in Unni Wikan's portrait (1996) of working class women in Cairo. Her protagonist, the resilient Umm 'Ali, demonstrates for us the struggles of a Cairene mother holding her family together in a situation in which her husband is unemployed,

rather ineffectual, yet violent. Wikan details the intricacies of a matrifocal family structure in which women, moving "from weakness to strength," gain a positive self-worth "that lends them an assurance and strength" that Hijazi seems not to perceive (p. 286,285). In many ways, Umm 'Ali is the savior of her family; working women are the last refuge for their families when men either cannot cope with the transformations in the economy, or simply are not there to provide the support for their family that their role requires of them.

In the middle class, Hijazi argues there is more flexibility and openness to change, and both the male and the female are pulled in two directions by the clash between progress and tradition, between modern transformations and defined roles. Haddad (1998) says that "while the woman longs to be free and to realize her rights, and the man wants her to be free, both are bound by internal chains:

the woman is prisoner of chronic conditioning that pushes her to play a subservient role, one of an instrument. She is comfortable in that role because she is psychologically prepared for it. However, consciously she is dissatisfied with it and is aware of her rights. The man talks about equality and the liberation of women but is incapable of giving up his privileges" (p. 12, the indented section of the quote is Hijazi).

Hijazi, says Haddad, portrays the middle-class man as a "hostage of traditional rules," yet one who claims the ideals of liberation for women and equality between the sexes. But he does not fully embody his ideals; in fact, "[i]n many cases he fears that he will lose control of the woman. His masculinity is contingent on his ability to control rather than his capacity to achieve" (p. 12). This is a key issue, in which masculine privilege and personal control become imbricated with enlightened views of social progress, creating a confusing brew of internal contradictions that are quite difficult to sort out. It is especially difficult because the masculine privilege and personal control issues are rarely addressed as real; instead, they are left deep in the psyche, as a backstage frame for the more accessible level of class-appropriate belief and behavior.

It is among the working and middle classes, where education and work possibilities for women have been growing for some time, that one finds the most interesting forms of these contradictions between gendered identity and class identity. Anita Weiss (1994), discussing a working class area of Lahore, Pakistan, argues that:

The renegotiation of gender images and expectations appears to fall into three categories: first: women are

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allowed -- and in some cases, encouraged -- to study beyond the stage of simple literacy; second, expanding labour opportunities for women resulting in changes in the perception of gendered work; and third, the renegotiation of personal power and mobility within the family. The first two of these areas are direct outcomes of what it is that women are doing differently from the past, resulting in men relinquishing some of the powerful control they have held over women and also expecting women to hold different roles. The last category, the renegotiation of personal power and mobility within the family, is a direct result of the first two. Because of women's increased competencies, men are also realizing that women do not need them as much as in the past, and that it is possible for women to now be self-reliant. Needless to say, this creates ample confusion in a society where social norms still revolve around honour and respect as there is a discernible increase in men's fears of what uncontrolled, qualified women might do (p. 135).

Uncontrolled, qualified women, indeed. What Weiss leaves to our imagination is the psychic effect this all has on men. She speaks of men's fears, and of husbands' desires to control their wives. She tells us of a reduced level of trust among men, even among biological and fictive kin, due to increased corruption. She even tells us that men are beginning to abandon their families, through divorce, labor emigration, or drugs. But since the article is about women, the analysis of men ceases at that point. I read between the lines of a profound dissociative failure of an old trusted gender ideology; masculinity is in tatters, manhood is in flight. Once again, women seem to bear the burden of survival, even in the face of strong social mores demanding limits to their self-actualization. There has of course been a strong conservative reaction to social changes in Pakistan, even as Benazir Bhutto served as prime minister, and as head of one of the largest political parties. But we can see in Bhutto's own changes over the years, during which she took to wearing 'modest dress' and tempering her Westernized demeanor, the effect of conservative opinion on even the most powerful of Pakistani women. Bhutto, as is true of so many other women in the Muslim world, has become the "new Islamic woman" (Zuhur 1992).

Elite Muslim women have combined elements of the public and private realms into a new synthesis, but one that produces a certain amount of identity conflict. As Nabila Jaber (1997) describes it, "[t]he outcome of this legal polarization implies two modes of being, which are likened to the (illusionary) separation between domestic and public spheres. This polarization translates . . . into an identity crisis for women" (p. 114). I suggest this can be considered another form of the double burden—

women carry two worlds (public and private), as well as work at two jobs (public and domestic). But this synthesis still fits into modern Islamist conservatism: "[t]he Islamist stance on women allows their members to escape social and economic limitations in a hierarchical society through a visible leveling process and the wearing of a uniform, and by verbally emphasizing social equality" (Zuhur 1992, p. 11). In a complex era in which much of traditional structure is breaking down, men and women can still be equal within Islam if the sexual segregation is maintained, minimally by the hijab, at most (best?) by the true separation of spheres. But the separate spheres do not hold in the modern economy; so the minimal distinction is maintained through the curtaining off of the woman's body from the gaze of men, permitting men and women to meet in the public space of work and economy. However, the responsibility for the two conceptual spheres is supposed to remain. Men have responsibility over the public world (and ultimately over women), women over the world of family, children and home. But this fanciful theory of separation is no longer expedient in practice. Accepting the necessity of education for one's daughters opens the door to their employment, which opens the door to a shift in the division of labor within the family, which opens the door to a reduction in the control by men over the entire package.

Even in revolutionary Iran, women are not following the path decreed by the most conservative clerics. While women were part of the support that initially brought Khomeini to power, it was also their votes that brought moderate Mohammed Khatami into office as President nearly twenty years later (Afshar 1998). It was Khatami's call for women to participate at higher levels in the politics of Iran that contributed to victories for moderate forces, and for many women, in the March 1999 elections, for example. Even in this still conservative Islamic Republic, the legacy of Ayatollahs Khomeini and Mottahari is beginning, in some ways, to change (see Paidar 1995; Esfandiari 1997). Their advocates have been in greater difficulty continuing to impose their interpretation of 'traditional' sex/gender arrangements upon a restive and politicized population. As Haideh Moghissi put it in 1994, women's activities and activism in Iran "signify only one thing: women's determination and their

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enormous efforts to escape the prisons of femininity and sex-roles defined and guarded by the guardians of sharia. The Islamic regime has not opened the gates. Women are jumping over the fences" (quoted in Najmabadi 1998, p. 59).

In one of the great ironies of unintended consequences, it appears that the Islamic Revolution in Iran has freed women from some of the restrictions of the past. The imposition of modest dress notwithstanding, the Islamic regime has brought about an expansion of the appeal of advanced education and employment from women from middle classes to working class women who are observant

Muslims. Segregation of men and women has increased the need for professional women to serve the female population (Esfandiari 1997). Again, as in Pakistan, the "new Islamic woman" has carried the day. Ex-President Rafsanjani's daughter Faizeh Hashemi has even been quoted as saying, "What I want to know is, what prevents a woman from becoming the President of the Islamic Republic?" (Afshar 1998, p. 63).

The idea of men as "natural" leaders in politics, business, and public affairs has been discredited.

And if the Iranian women interviewed by Haleh Esfandiari (1997) are any indication, there has been a great reduction in women's respect for men as the Islamic Revolution unfolded.

In general, if the comments of these women are any guide, respect for men--their competence, good sense, fairness--has sharply declined. The idea of men as "natural" leaders in politics, business, and public affairs has been discredited. Women are much more likely to see men as full of swagger and bravado, but empty shells when it comes to displaying real courage and backbone in crises. Women feel far more independent than before the revolution, and married women far less dependent on their husbands (p. 172).

It seems as if this particular façade of Sharia-based 'revolutionary' masculinity has been truly pierced by women's intelligence and drive. And it seems that this has happened regardless of the policies of individual governments. I wonder what the ultimate Islamic Reformation will consist of—perhaps 'it' (though there are likely to be multiple forms) will be a reformation of the sex/gender order within a modernized Islamic frame. We shall see.

So we're back once again where we began. Each path we take into the literature on gender relations in the Middle East and North Africa leads us to extensive material on what has been happening to women in families, schools, and workplaces. Each scholar or analyst finds plenty of material to explicate the ways men and women see this process; in other words, women are present in the writing and theorizing about these transformations, and men are present primarily one step removed. What exactly is the problem here? Where are the men as an actively engaged gender, and not just as the generic standard from which women differ?

Finding the Voices of Men

In the search for information about how the global forces of change in the gender order are affecting Muslims, the voices we find in most literature on gender are those of women. It is in politics and economy that we find the voices of men, as party leaders, revolutionaries, autocrats, military figures, and businessmen. This means that much of our sense of what men think must be found through a double process of translation, so to speak. Men talk about the economy, the family, politics, about the requirements of their religion, about the pressures of unemployment and political disempowerment, but infrequently about the ways they think and feel concerning masculinity and (gendered) power. Discussions about patriarchy deal with what men say about women (Khalifa 1996). Similarly, most articles on gender and social change in Muslim countries are focused on women's lives, struggles and achievements (Haddad and Esposito 1998; Göçek and Balaghi 1994; Sabbagh 1996). The paradigm in which 'gender' means 'women' still has a powerful hold on anthropological scholarship⁴. When Muslim men are written about, it is rarely in terms of their masculinity, their struggles in the realm of gender, or their 'public' lives as structured patterns of gendered behavior. One must approach the internal struggles of men about the gender order through a kind of double bind: either through what women say about men, or what men say about the world of society, economy and politics. When men do talk of private life, it is all too frequently in terms of the family and of women's roles within it, with the focus on men's roles as protector and provider. This is what I found in fieldwork with men in several Moroccan cities in the early nineties (Conway-Long 2000, Conway-Long 2002).

But in the end, even though anthropological fieldwork on Middle Eastern men as men is just beginning to appear, we still do not have much material in which men speak directly and clearly about the ways they perceive themselves as men, as masculine constructions, as participants in any sort of ongoing negotiation and recreation of the differences between the sexes and genders. Deniz

Kandiyoti has made one attempt to gather some of the ways men actually talk about these issues, in her 1994 piece "The Paradoxes of Masculinity: Some Thoughts on Segregated Societies." As she struggled with her concept of patriarchy in another work on women and the state, she discovered throughout the modern period a continued presence of male reformers who supported women's liberation in what appeared to be honest ways, not merely, as she first suspected, to cloak their deeper, essentially patriarchal values. In the process of puzzling over this, she discovered the work of Bob Connell (1987), whose work in hegemonic masculinity is the standard framework for identifying the multiplicity of masculinities in any given socio-cultural system. Kandiyoti was forced to return to the data about men's upbringing in the classic Arab household for clues to the puzzle of such variations. Examining Bouhdiba's work *Sexuality in Islam* (1985), the novels of Egyptian Najib Mahfouz, a series of recent interviews from Turkey, and a study of one homosexual subculture in Istanbul, she came to an interesting conclusion:

I was also intending to make a strong case for situating masculinities -- however fragmented and variegated they may appear -- in historically and culturally specific contexts which delimit and to some extent constrain the range of discourses and choices available to social actors. . . . I learned in the process that behind the enduring facade of male privilege lie profound ambiguities which

may give rise to both defensive masculinist discourse and a genuine desire for contestation and change (p. 212).

Kandiyoti provides for us a model of moving beyond the expected, where male is equated with patriarchal and masculine and seen as uniform, to a method in which the particular historical and cultural conditions of a gender construction are examined, in which men are expected to demonstrate variations even in a unique historical and cultural situation. It is the direction we need to go to do much more work, and I am hoping many more anthropologists are waiting in the wings to study this obviously needed area. The state of the world seems to hang in the balance. While I would argue it is equally essential to study the Texas-Kennebunkport-Washington neocon connection, it is going to take a great deal of effort to show the wider public (particularly in the U. S.) that Muslim males are not the new danger, tortuously re-constructed as an ahistorical reflection of the African-American male of the post-slavery South. For men in the Muslim Middle East are facing the same crises and dislocations as other males worldwide, and, while their religious and other cultural heritage may lead them to some unique solutions, it is singularly inappropriate to construct an elaborate false image of a unitary Muslim male, designed to cloak our own aggressiveness, our own insecurities, and our own collective denial and disregard for the impact of our nation's actions upon the world.

End Notes

1. This term, as used by Hawley and Proudfoot, is easily challenged. As is argued below, fundamentalism has become a creative response to the modern world that is only "antimodern" in certain very delimited ways, especially as modern is seen as a subset of Western. As a whole, fundamentalist movements are rather a function of modernity itself. In that sense, all non-Euro-American versions have gone a step beyond the original US-based movement.
2. See Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* (1965) in a chapter entitled "The Algerian Family." While aware of the impact of colonialism and the war for liberation on family relationships, he remains pre-gender, so to speak, by leaving masculine and feminine in the realm of what is natural.
3. As often true, there is nothing specifically 'Islamic' about this interlinkage of women and cultural values; it can be argued as a near universal.
4. Matthew Guttman (1997), in "Trafficking in Men: The Anthropology of Masculinity," had this to say: "Insufficient attention has been paid to men-as-men in anthropology . . . , and much of what anthropologists have written about masculinity must be inferred from research on women and by extrapolation from studies on other topics" (386).

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