

Nasif. Shaykh 'Ali Yusuf actually married a daughter of Shaykh al-Sadat, who was one of the *ashraf*. As for Malak Hifni Nasif, *bahithat al-badiyah*, she was married to 'Abd al-Sattar al-Basil. Sonbol also states that a secret police force was instituted in 1940, yet it was established in the early 1920s to fight political crime. There is also the burning of the Cairo Opera House which, according to Sonbol, took place in the 1990s, whereas it burned down in 1971. Montreux is referred to as Montreaux. Also according to Sonbol, Isma'il Sidqi was fired as Prime Minister of Egypt after the Badari incident, but the Badari case was debated in the Egyptian Parliament in January 1933, and Sidqi only resigned in September 1933, as a result of King Fuad and Ibrashi's machinations. In referring to the Ziwar cabinet of 1925, she writes 1952. The bread riots took place in Egypt in 1977, not in 1981.

MALAK BADRAWI

MAI GHOUSSOUB and EMMA SINCLAIR-WEBB (ed.):

*Imagined masculinities: male identities and culture in the modern Middle East.*

294 pp. London: Saqi Books, 2000. £25.00, £14.95 paperback.

There has been a significant increase during the 1990s in publications on Western 'masculinity'. Some have been written in response, and sometimes as a challenge, to a perceived imbalance in gender and identity studies that favours women. These (primarily male) authors assert that feminist literature and women's studies have either excluded men, or have neglected to address the complexities and possible diversity of male identities. The juxtaposition of more fully explored and developed female identities against some essentialized, monolithic, and normally patriarchal 'male' in much feminist literature has been viewed as tactically disempowering towards men, and some have sought to rectify the situation by reclaiming a male focus in their writing. Positions entrenched in exclusionary policies, however, have only served to widen the gender divide and have failed productively to engage with the social and cultural politics of gendering.

More inclusive approaches to gender studies have also responded to the under-representation of 'masculinity' in earlier feminist works and women's studies, but have more successfully avoided the pitfalls of the 'all-male' works by bridging the divide between the sexes. Contemporary gender studies address notions of masculinity and femininity within a unified discursive field, thereby recognizing not only their necessary relation to one another, but also the possibility of multiple and overlapping gender identities. Writers, such as the contributing authors to Cornwall and Lindisfarne's *Dislocating masculinity* (1994), consider the construction of hegemonic and variant masculinities within particular ethnographic contexts, and thereby collectively challenge the notion of a natural, universal and heterosexual masculinity. The compilation of writings in Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb's edited volume under review here, *Imagined masculinities*, follows suit, and makes a significant contribution not only to the study of masculinities, but also to gender research in the Middle East more generally.

Despite commonly held assumptions about patriarchal dominance in Middle Eastern cultures and societies, studies of the production and reproduction of masculine identities have been scant, and much of the gender focus in this region has been on women in relation to issues of social status,

Islam, politics and law. Ghousseb and Sinclair-Webb's volume initiates a much-needed correction to this deficiency. *Imagined masculinities* presents the work of fifteen academics, journalists and writers of various cultural backgrounds, all of whom share the premise that masculinity, like femininity, is socially constructed with complex webs of power relations. In addition to newly-authored contributions, a few of the chapters are excerpts reprinted from existing publications, such as Bouhdiba's 'Sexuality in Islam', and others are translations from works in Arabic which present an English-reading audience with a valuable insight into gender studies pursued by non-Western scholars and writers. One of the great merits of the book is that the editors have not equated the Middle East exclusively with Islam, and have included several fascinating contributions on Jewish-Israeli notions of masculinity (but unfortunately none specifically addressing the Christian communities of the region), and regional coverage extends widely from Morocco to Turkey and into the Arabian Peninsula without ever positing generalized notions of 'Middle Eastern' practices.

The book has been divided into three parts. The first, entitled 'Making men: institutions and social practices', comprises essays that analyse the making of masculinity in ritualistic and institutionalized contexts. The editors claim to have achieved a chronology from childhood to adulthood here, but with only five chapters in the section, two of which deal with circumcision and three that analyse masculinity within military and combative contexts, there are certainly a great many lacunae in relation to the ageing process. In fact, elderly males, or even those who have passed beyond the ritual 'wedding night', tend to be relegated outside of studies of masculinity, falsely suggesting that either masculine identity remains static with maturity, or that older men assume classic patriarchal roles. The contributions in this section are nevertheless among the strongest in the book, and particularly enlightening is the contrast between both Bouhdiba's and Khal's accounts of Muslim circumcisions with that of Bilu's highly informative (though at times overly theoretical) analysis of circumcisions, haircuts and the Torah among Israel's ultra-orthodox Jews. Sinclair-Webb's study of military service and manhood is situated within the intricate relationship between gender, ethnicity and power in contemporary Turkey, and the government's ongoing oppression of the Kurds. I felt, however, that this relation could have been better highlighted in order to demonstrate more clearly how questions of gender identity cannot be disentangled from ones regarding language, ethnicity and race. Petee's essay on male gender in the Intifada is an abbreviated version of an article originally published in 1994 that nicely complements her earlier and more extensive work on women in the Palestinian resistance movement. Kaplan's study of gender and sexuality in the all-Israeli military 'melting pot' points out how some men, while fully upholding the hegemonic masculine ideal espoused by the army and nation, may also develop a homosexual identity.

Part 2 of the book on 'Male fictions' takes a more literary slant on the issue of masculinity, with contributions considering medieval and modern Arabic literature, the Egyptian cinema, and propagandist journalism. The first two chapters are particularly insightful and complement each other nicely in their historic focus. In her analysis of 'wiles of women' stories, such as those integrated within such frame stories as *The Thousand and One Nights*, Najmabadi provocatively suggests that, in contrast to the way that the Oedipus story works to produce 'heterosocial heteronormativity', these circulate in the Middle East to produce and reproduce a 'repudiation of the world of women, while distancing from male homoeroticism to construct a

homosocial adult manhood'. In the following chapter, Lagrange engages in a somewhat extensive historical survey of 'homosexuality' in Arabic literature, and posits several possible reasons for the subject's general neglect in contemporary writing in comparison with literature of the Classical Age. The book's third part, 'Memoir and male identity', completes the volume with three chapters by Jewish and Arabic writers. All three present highly entertaining autobiographical insights into the lives of Middle Eastern men and explore important episodes in the construction of gender identities.

*Imagined masculinities* provides a necessary study in the Middle East context, and will be extremely valuable for students in gender, anthropology, and Near and Middle Eastern studies. We can only hope for more follow up on this important issue.

TREVOR H. J. MARCHAND

RUTH RODED (ed.):

*Women in Islam and the Middle East: a reader.*

xiv, 271 pp. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999. £39.50.

Ruth Roded has been associated with the Department of the History of Islam and the Middle East at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for over twenty-five years. During this time she has worked to transmit an understanding of the complex role of women in the history and culture of this part of the world. From the first course she taught on women in Islam and Middle Eastern history, it became clear to the author that the only way to do justice to this controversial subject was by enabling her students to read primary sources (in translation, if necessary) and form their own opinion. This was a perilous path, fraught with dangers in not only the selection of materials, in their translation (mainly into English), but also in the omission of material.

Ruth Roded is careful to highlight the particular difficulties of interpreting early Islamic, particularly quranic, references to women. Hence her effort to let the material speak for itself is introduced by text which attempts to 'locate' the material. Here she raises questions which the twenty-first century reader might wish to ask. She is also careful to note the biases which emerge—particularly in European travel literature—isolating Islam as denigrating to women, when the facts presented seem to suggest that what is being perceived is a social and cultural attitude common to Arab Christians, Muslims and Jews alike. She cites, for an example, the work of Henry Harris Jessup, a Protestant missionary in Syria for seventeen years in the mid-nineteenth century. In his book *Women of the Arabs* he refers to a number of scholarly works and Arabic written and oral sources, yet his attitude to the subject is extraordinarily biased. 'The scourging and beating of wives is one of the worst features of Moslem domestic life', he says. Yet, as Ruth Roded shows, Jessup, by his own evidence, admits that Christians in nineteenth-century Syria beat their wives as often as did Muslims. In fact she goes on to state that the nineteenth-century man's 'right and even obligation to punish women and children in his care by beating if necessary was widely recognized in the West as well as the East until very recently' (p. 6). With this cultural relativistic approach to the material outlined in her 20-page introduction, the selected readings which comprise the bulk of the book offer a promise of being more than a reaffirmation of orientalist scholarship.

The readings are divided into five parts: Part 1, The foundation of Islam;