

ZIADDEH LECTURE 2010



Near Eastern Languages and Civilization

*The Farhat J. Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture  
in Arab and Islamic Studies*

*Arab American Christian Scholars  
and the Study of the Middle East  
in the United States*

*Professor Yvonne Haddad  
Georgetown University*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is my distinct privilege to provide you with a copy of the eighth Farhat J. Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies, "*Arab American Christian Scholars and the Study of the Middle East in the United States*," delivered by Yvonne Haddad on May 7, 2010.

The Ziadeh Fund was formally endowed in 2001. Since that time, with your support, it has allowed us to strengthen our educational reach and showcase the most outstanding scholarship in Arab and Islamic Studies, and to do so always in honor of our dear colleague Farhat Ziadeh, whose contributions to the fields of Islamic law, Arabic language, and Islamic Studies are truly unparalleled.

Farhat J. Ziadeh was born in Ramallah, Palestine, in 1917. He received his B.A. from the American University of Beirut in 1937 and his LL.B. from the University of London in 1940. He then attended Lincoln's Inn, London, where he became a Barrister-at-Law in 1946. In the final years of the British Mandate, he served as a Magistrate for the Government of Palestine before eventually moving with his family to the United States. He was appointed Professor of Arabic and Islamic Law at Princeton University, where he taught until 1966, at which time he moved to the University of Washington.

The annual lectureship in his name is a fitting tribute to his international reputation and his national service to the discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies. The event and publication would not be possible without the generous support of many contributors including students, colleagues, friends, and above all Farhat and Suad themselves, and their family members. On behalf of our Department, I extend my deepest thanks to them and to all of you who have supported the Ziadeh Fund. You truly have made a difference!

Sincerely yours,



Scott B Noegel  
Chair, Near Eastern Languages & Civilization  
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*The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization  
at the University of Washington*

**The Eighth Farhat J. Ziadeh  
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*Arab American Christian Scholars  
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**Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad**

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# *Arab American Christian Scholars and the Study of the Middle East in the United States*

**Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad**

This study is an effort to explore the contribution of Arab American Christian scholars to America's understanding of the Middle East. The U.S. inherited influence over the region from European colonial powers after WWII. In the process, the Middle East became of crucial importance during the Cold War and continues to be an area of vital interest to American prosperity and dominance in the world. This study will focus primarily on a cohort group of immigrant Arab Christian scholars, part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brain-drain immigration from the Middle East. These scholars enriched America's knowledge of the Arab World, helped in pioneering the study of Arabic and Islamic studies and provided accurate information and seasoned reflection on the area that filled a major vacuum of knowledge in the academy. The study will provide a preliminary overview of the subjects they explored, the academic atmosphere in which they struggled to publish their scholarship and the service they rendered to their adopted country. Limited space precludes doing full justice to the many who participated in this endeavor or providing a comprehensive assessment of the value of their contribution.

The coalescing of several factors makes this preliminary overview look timely. The first factor is the passage of time. Many of these pioneering Arab American scholars, who a half century ago assumed the task of establishing Middle Eastern Studies in the American academy, have retired or passed away. Their contribution to the U.S. has not always been recognized as having made a difference even by community and political leaders of the Arab immigrant organizations. In 1994, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and Arab American Institute distributed a list of prominent Arab Americans prepared by Casey Kasem, host of American Top 40. The list did not have a single reference to a scholar of Arab ancestry. A 2005 revised edition included three Arab educators: Edward Said, Jack Shaheen and David Adamany.<sup>1</sup> Others, featured in order of the importance Kasem placed on their contribution to the U.S. are: military



officials,<sup>2</sup> politicians, including members of Congress, senators, governors or individuals, and officials appointed by the President,<sup>3</sup> followed by those who have excelled in sports,<sup>4</sup> noted activists,<sup>5</sup> business leaders,<sup>6</sup> individuals in the entertainment industry<sup>7</sup> and media personalities.<sup>8</sup> Eventually educators were mentioned, followed by contributors to fashion,<sup>9</sup> art and literature<sup>10</sup> and finally science and medicine.<sup>11</sup>

While the focus of this study is on Arab Christians who became scholars of the Middle East at a crucial time in American history, it is nonetheless true that the cohort group discussed below did include Muslim scholars who contributed to the wealth of information about the area such as Naseer Aruri,<sup>12</sup> Hisham Sharabi,<sup>13</sup> Ibrahim Abu Lughod,<sup>14</sup> Ayad al-Qazzaz,<sup>15</sup> Muhsin Mahdi,<sup>16</sup> Hani A. Faris,<sup>17</sup> and Baha Abu Laban.<sup>18</sup> Although they acknowledge the contributions of these scholars, many Muslims now feel strongly that it is time for Muslim scholars to be interpreting the social, economic, religious, political and cultural dynamics of their societies, particularly at a time when Islamophobia has become dominant in the United States. Muslim attempts to reclaim their right to speak for Arabs and Arab Islam began to surface in the middle of the 1970's as more Muslims began to emigrate to the United States and as the commitment to the secular nation state in the Middle East began to recede as a consequence of the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars.

Among them was Professor Ismail al-Faruqi of Temple University who, in the middle of the 1970's, moved intellectually from advocating Arabism to promoting Islamism.<sup>19</sup> He noted that the study of Middle Eastern societies in the United States and of Islam was dominated by Arab Christian scholars living in the West. He praised Arab Christians for rendering a great service to Islam, particularly in mediating between Muslim populations and the West. He identified three periods of Arab Islamic history during which this contribution was particularly needed by Muslims. The first was during the formative period of Islamic civilization. Arab Christians introduced and translated Greek and Syriac manuscripts, and contributed to the development of Arab civilization in such areas as science, philosophy, medicine and mathematics. The second major contribution was from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when they translated European knowledge into Arabic giving rise to what is known as the *nahda*, the revival of Arabic thought. The third period was during the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Arab Christians published studies on the Arab and Islamic contributions to science, history, culture as well as monographs on the Arab world, Islam and Muslims. Al-Faruqi noted that they



established centers for Middle Eastern studies, translated medieval Arabic texts, combated virulent stereotypes against Arabs and Muslims, developed collections of books and manuscripts in American libraries and introduced accurate information about the Arab and Muslim world. However, he believed that “It is time for Muslims to take over the writing about Islam and Muslims.”<sup>20</sup>

While many Muslims have been supportive of Arab Christian scholarship and cultural contributions, the same is not true of some Jewish-American Zionists who have dismissed them as marginal. One of the most outspoken of these critics is American-Israeli scholar Martin Kramer. Kramer who is supported by the Israeli lobby accuses scholars of the Middle East of providing ideological interpretations that fail to understand the dynamics operating in the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> For Kramer, the touchstone of good scholarship on the Middle East is one that shares his perspective on Israel. He dismisses any studies that criticize Israel’s expansionist policies or its treatment of Palestinians, and views as substandard any scholarship that analyzes the impact of Western colonialism and racism on the politics of the Middle East. Kramer accuses scholars of Middle East studies of failing to serve American interests. His views are shared by many of the neo-conservative policy makers, think-tanks, and pundits who support pro-Zionist interpretations of the economic, political, and cultural developments in the Middle East.

While there have long been voices that have attempted to alert the American public to the consequences of the supersession of Israeli interests over American interests in the Middle East,<sup>22</sup> it is only lately that we have the beginning of public recognition among some American political and military leaders that the Arab Christian scholars (among others) in many instances were right all along and that their insights into what obtains in the Middle East and their recommendations were sound. There is a growing understanding that political expediency as well as powerful lobbies led several American administrations to choose policies generated by think-tanks accountable to foreign interests that were counterproductive to America’s vital interests in the area.<sup>23</sup> A recent example is General Petraeus’ testimony before the Armed Services Committee of Congress, arguing that there has been:

Insufficient progress toward a comprehensive Middle East peace. The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in the AOR [Area of



Responsibility].<sup>24</sup> Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas.<sup>25</sup>

### **Arab American Christians**

Christians from the Arab world began emigrating to the West in the 1870's. They came to an America described to them not only as the land of opportunity, but as the land of freedom and justice. From the beginning, however, they encountered hostility and racism. They only won their right to become citizens by contesting in the courts and being declared "white."<sup>26</sup> They established several ethnic and literary newspapers and magazines which published information about Middle Eastern issues.<sup>27</sup> These publications gave a platform for Arab Christian scholars and journalists to publish information directed at both the immigrant population and the general American public.<sup>28</sup> These articles provided facts about Arab history, religion, science, and civilization that had become part of the foundation of Western civilization. The goal was to forge a community that is proud of its history and contribution to civilization and to preserve its identity from disintegration in the face of racism and stereotyping; at the same time the articles promoted patriotic duty to the United States and encouraged enlisting in its armed services.<sup>29</sup>

More recently, the Arab American Christian community has featured award-winning journalists such as George Hishmeh, who has been instrumental in writing about the United States and its policies in the Arab press, including *The Jordan Times*, and in interpreting the Arab world to audiences on American television. Hishmeh has also been involved in founding "The Palestine Center," a Washington think-tank.<sup>30</sup> The community also includes *Washington Post* and *New York Times* correspondent Anthony Shadid, who won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting, and the *Toledo Blade's* Michael Sallah, winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. Also of note is the feisty Arab American journalist Helen Thomas, who served for 57 years as a correspondent for



United Press International and was dean of the White House press corps.

These writers also found a need to write a history of the Arab community in the United States. They tried to imbue a sense of pride and dignity among their members, emphasizing that they are the descendants of pioneers in building great civilizations, not the “Mediterranean trash” as their detractors claim. The first to undertake such a task was Phillip K. Hitti. He wrote *The Syrians in America*,<sup>31</sup> in which he distinguished the community from the reigning stereotypes and argued that they are an asset to the United States as they share its values and work ethic and are contributing members to the society. A sequel was published in 1946.<sup>32</sup> Other Arab Christian authors who later took on the task of writing on the history, integration and the assimilation of the community include Alisha Naff, Farhat J. Ziadeh, Gregory Orfalea, Elaine Hagopian, and Adele Linda Younis.<sup>33</sup> Several doctoral dissertations have been written on the Arab community in Dearborn, Michigan, many of which have not been published.

Among the early Arab Christian immigrants was an important literary group who in 1920 founded al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah, the Literary Bond. Their works initiated a new school of diasporic literature, *adab al-mahjar*, that utilized an innovative new verse abandoning the traditional constraints of Arab poetry that they considered archaic in rhythm and rhyme.<sup>34</sup> (They had a major influence on the development of modern Arabic literature in the Arab world.) Among them are Kahlil Gibran, author of the popular *Prophet*, Amin Rihani, and Mikhail Naimeh. They were concerned about the situation that obtained in the lands they left behind and at times became engaged in lobbying against colonial domination of the area after WWI.

Despite the fact that many Americans are ignorant of the existence of an indigenous Christian community in the Middle East and that the Christian immigrants from the area are not recent converts from Islam, very few Arab American Christian scholars have focused their studies on Christianity in the Middle East, with several notable exceptions. American born Robert M. Haddad of Smith College published *Syrian Christians in a Muslim Society*,<sup>35</sup> which documented the history of the Byzantine-rite Orthodox Church, the largest Christian church in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine/Israel. Aziz Atiyah wrote about the Coptic Church in Egypt.<sup>36</sup> Philip M. Kayal and Joseph M. Kayal wrote about the assimilation of the Syrian and Lebanese Christians in the United States.<sup>37</sup> Irfan Shahid’s research and publications focused primarily on the relations between the Greco-Roman



world and the Arabic and Islamic world in late antiquity and medieval times. His monumental multi-volume *magnum opus*, entitled *Byzantium and the Arabs*, focused on its history from the 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>38</sup> This work has made Shahid the leading scholar on the history of the Ghassanids, the early Christian tribes of Arabia. In it Shahid provides the historical background of the tumultuous early centuries of the church in the Middle East, including the Christological arguments that tore the church of the East between Byzantium and the Monophysites, the circumstance that prevailed when Islam arrived in Arabia.

### **The Cold War and Middle Eastern Studies**

In the post WWII period, the United States attempted to fill the power vacuum left by the British departure from the Middle East. It looked for people to employ in the Middle East branch of the Department of State. At the time there were only a few Middle Eastern experts in the United States, including American Christian missionaries who had developed important insights during their service in the Middle East. In order to fill the lacuna, universities imported scholars from Europe and the Middle East. In 1949, the Committee on Middle Eastern Studies, established to advise the government on how to proceed, reported that “at no university does there appear to be a person who would claim to be an expert in economics, sociology, or politics of the present day Near East.”<sup>39</sup> Consequently, National Research Centers for Middle Eastern Studies were established at various universities. Research funds were made available by the Ford Foundation and the U.S. government; scholars began to study the societies favored by the funding agencies. Initially many studies focused on Lebanon, perceived as a possible model for the nations in the area of a developing and modernizing a democratic and pro-Western society. Later, with Nasser’s ascent to power and the growing threat of socialism in the area, the focus shifted to Egypt, seen as the most influential nation in the area. Among the early Christian Arab scholars who pioneered Middle Eastern studies in the U.S. were Lebanese American Philip Hitti at Princeton University, Palestinian American Farhat J. Ziadeh at the University of Washington, Egyptian American Aziz Atiya at the University of Utah, and Iraqi American Majid Khadduri at Johns Hopkins University.

The majority of Arabs immigrated to the United States after WWII, two-thirds of whom were Christian. They generally came on a preference visa because of their ability to serve the American economy or to study engineering and medicine with the goal of returning to serve their home countries. Some were caught in the vortex of American racism and



anti-Arab attitudes and decided to settle and “do something about it.” Several changed their concentration from the sciences to the humanities and social sciences in an effort to engage in the debate and provide correctives to the dominant erroneous teachings about the Arab world. Some of the Christian Arabs joined Muslim scholars and became founding members of the Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) organization. It was formed in 1967 when it became clear to the young scholars that the American Oriental Society (AOS) and the recently organized Middle East Studies Association (MESA) formed in 1966 would not accommodate their methodologies or their ideas or allow them to read papers or publish their research. The AAUG was formed by activists as other scholars were fearful of losing their academic positions if they were associated with it.<sup>40</sup> They were galvanized by the Arab defeat and the American reaction to the war. Their goal was to demystify the Orient. The AAUG constitution noted that “The Association aims at promoting knowledge and understanding of cultural, scientific, and educational matters between the United States, Canada, and the Arabic-speaking countries.”<sup>41</sup>

AAUG provided a morale boost to the beleaguered Christians and Muslims in the Arab American community, both the recently arrived and also the children and grandchildren of the early immigrants. “This is because in times of crises which are Middle East related,” says Michael W. Suleiman, “even those who are (and believe they are) fully assimilated in American society find themselves singled out as ‘Arabs,’ i.e., they are stripped of the ‘American’ part of their Arab-American identity.”<sup>42</sup> The organization came into existence due to its members’ support of the Palestinian cause and it thrived as an organization that favored Arab nationalism and was suspicious of imperialist policies that fostered the division of the Middle East into mini nation-states and the creation and empowerment of the state of Israel. Its cohesion did not last long as political developments overseas precipitated contentious confrontations among the members. The Lebanese were the first to leave as a consequence of the Civil War of 1975-1990. The Egyptians followed when some in the AAUG criticized the peace treaty Sadat signed with Israel since it did not include recognition of Arab Jerusalem and abandoned the Palestinians to the mercy of Israel. Events overseas and inter-Arab conflicts continued the process of weakening the organization.<sup>43</sup>

### **Countering the Challenge of Modernization Theory**

The work produced by Arab American scholars was based on



realities in the area and tried to counter the Zionist and imperialist ideological perspective on the Arab world. Modernization theory, particularly the work of Daniel Lerner,<sup>44</sup> was the dominant lens through which Western scholars looked at the Arab world. This theory perceives history as a record of the universal progress of all societies who are on a trajectory moving from a rural, agrarian, religious, irrational “traditional” to an urban, industrial, rational, “modern” status. It assumes that any society can be located at a certain point along this continuum. For some modernization theorists, modernization relies on the cultivation of certain cultural psychological traits, while others believe it is rooted in macroeconomic factors. But all believe that there is only one path to modernity.<sup>45</sup> To address these issues and to be able to publish information that contested the dominant narrative of the established scholars, AAUG began publishing a scholarly journal: *Arab Studies Quarterly*. It provided an alternative venue for ideas and information that was censored by other academic publications.

A few early issues of *Arab Studies Quarterly* published articles that gave credence to modernization theory. An example is Barbara Kalkas’ article on the failure of state-led industrialization in Egypt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> While demonstrating the relative importance of external and internal factors that impeded the state’s efforts, Kalkas takes modernization and its effects for granted, dismissing the relative importance of these two factors in development.<sup>47</sup> Another example is Debbie Gerner-Adams’ hypothesis that although the status of women in the Middle East is indeed changing, the change is a process of tension between “tradition” and “modernity,” neither of which is problematized. The concluding section of her article provides a chart, in which she ranks various Arab countries based on how “modern” their laws regarding personal-status issues, minimum marriage age, polygamy, and so on. In this chart, certain laws are deemed “modern,” and “modernity” is measured simply by how many such laws a given country has.<sup>48</sup>

Several issues later, *Arab Studies Quarterly* published articles that are explicitly critical of modernization theory, often refuting its claims. For example, Judith Tucker questions the beneficial effects of modernity on traditional societies when she reports on the social and economic pressures unleashed on peasant families, and especially women, by the modernizing policies of the Egyptian state.<sup>49</sup> Mona Hammam writes about women and industrial work in Egypt, noting that the treatment of the history of women’s participation in the industrial workforce in Egypt under-



mines many stereotypical claims about the “traditional” nature of Egyptian society before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hammam uncovers a long history of women’s participation and the effects of such participation on society. This history gives the lie to claims that Egyptian society has “traditionally” segregated and suppressed women. Hammam notes that her research “lends support to the school of thought which considers economic factors the crucial determinant variable in defining sex roles and which relegates sociocultural factors to a contributory function.”<sup>50</sup>

By 1993, *Arab Studies Quarterly* was publishing essays that were devoted to a full theoretical critique of the bases of the modernization paradigm. Mervat Hatem tries to demonstrate that modernization theory is not as objective as it claims, illustrating how it is a product of the power differential between Western societies and post-colonial Third World societies. She further makes the well-known point that modernization theory is overly simplistic, totalizing both “tradition” and “modernity” into monolithic categories that are mutually exclusive.<sup>51</sup>

Other articles in *Arab Studies Quarterly* provided implicit critiques of modernization, particularly those addressing economic issues, many of which subscribe to the dependency theory that sees economic backwardness not as a consequence of failure to be sufficiently modern but as a pernicious legacy of colonial and neocolonial domination. For example, Jacqueline Ismael reasons that Kuwait has remained underdeveloped (despite its capital surplus from oil extraction), not due to remnants of “tradition” getting in the way of development, but to internal class relations which ensure “the recirculation of capital accumulated through oil exploitation back into the dominant capitalist system. Thus...Kuwait reflects the same syndrome of underdevelopment present in other dependent nations...”<sup>52</sup>

Over time, modernization theory became widely discredited and disappeared as an object of discussion. Emphasis shifted to investigation of plural, different “modernities.” An example is Mansoor Moaddel’s attempt to break down the modernization theorists’ portrayal of religion as an inherently “traditional” force by discussing the proliferation of “ideological creativity” among Egyptian ‘*ulema*’ around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He describes their “affinity with the Enlightenment, daring criticisms of orthodoxy, reexamination of Islamic theology...and an orientation toward social reforms and political moderation.”<sup>53</sup> In a similar vein, Robert Springborg wrote against the portrayal of landowners in Egypt and Syria as semi-feudal and anti-capitalist. He described the Syrian agricultural



economy instead as “complex, market oriented, reasonably productive, and possibly not as exploitative as has generally been imagined.”<sup>54</sup> In this way Springborg’s writing serves to collapse the false dichotomy of traditional/modern, and instead show that the two interact in sometimes unexpected ways not envisioned by classical modernization theory.

Jamil Jreisat explicitly criticizes cultural explanations for the “backwardness” of the Arab world. He seems to find the “racist Western perspectives that tend to find something peculiar and genetically inferior in the cultures of other peoples” to be not really worthy of consideration, but at the same time he, like Hammam, does subscribe to the belief that cultural variables have some explanatory role to play, and assumes that many of the same stereotypical cultural attributes the “racist” literature ascribes to the Arabs are still valid. Furthermore, his explanation of underdevelopment in the Arab world relies on the excessive centralization and heavy-handed rule by those at the top for reasons of regime security, which while not indicting Arab society as a whole does still rely on a certain understanding of culture for its explanation.<sup>55</sup>

In his novels as well as his sociological work, Halim Barakat portrays what he considers the underlying reality of the Arab world, a unity of the area under the banner of Arab nationalism and a quest for justice, both by the return of the Palestinian diaspora and the establishment of economic justice for the underprivileged. His works are concerned with the difficulties facing modern Arab societies such as alienation, the crisis of civil society, and questions of identity, freedom, and justice. The theme of alienation is a central concept running through both his fiction and non-fiction, which he conceives as “a discrepancy between reality and utopia or between what is actual and what is desired.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in an early monograph, Barakat classifies Arab novels and novelists in general in how they treat the alienation of the individual from society, and particularly in terms of their alienation from ruling classes and ideologies. He identifies several possible orientations on this subject: reconciliation, passivity, escapism, and individual rebellion. His preference is for the orientation of “revolutionary change,” in which individuals undertake to or at least imagine the possibility of changing society instead of themselves as a means of alleviating their alienation.<sup>57</sup>

In his nonfiction work, Halim Barakat’s Arab nationalist vision is very clear. “I view the Arab world as a single, overarching society rather than a collection of several independent nation-states.”<sup>58</sup> However, he is



aware of the incongruity between what he sees as the underlying reality of a single Arab nation and its current foreign-imposed political divisions into separate nation-states. The situation that obtains leads to alienation because of the alarming “gap between reality and dream.”<sup>59</sup> He admits that “[the Arab world] carries within it the potential for both unity and divisiveness,” yet while divisiveness should be acknowledged, it should not be allowed to get in the path of the unity.<sup>60</sup>

Barakat’s preference for revolutionary change is readily apparent in his fiction. To take one example, *Days of Dust*, a fictionalized account of the Six Day War, features a protagonist who makes no secret of his belief that Arab states need not only revolutionary political but also social change. During an argument with a friend about the social and political potential of the Arab world, Ramzy Safady (Barakat’s main protagonist and voice) says “I am not underestimating the revolutionary movements. I do not recognize them. All we have are revolts, not social revolutions...You are a revolutionary in politics, but a social reactionary. There’s not one of us in revolt against our customs...”<sup>61</sup> Barakat makes no secret of the fact that he considers outdated traditions to be as much of an enemy to the progress of the Arab world as any neocolonial influences.

There was a significant lag between the appearance of the post-67 generation of Arab American scholar/activists and the adoption of an anti-modernization stance by the preponderance of authors published in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*. While *Arab Studies Quarterly (ASQ)* was founded as a self-consciously left/radical publication, and its articles overall reflected a critique of modernization theory from the beginning, *IJMES* defended modernization theory in its first issue in the publication of an article by H.A.R. Gibb on “The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World,” which set the tone for the rest of the decade. In this article Gibb writes that “It might be expected that [the problems created for religions by modernity] would be especially acute in Islam because of the particular rigidity of its dogmatic assumptions and affirmations...but up to the present time Muslim theologians have refused to face it in any but the most superficial manner.”<sup>62</sup> Modernization theory continued to be adumbrated in *IJMES* by many of its authors almost until the 1990s, 10 years after its critique in *ASQ*.

### **Contesting Stereotypes**

A major challenge to the immigrant Arab American community, as we have seen, was the reality of negative stereotypes of Arabs and Mid-



dle Easterners in the United States. Scholars sought to counter the images of Arabs as “camel jockeys,” “rag heads,” “sand niggers,” and generally backward. They focused on the production of factual information concerning Arab history, civilization and culture. Thus, along with the struggle to have their research taken seriously, Arab American scholars had to assert their legitimacy as Americans as well as scholars. Thus, they became invested in documenting the history of the Arab American community. Arab American Christians pioneered the efforts to counter anti-Arab prejudice and especially to locate their own identity as both Arab and Christian.

Political scientist Michael W. Suleiman, for example, believed in the necessity of systematic research into the conditions and circumstances of Arab Americans, both historically and in contemporary times, in order to better mobilize the community to achieve its political and social aims. His publications sought to place the history of Arab Americans as part of American history, providing an accurate scholarly history of the Arab American community and its changing circumstances and attitudes. Suleiman was a strong advocate of documenting the history of the community and its contribution to American society. He wrote that “unless and until Arab Americans are embedded in the consciousness, and written into the history of the United States, i.e., unless they are integrated into American society and body politic, they will not have the ability to influence policy.”<sup>63</sup>

Suleiman sought to generate an awareness of the presence of Arab Americans in the United States, not as terrorists but as productive citizens. Like other immigrants before them, said Suleiman, Arabs are in the mainstream of American society and like other ethnic groups that preceded them, whether African Americans, Irish, Jewish, or Polish, they are being stigmatized unfairly. He appealed to America’s sense of justice and fairness in demonstrating a deep conviction and commitment not only to the American dream, but also to a better American future. Thus, Suleiman’s account of the history of the Arab American community covers the many obstacles the community faced in the form of the exclusionary and prejudiced attitudes of the larger American society. He also documents the struggles within the Arab community over whether and how to reconcile their native culture to America. He details the shifting patterns of immigrant attitudes from a *nizala* mindset (seeing themselves as temporary sojourners) to one in which they see themselves as permanent settlers in North America. This history is also bound up in fascinating ways with the construction of exclusionary racism in late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century America,



exemplified in its immigration laws. Suleiman mentions several debates and court cases which attempted to settle the question of whether Arabs were “white” or not, and thus eligible to be included within the more-privileged racial categories in America’s immigration laws and in society in general.<sup>64</sup> The dark side of this story, of course, is that Arab American leaders were forced to accept the logic of white supremacy, and therefore, argued that yes, Arabs were white while implicitly or explicitly having to agree that such racist classifications had merit.

Michael W. Suleiman was passionate in his effort to shed light on the negative stereotypes of Arabs in American society, as well as the pervasive pro-Israeli bias of the American media and its effects on American policy in the region. He demonstrated that the anti-Arab and pro-Israeli biases of the American public are rooted not in simple ignorance of the situation, but in a deeper inability to see things from a perspective sympathetic to Palestinians. This unsympathetic view is related to a long history of Western stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims, stereotypes that are “hazy, broad, malleable—and negative,” and are characterized almost more by logical inconsistency than by their distance from more accurate portrayals.<sup>65</sup> Alongside the stereotypes is a more general attitude which simply ignores the existence of Arabs whenever convenient.<sup>66</sup> Suleiman notes that after the initial shock of the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Arab public opinion was predominantly pro-Palestinian, seeing its cause as “clearly moral and just.” He notes that the possibility of partitioning Palestine came as a great shock to most Arabs.<sup>67</sup>

Also active in contesting stereotypes is sociologist Elaine Hagopian who took up the cause of discrimination against Arab and Muslim Americans. Her works provide both a theoretical and an activist point of view. On the one hand, she highlights and details specific cases of discrimination, including systematic discrimination by the U.S. government against Arab and Muslim Americans. For example, in her 1976 article “Minority Rights in a Nation-State: The Nixon Administration’s Campaign Against Arab-Americans,” she writes about “Operation Boulder” in which the FBI was ostensibly attempting to root out Arab terrorists in the U.S. after the attack on the Munich Olympics. Her research found that it was actually undertaken at the request of, and used to benefit, Zionist organizations in America.<sup>68</sup>

In her edited volume *Civil Rights in Peril: The Targeting of Arab and Muslim Americans* Hagopian continues to expose systematic discrimination



against Arabs and Muslims in American society and government. She also makes clear the link between the continuing existence of this discrimination and a certain kind of right-wing politics, treated especially in her chapter titled “The Interlocking of Right-Wing Politics and U.S. Middle East Policy: Solidifying Arab/Muslim Demonization.” Hagopian focuses on the interplay of several factors which influence the politics of minorities in a modern nation-state. In her preface to *Civil Rights in Peril*, she writes “the intention of this volume is to lay bare the interplay of domestic and foreign policy that must be understood if we are to reverse the dangerous course on which the nation is embarked and restore rights guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.”<sup>69</sup> Indeed, in “Minority Rights in a Nation-State,” written some 30 years earlier, Hagopian does some interesting theorizing on the role of minorities in politics. After defining a modern state as one that necessarily treats all of its citizens equally, she writes that “The principle of nationalism, i.e., of one people belonging together in the nation-state and being therefore entitled to all of its rights and obligations, should theoretically be in harmony with this concept...There have, however, been numerous discussions and writings about the basis of nationalism. Was it to be based on language, culture, ethnicity, creed, etc., or several of these?”<sup>70</sup> In this passage, Hagopian gets at one of the fundamental paradoxes of nationalism, namely that it assumes that states are expected to treat all citizens equally, even though the nation itself is an inherently exclusive concept. The two categories never align perfectly in practice.

In Halim Barakat’s novel, *Days of Dust*, his character, Ramzy Sa-fady, wonders aloud about the prevalence of anti-Arab sentiment in America. Reading a letter to the editor of *Time* magazine, he asks, “Why does this American farmer want us to go to hell? He’s probably never met an Arab in his life. Why all this hatred for the Arabs? I just don’t understand.” His American lover, Pamela, with whom he is discussing the topic, launches into an explanation which refers back to the casual racism present in Western literary classics such as *Robinson Crusoe*, and seems to imply that such racism comes from an individualistic, commercial outlook which treats human beings as commodities. In an article in the same issue of *Time* Pamela also mentions that “Zionism is creating a new type of anti-Semitism in America.” She quotes from the article: “Why do we antagonize and abuse the Arabs? Throughout their history they never harmed either the West or the Jews. In fact, on the contrary, it was they who rescued the West from the gloom of the Middle Ages.”<sup>71</sup> Barakat sees two sources for negative American attitudes towards Arabs: both ignorance and a more deep-seated racism which Barakat sees as a product of modern capitalism.



Jack Shaheen has written extensively on the visual depiction of Arabs and Muslims in the American media.<sup>72</sup> He asserts that media stereotypes are damaging and must not be ignored since they do not exist in a vacuum. The repetition of words and images denigrating people not only distorts reality, but in a more important way it narrows our vision. He defines crude caricatures, explains why they persist, and provides workable solutions to help shatter misperceptions. Shaheen was a CBS News Consultant on Middle East Affairs from 1993-98 and has also served as a professional film consultant. He has worked on such films as *Syriana* (2005); *Three Kings* (1999); Showtime's TV movie, *West Wing* (1998); *The Prince of Egypt* (1997); *Um Khultum: A Voice like Egypt* (1996); and *Scooby-Doo in Arabian Knights* (1994). He has zeroed in on the most notorious producers and reproducers of the stereotypical depictions of Arabs and Muslims in some of the places best known for reproducing such stereotypes, namely the American film and television industries. Beginning in the 1980s, Shaheen published op-eds and letters criticizing specific instances of these stereotypes in popular movies including *Aladdin* and *The Kingdom*. He also published an analysis of a large number of film depictions of Arabs to draw attention to patterns in content and in the reception of such stereotypes in American popular culture. These include *The TV Arab* (1984) and *Reel Bad Arabs* (2001), in which he compares over 900 films.

To increase its salience for non-Arab Americans, Shaheen frames the issue by comparing stereotypes of Arabs to earlier stereotypes of Jews, tapping into most Americans' strong sense of concern over anti-Semitism. "Yesterday's Shylocks resemble today's hook-nosed sheikhs, arousing fear of the 'other'."<sup>73</sup> He shares Michael W. Suleiman's belief that stereotypes are the result of ignorance or lack of unbiased information. They can be corrected only if true and factual information is able to compete with them in the marketplace of ideas. In a non-confrontational style Shaheen talks about stereotyping as "misperception" or "unrealistic perception." He argues that such "bad" information is detrimental not only to Arab Americans but to U.S. policymakers when dealing with the Middle East.<sup>74</sup> Thus, making Americans aware of this misinformation is important not only for the sake of the truth itself, but because such misinformation is actively detrimental to U.S. national interests.

### **Confronting Orientalism**

When it comes to Arab American scholars, Edward Said is considered in a league of his own. The publication of *Orientalism* in 1978 left



an impact beyond its target audience, and became one of the most important scholarly works for a variety of disciplines.<sup>75</sup> In it he argued that Europeans since ancient Greece have been dealing with non-Europeans (“Orientals”) through a selective and creative re-imagining and re-interpreting which has been used to justify colonialism, imperialism and neo-imperialism, and which has become so pervasive in Western thought that it forms an unspoken and hence, unchallengeable set of assumptions on which Western scholarship and policy towards Oriental societies is still based. Thus, Western scholarship passes itself off as impartial even though in reality it is not.

In his criticism of scholars of Middle East Studies, Martin Kramer focused his sharpest criticism on Palestinian American scholar Edward Said, whom he accused of almost single-handedly ruining Middle Eastern studies in the United States. He devotes two chapters to criticizing Said’s books *Orientalism*<sup>76</sup> and *Covering Islam*<sup>77</sup>, questioning their merits and bemoaning what he considers to be the negative impact they had on scholarship of the Middle East, particularly because they coincided with a wave of popularity for post-modernism and multiculturalism in American academia. He suggests that *Orientalism* has gone on to become the bible of Middle Eastern studies in the U.S., and to spawn a generation of acolytes, blithely repeating slogans about stereotypes and the production of knowledge. In fact, Kramer seems to think that Edward Said became something of a dictator over the field, and that “It would be difficult to underestimate how effectively Said defined the boundaries of acceptable discourse...” on the Palestinian issue in particular and Middle Eastern studies in general.<sup>78</sup>

On the other hand, Kramer recognizes the contribution of “the founding fathers” of Middle East studies in the United States: Phillip Hitti, Majid Khadduri, and Farhat J. Ziadeh. “These ‘wise men,’” he says, “were formidable leaders of Middle East centers, and their mastery of the finer points of culture and language commanded a special reverence, on campus and off.”<sup>79</sup> He also has great words of praise for Albert Hourani of Oxford University for whom he assigned great prominence because of his criticism of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.<sup>80</sup> He credits Albert Hourani with defending the older, European tradition of Orientalism and favorably quotes Hourani’s review of *Orientalism* stating that Orientalist scholarship “has now become a dirty word. Nevertheless it should be used for a perfectly respected discipline.”<sup>81</sup> He depicts *Orientalism* as fomenting Muslim grievances which has led to counter-attacks by Muslims “who say nobody understands Islam except themselves.”<sup>82</sup> Kramer also quotes Hourani in an effort to support his assertion that the publication of *Orientalism* has



given license to Islamists to justify acts of violence and points to “the tendency of some supporters of the death edict (against Salman Rushdie) to invoke *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam* as evidence for the prosecution.” He further points out that Islamic Jihad hostage-takers in Lebanon had read *Covering Islam*.<sup>83</sup> While Said did regret the fact that they had made use of his arguments, it is a well-established fact that the Muslim Brotherhood became aware of Western distortions of Islam and the Western preference for a secular Islam as obtained in Turkey during the late 1920s and early 1930s, a fact that spawned attacks on Western scholarship. Their consciousness was raised when they read translations of Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s *Islam in Modern History*<sup>84</sup> and Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*.<sup>85</sup> They deduced that the Western agenda was to exorcize Islam from Muslims and create secular states modeled after Western patterns.

### **Documenting Arab and Islamic Contributions to World Civilization**

Several Arab American Christian scholars are noted for their substantial contributions to our knowledge of Islamic civilization and its intellectual production. Among them are the Hourani brothers. Albert Hourani of Oxford University was a prolific author and trained many of the scholars who now hold teaching positions in Middle East studies at American universities.<sup>86</sup> George Hourani of the State University of New York at Buffalo focused on the history of Islamic theology and philosophy, including the theory and practical issues of Islamic ethical thought.<sup>87</sup> A third brother, Cecil Hourani, wrote about Jordan.<sup>88</sup>

Other Arab Christian scholars of medieval Islam include Michael E. Marmura of the University of Toronto.<sup>89</sup> Marmura dealt mainly with Islamic philosophy, focusing particularly on Avicenna and al-Ghazali. He provided translations of their works, making it possible for other scholars to assess the meaning and relevance of medieval philosophy over against the closed, fixed meaning assigned to such works by Orientalists. These translations became an important resource for scholars who, without the necessary language training, were able to continue the debate by providing fresh interpretation of the significance of the works in question.

George Makdisi of the University of Pennsylvania was primarily an historian of the Arab civilization that flourished under the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. His work focused on the institutions that supported religious thought, in particular the *madrasa* system and the historical development of what became the four orthodox Sunni *madhabib* (schools of law). A good example is his relatively early (1970) article “Madrasa and



University in the Middle Ages,” which compares the history of Islamic *madrasas* in Baghdad in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE to European universities of the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE, when both were in their early stages of development. He focused on the economic and social patterns which led to the formations and characteristics of each. Makdisi was also interested in historiography, and was especially vigilant in turning up and interpreting previously unknown manuscripts. The best example of this is his discovery and translation of the autobiography of Abu ‘Ali ibn al-Banna’ al-Hanbali, a Baghdad historian who lived during the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE, believed to be the oldest extant autobiography written in Arabic.

Writing at the same time as Makdisi, Farhat J. Ziadeh argues that modernity is inherently superior to traditional societies, and puts Islamic law, the *shari‘a*, on the side of “modernity.” He questions the treatment of the history of the *shari‘a* as something “traditional” and therefore unchanging. In his book *Property Law in the Arab World*<sup>90</sup> he describes the development of laws in the Muslim world as one of transition from a mostly Islamic basis to one that is mostly Western. Thus, he attempts to argue against the findings of the modernization theorists that Islam is opposed to modernity. This argument is also made in Ziadeh’s *Lamyers, the Rule of Law and Liberalism in Modern Egypt*<sup>91</sup> in which he documents the history of the liberal-nationalist movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He writes that liberalism gained a foothold if only briefly despite the fact that “very little in the Islamic background of Egypt is conducive to the rise of constitutionality or the rule of law.” He sees law, even religious law, as a contingent creation and not a dogma.<sup>92</sup> Ziadeh argues that the question of how much of *shari‘a* consisted of divine revelation and how much consisted of secular (including foreign) influences becomes even more complicated with the addition of Western colonialism. Ziadeh details how legal codes in the Arab world have evolved from what he calls a stable and homogeneous base (*shari‘a*) to an eclecticism characterized by the coexistence of both religious-traditional and secular-foreign laws. But this process has taken place even within the *shari‘a* itself.<sup>93</sup>

Another Lebanese American scholar is George Atiyeh, who was the Head of the Near East Section of Library of Congress from 1991-1994 and is credited with developing much of the Library of Congress’ Middle East collection. He acquired rare publications and early Arabic language newspapers. His publication entitled *The Book in the Islamic World* is a collection of scholarly essays about the history of books in the Arab world.<sup>94</sup> Atiyeh served on the advisory editorial board of the *Middle East Journal*, and was a founding member of the Middle East Librarians Association



(MELA), which named a special prize in his honor.<sup>95</sup>

Also of note is Charles Issawi, who wrote on the classical Arab cultural legacy to the West, detailing how Arab cartographers corrected the long-standing misconception that the Indian Ocean was a landlocked inland sea. This crucial distinction, he maintains, allowed Europeans to first conceive of navigating around the southern tip of Africa to open a new water route to the Far East.<sup>96</sup>

### **Development and the Economies of the Middle East**

Some Arab Christian writers focused on the importance of understanding the economic development of Middle East countries. Afif I. Tannous, for example, analyzed Western influences on the emerging economic and social makeup of the rural village, the role of the village in national culture, and the importance of land reform as well as tribal culture in the Arab world.<sup>97</sup> Much of his work and research is centered on his home village of Bishmizzeen, Lebanon, which he used as a model for examining social changes and developments across the Arab world. Most of his articles stress that it is necessary to examine rural life in the Arab world to understand the dynamics of the region, that Arab life is centered in the village rather than the desert (i.e., countering the Western stereotype that most Arabs are nomadic Bedouins), and that land is linked with an Arab concept of honor.

Tannous' contribution to the emerging field of Middle Eastern studies is his focus on rural village life and nomadic culture as part of greater political developments, in contrast to the usual focus on the political, the intellectual, and the urban. He argues that the rural is significant to understanding the Middle East because most of the Arab population lives in or originates from rural environments. He examines the negative effects of an industrialized silk industry on Bishmizzeen that forces its villagers to abandon their agricultural way of life, noting that Western industrial development is harmful to the local Arab economy because most Arabs are still tied to their land. Tannous argues for efficient land reform with better organization and management of land as cultivatable property, pointing out that land is the biggest economic asset in the Middle East and that improved agricultural practice is the key to regional development. He thus provides an alternate view to the modernization theory that emphasizes that industrial development is the path to overall progress.

Another Arab American scholar of note is Charles Issawi, who



wrote widely on economics, but framed it within social and cultural history. His work demonstrates the economist's love for neatly defined, quantitative variables. Where such variables did not exist, he designed highly creative ones. In his study of empire builders he discusses "what enabled certain people, and not others, to imprint their language and culture over a large area." He defines what he considers as "empires" and "culture builders" in human history as those whose power covered an area of at least one million square miles and endured for at least 200 years, providing a highly detailed discussion of which polities these criteria include or exclude, and why.<sup>98</sup>

Issawi notes that both human and physical geography play determinative roles in understanding some of the larger, macro historical processes that have taken place both in the Middle East and in Europe since medieval times. He reviews three theories concerning the failure of democracy to achieve any durability in the region— that it has not had time to develop organically, that it has been thwarted by outside influence, and that it is simply incompatible with Arab culture. While determining that these things "undoubtedly contain a large measure of truth," Issawi decides that "sociological factors" also need to be taken into consideration since democracy needs a society that is in a specific relationship with the territory it inhabits. His full list of variables includes "size of territory and population, level of economic development, distribution of wealth, industrialization, homogeneity of language and religion, degree of education and habit of co-operative association."<sup>99</sup> In a later article he uses pre-civil war Lebanon as an example to shore up his hypothesis that prerequisites such as geographic size (as well as other factors such as economic development and education) are necessary for democracy and that this model applies in the Middle East as well as in Europe.<sup>100</sup>

Issawi also notes that European societies advanced more rapidly than those in the Middle East, beginning in the late medieval period. This advancement was due to Europe's technological superiority that allowed for greater agricultural surpluses, and to its more stable agricultural climate. He notes that in the Middle East, "rainfall is scarce and irregular, and irrigation works are fragile and easily destroyed, and are also subject to deterioration by salination." The two exceptions are Egypt, with its reliable Nile, and Turkey, which receives adequate rain in its coastlands. He also argues that Europe began to outstrip the Islamic world technologically and economically much earlier (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) than the conventional accounts (which place this moment sometimes around the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE).<sup>101</sup>



Another prevalent theme in many of Issawi's works is the importance of European economic dominance and penetration in creating the underdeveloped situation in the region today. He wrote on the role of the colonial economy in creating the Lebanese commercial bourgeoisie,<sup>102</sup> the process of de-industrialization of the Middle East under the unrelenting competition of Europe<sup>103</sup> and the restructuring of regional trade routes under the political and economic influence of the European powers.<sup>104</sup>

Iliya Harik wrote widely about issues of political economy and rural politics in Egypt and Lebanon. At times his methodology leads to a failure to question many of the assumptions of the theories he uses, especially when it comes to modernization and Western definitions of democracy and authoritarianism. At the same time, using the same methods he argues against many of the modernization theorists and critics of Arab culture.<sup>105</sup> In his works on the political economy of Egypt, Harik makes a fairly standard liberal critique of the development policies of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, while dismissing Anwar Sadat's *infitah* reforms as "cosmetic." As to rural and village politics in Egypt, Harik tries to demonstrate that the Orientalist notion of the essential or unchanging nature of village life is untrue.<sup>106</sup> His overall conclusion in this work is that "modernization under mobilizational and welfare-oriented regimes has had a positive rather than disruptive effect on rural communities."<sup>107</sup> That is, where most modernization theorists see rural communities as being resistant to modernization, Harik sees them as being basically accommodating of it, although he still agrees that the basic tenets of modernization theory are sound.

In his writings about Lebanon, Harik's central thesis is that Lebanon's particular history makes it uniquely suited to resist 20<sup>th</sup> century pressures which led other Arab states to institute authoritarian rule. This is due to its especially resilient feudal structure, known as the *iqta`* system, especially as it developed under the rule of the Shihabi family in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *iqta`* institutions "were basically conducive to the development of a tradition of sound and relatively free and responsible political life in Lebanon. The propinquity between rulers and their peasants and the balance of pluralistic political forces were main factors in the social, economic, and political freedom and security of the Lebanese under the (Shihabi) Imarah."<sup>108</sup> His faith in Lebanon's uniquely democratic society persisted despite the civil war.<sup>109</sup>



Even when defending Arab culture against its Western critics, Harik employs the most rigidly “scientific” approach possible. For example, in his article “Democracy, ‘Arab Exceptionalism’ and Social Science,” Harik takes issue with a Freedom House survey which demonstrates an exceptional level of authoritarianism in Arab and Muslim states. However, while all he has to do to disprove the culturalist notion of Arab or Muslim exceptionalism is to point out that this correlation does not imply that Arab or Muslim cultures *cause* authoritarianism, Harik chooses instead to use Freedom House’s methods against them, by showing that by their own statistical measures many of the states they label “unfree” should be reclassified.

While criticizing the Orientalist project of defining Arab culture as static and a-historical, Samih Farsoun faults Arabs for shirking their responsibility to define themselves and to develop sufficient theoretical challenges to the Orientalist view, such as that of the dependency school which originated in Latin America or the Cultural Revolution in China.<sup>110</sup>

### **The Problem of Israel**

The issue of Palestine engaged American-born children of the early immigrants who empathized with the plight of the Palestinian people. Elaine Hagopian, who served as president of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (1976), became interested in the education of Palestinians under Israeli occupation.<sup>111</sup> She visited Palestine as an expert on a UNESCO team to do a feasibility study for a Palestine open university and assess Palestine refugee education (1979-1980).

The problem of Israel challenged the scholars and set them on a course to correct the dominant discourse in the hope that Americans would be able to decipher the truth through the fog of propaganda. As a result, they were targeted on American campuses by student pressure groups organized by the Zionist lobby and operating through members of Hillel organizations. The aim was to obstruct and prevent any discussion that provides an alternative view to that promoted by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and other Zionist organizations. They also received death threats from members of the Jewish Defense League.<sup>112</sup> Martin Kramer points to George Hourani’s 1968 MESA presidential address as the sounding bell for a new, anti-Israel era in Middle Eastern studies. In this address entitled “Palestine as a Problem of Ethics,” Hourani asserted that “the Arabs’ claim to a state [in Palestine] is...



based on indisputable facts,” while “the claims of the Jews to live in and have a state in a part of Palestine... presents a serious ethical problem.” Hourani dismissed Jewish historical and religious claims to the land of Israel, and pronounced the early Zionist settlement as wholly immoral. Not even the flight of Jews from Nazi tyranny made the Zionist immigration legitimate, since “it cannot be assumed that if Palestine had not been available all other gates out of central Europe would have been closed to these individuals.” The Jews would have done better, Hourani concludes, had they realized the suffering that the Zionist enterprise would inevitably bring in its wake, and relinquished their desire for statehood.

Samih Farsoun wrote about Palestinian history, the encounter with Zionism and the consequent displacement of the Palestinian population. With other leftist critics of traditional Arab culture such as Hisham Sharabi, Farsoun identified the less appealing aspects of Palestinian culture, such as patriarchy, as particular obstacles to be overcome in building a new revolutionary consciousness.<sup>113</sup> The overriding theme of Farsoun’s writing was his defense of Palestinian national aspirations in the face of Israeli aggression and American material, political and ideological support for that aggression. He focused on specific acts of Israeli or American policies, as well as a broader defense of the legitimate rights of Palestinians given their longer historical existence in Palestine.<sup>114</sup> He was very critical of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the U.S. war in the Gulf in 1991.<sup>115</sup>

Some of Halim Barakat’s nonfiction writing is in this same activist vein of trying to correct Western and American misconceptions of Arabs and of the situation in Israel/Palestine. Barakat’s co-authored study of refugees from the 1967 war, conducted within a year of that war, makes it clear that the refugees fled at least partly out of fear of the advancing Israeli army.<sup>116</sup> He documents that the refugees had strong economic and social ties to the land they left behind, and greatly desired, as they still do, to return. The study was undertaken in part to avoid the kind of misinformation that sprang up about the refugees of 1948, of whom Barakat wrote that “the circumstances of their departure have never been clarified: whether they left by official order, out of fear of Israel, or by forcible eviction.”<sup>117</sup>

The problem of Israel has not been the exclusive domain of political scientists and historians. It has been addressed in works on art, poetry and novels. Most of the published works of the Palestinian painter Kamal Boullata consist of literary, primarily critical studies of poetry, specifically



about the creation and meaning of poetry in the context of the Palestinian national struggle. His aim was to make the cause understandable to Western audiences.<sup>118</sup> His focus is on two broad themes or genres. The first seeks to explain contemporary Arabic poetry, its position in Arab society, and what it says about Arab society to a Western audience. His works include *Women of the Fertile Crescent: An Anthology of Modern Poetry by Arab Women*, which feature noted authors selected to represent most of the countries of the Arab world. It includes well-known feminists Nazik al-Mala'ika and Salma al-Jayyusi portraying a side of Arab culture that is not patriarchal and oppressive.

Kamal Boullata reflects on his visual artwork as a means of Western-Muslim, or at least Christian-Muslim rapprochement.<sup>119</sup> While discussing the Islamic symbol of the eight-pointed star (formed by two squares superimposed at 45-degree angles to each other, sometimes inscribed in a circle), he comes to the conclusion that this symbol signals not only the union of heaven and earth, but also the historical multiculturalism and diversity of the city of Jerusalem. "Only in the Dome of the Rock, however, did the architectural expression of the convergence between the physical and the metaphysical realms itself reflect a historic meeting that made Jerusalem open for all its citizens and the rest of the world." By relating a specifically Islamic monument to the theme of multicultural tolerance, Boullata is attempting to show that such tolerance is not only theoretically possible in Islam but also has been practiced by the religion's adherents, once again demonstrating for a Western audience the hollowness of the stereotype of Islam as a violent and intolerant religion.

On the theme of Palestinian remembrance Boullata's works include a retrospective tribute (which he edited with Mirene Ghossein) to the poet Rashid Hussein, which includes some of Hussein's poems as well as personal remembrances from many notable figures. This volume also includes Mahmud Darwish's very famous tribute to Hussein, "On Fifth Avenue he greeted me." While focused on the poet's life, it also deals with his politics, especially his long engagement with his status as an exile. It also includes an essay by Salma al-Jayyusi, "A Personal Holocaust," which sums up the political as well as the personal motivation behind Hussein's poetry. Another volume of poetry edited by Boullata (with Kathy Engel) is *We Begin Here: Poems for Palestine and Lebanon*, produced in response to the 2006 Israeli incursion into Lebanon. Boullata makes it clear that these poems (written in English) are directed mostly at an American audience, and the volume includes a few poems written against the American invasion of Iraq as well.



Finally, some of Boullata's shorter works concern the political situation of Palestinian artists and poets and the effects of the occupation on their work.<sup>120</sup> In these works he demonstrates clearly that the occupation plays a central role in artistic production in the West Bank and Gaza, and that this production in turn is directed at creating and recreating Palestinian identity and national pride as opposition to that occupation.

### **The Role of Women**

One of the major stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims concerns the role of women in Arab society. Arab scholars have addressed this issue in many publications, some very critical of the Arab world. Several publications address the issue of patriarchy and neopatriarchy, a concept made famous by Hisham Sharabi.<sup>121</sup>

The work of Suad Joseph, an Arab Christian anthropologist, is concerned with the application and development of feminist theory to Arab societies, and is based primarily on working-class Lebanese communities for data. As a feminist, Joseph is already situated outside the mainstream of popular discourse on the Middle East, and therefore is well suited to activist writing. This dual focus, on feminism and Arab society, leads Joseph both to criticize Arab society for being excessively patriarchal, and to criticize Westerners who lambaste Arab society for being oppressive and irrational. For example, in "Patriarchy and Development in the Arab World," Joseph argues that "patriarchy is powerful in the Arab world because age-based kinship values and relationships are crucial socially, economically, politically, ideologically and psychologically."<sup>122</sup> Her criticism differs from more rigid Orientalist criticism in that it locates patriarchy in historical processes (social, economic, political etc.) instead of a-historical "culture." In reply to Anouar Majid's "The Politics of Feminism in Islam," Joseph applauds his critique of "modernity, capitalism, imperialism, globalization, secularism, the nation-state, individualism, the separation of church and state, clerical Islam, and Westernized Muslim elites" and says that "(h)is critique of the demonization of Islam is especially well taken."<sup>123</sup>

Joseph's fundamental break with the Enlightenment tradition stems from her critique of what she calls the "bounded, autonomous, and separate self."<sup>124</sup> That is, as opposed to seeing individuals as essentially different from each other, she maintains that each individual is a product of his or her environment. When applied to Arab society, Joseph main-



tains that what she calls “patriarchal connectivity” is the dominant form of social milieu that goes into forming personal identities.<sup>125</sup>

With the support of several scholars as editors, Joseph initiated a major undertaking that lasted from 2003 to 2007. She produced a definitive comprehensive study of women in Islam in a six volume encyclopedia that addresses the history, social construction, and reforms concerning Muslim women throughout the world.<sup>126</sup>As a service to scholars and the general public, the encyclopedia has been made accessible for free on the internet.

### **Conclusion**

Faced with a hostile environment in the United States, early immigrant Arab American Christians realized that the discrimination they were experiencing was grounded both in American concepts of race and in an ignorance of the existence of an indigenous Christian community in the Arab world. They strived to counter the misperceptions by providing corrective discourse about their heritage and the contribution of Arabs to world civilization. They wrote the history of their emigration and their contribution to American society and the building of the American economy, attempting to dispel prevailing anti-Arab stereotypes. Their efforts were geared towards indigenizing the Arab American community and making it a recognized part of American history.

The cohort group that emigrated in the middle of the twentieth century was stunned by the American public celebration of the Arab defeat of 1967, the vocal hatred of Arabs and the dismissal of Palestinians as unworthy of a homeland. They responded by trying to provide information about the reality of the Middle East and the Palestinian effort to be recognized as a peoplehood. Rather than succumbing to the onslaught of diatribe and disdain, they chose to take America at its word to be a nation inclusive of all people and to confront their critics with the truth. Arab American Christian authors endeavored to change the environment they found themselves in by engaging in intellectual production with the belief that if the American people knew the truth about their humanity, their rights, and the reality of cruel stereotyping of Arabs they would gain America’s respect as they worked for what is good for the country. Though at times they wearied, they never faltered in their belief that if they provided accurate information, contesting and correcting the reigning stereotypes, Americans would understand how important it is to change the misguided policies that have drained the American economy, depleted



its reserve of international goodwill, and led to the many misadventures that have resulted in the loss of American lives. Their efforts ranged over a variety of disciplines in an attempt to clarify for Americans that their policies are based on faulty assessments and distorted images.

In the process, they re-wrote the history of Arab civilization with special attention to trying to change what they perceived to be the narrow Orientalist perspective that has been colored by medieval perceptions, and by documenting the contributions of Arabs to world culture and civilization. They took on the Zionist propaganda machine but were not able to undermine its dominance and its power over Congress, the White House, and those who determine policy and conceptualize the interests of the United States. They were motivated not only because they were targeted as a community, but because they believed it crucial to counter the Zionist propaganda machine that has produced a politically influenced distortion of realities of the Middle East and of Arab history and culture. The task has proven to be enormously difficult. As Ibrahim Abu-Lughod reflected on the efforts of the Arab scholars (Christians and Muslims) who collaborated in the AAUG project, “We thought the problem was lack of organization, so we organized; then we thought it was the absence of factual and objective information, so we provided it through lectures and conferences; then we thought that it was the fact that publishers refused to publish our manuscripts, so we set up our own press; now we find that distribution of our publications is blocked. Will there ever come a time when we can present our viewpoint to the general public without its being deflected, distorted or blocked?”<sup>127</sup>

Even the effort to sensitize the American public to the presence of Christians in the Arab world has been stymied. Rather than identifying with co-religionists in another part of the world, Christian Americans seem to feel that the Christianity of the Middle East, in its many Eastern Orthodox forms, is not to be recognized as equal or worthy to that in the West. Efforts by these American Christian Arabs to generate Christian empathy for the suffering of the Palestinian people have met, for the most part, with hostility and misunderstanding. Arab Americans have discovered that many American Christians tend to see Christians of the Middle East through the prism of race rather than being able to build bridges of faith with them. Finally, the efforts of Arab American Christians to foster understanding of the plight of Middle East Christians has been thwarted by the rise of Christian Zionism. Developing a scenario for the second coming of Christ based mainly on the book of Revelation, Millenarian Christians have assigned to their fellow Christians in the Middle East



nothing more significant than the role of bit players in the unfolding drama of the end of times.

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3. Ibid., Including: Congressmen Nick Joe Rahall II (D-WV), Charles Boustany (R-LA), Darrell Issa (R-CA), Sec. of Transportation Ray LaHood (R-IL); Former Senators John E. Sununu Jr. (R-NH), James Abourezk (D-SD) and James Abdnor (R-SD); Former Governors John Baldacci (D-ME), Victor Atiyeh (R-OR), John H. Sununu Sr. (R-NH), Former U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, Former Congresswomen Pat Danner (D-MO) and Mary Rose Oakar (D-OH), Former Congressmen Abraham Kazen, Jr. (D-TX), George Kasem (D-CA) Toby Moffett (D-CT), and Chris John of (D-LA). Arab-Americans appointed to office include Spencer Abraham (Former U.S. Secretary of Energy), Donna Shalala, (Former Secretary of Health and Human Services), Mitch Daniels, (Former Director of the Office of Management and Budget and current Gov. of Indiana); US Chief of Protocol Selwa Roosevelt, and Former Ambassadors Thomas Nassif (Morocco), Edward Gabriel (Morocco), Theodore Kattouf (Syria), Marcelle Wahba (UAE), and Philip C. Habib (Special Presidential Envoy to the Middle East).
4. Ibid., Including: NFL quarterbacks Doug Flutie and Jeff George, NFL coach Rich Kotite. NFL players Bill George, Abe Gibran, Drew Haddad, baseball players Joe Lahoud (Boston Red Sox) and Sam Khalifa (Pittsburgh Pirates), Winner of the Indy 500, Bobby Rahal, Boxer **Petey Sarron** (who won the world featherweight championship in 1936-1937),



Khalid Khannouchi, (world record holder in track and field); sports teams owners Joe Robbie. (Miami Dolphins). George Maloof, Sr. (Houston Rockets), Joe and Gavin Maloof (Sacramento Kings), and Fred Saigh (St. Louis Cardinals). Others include: Zuhair “Steve” Mansour (weightlifting’s Grandmaster of the World in 1990), Eddie Elias (founder of the Professional Bowlers Association), Yasser Seirawan (national chess champion) and Jennifer Shahade (Women’s International Chess Master).

5. Ibid., Including: Ralph Nader (consumer advocate) Candy Lightner, (founder of Mothers against Drunk Driving, MADD), Ralph Johns (organized Woolworth “sit-in” in Greensboro, North Carolina.

6. Ibid., Including: Joseph Jacobs (founder of Jacobs Engineering Group), Najeeb Halaby (CEO of Pan American Airlines), Ray Irani (Chief Executive Officer of Occidental Petroleum), Jacques Nasser (President and CEO of Ford Motor Company), Richard Caleal (Ford Car designer), Samir G. Gibra (Chairman of the Board of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company), Ned Mansour (President of Mattel, Inc.), Sam Moore (founder and president of Thomas Nelson Publishers), Albert George (President of Joy Cone Company), John Mack (Chairman of the Board and CEO of Morgan Stanley), Youssef A. Nasr (CEO of HSBC USA), William Hann (President and CEO of Cedar Bank), Mohammed Abu-Ghazaleh (Chairman of the Board and CEO of Fresh Del Monte Produce, Inc.), Andrew Thomas (President and CEO of Heineken USA), Farouk Shamie (CEO and founder of Farouk Systems USA), Fayeze Sarofim (heads Fayeze Sarofim Investments), George Shaheen (founded Andersen Consulting, now called Accenture), Roger Farah (president and chief operating officer of Polo Ralph Lauren), Simon Assad (co-CEO of Heavy.com), and Paul Orfalea (founder of Kinko’s).

7. Ibid., Including award-winning singers Paul Anka, Herbert Khaury, Frank Zappa, Paula Abdul, Tiffany Shakira, Don Bustany and Casey Kasem (creators of the radio shows “American Top 40,” “American Top 20,” and “American Country Countdown”), Broadway playwright Fred Saidy, (“Finian’s Rainbow” and “Bloomer Girl”), opera star Rosalind Elias, Broadway star Elie Chaib, David Yazbek (who wrote the lyrics and score for “The Full Monty”), Broadway director John Bowab, actors Michael Nouri, Vince Vaughn, Wendie Malick, Tony Shalhoub, Amy Yasbeck, F. Murray Abraham, Shannon Elizabeth, Vic Tayback, Khristyne Haje, James Stacy, Michael Ansara, Kathy Najimy, Shannon



Elizabeth, Salma Hayek, Danny Thomas and Marlo Thomas, film producers Mario Kassar, Moustapha Akkad and Tom Shadyac; TV directors Tony Thomas, Asaad Kelada; Talent managers George “Bullets” Durgom, Rene Angelil and Emilio Estefan, cinematographers George S. Dibia and Fouad Saidwas, Oscar winners William Peter Blatty, Callie Khourie and Paul Jabara.

8. Ibid., Including: Diane Rehm (NPR), George Noory, Lucie Salhany (Chair of Fox Broadcasting Co.), Tammy Haddad (Creator of “Larry King Live”), Hoda Kotb (The “Today” Show), and Mike Joseph.

9. Ibid., Including: men’s wear designer Joseph Abboud, super model Yamila Diaz-Rahi, hair stylist Frederic Fekkai, apparel makers J.M. Hagggar III, Farah Brothers and Maloof Brothers, jewelry designer Colette Malouf, and designers Reem Acra and Norma Kamali.

10. Ibid., Including: Sam Maloof, Hussam A. Fadhli, Karim Rashid, Zaha Haid, Naomi Shihab Nye.

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