

understanding al-Barudi's place in the intellectual and literary social space of his time. In this period of the emergence of a modern state bureaucracy, professional social classes, and an Arabic public sphere, al-Barudi played a key role in adapting the poetic tradition to his own purposes and at the same time to a new social function. Unlike Bourdieu, however, DeYoung does not attempt to delineate the nature of the cultural field in which al-Barudi operated or to set out its parameters and the various positions within it. Such an exposition would throw much light on the transformation of the social role of poetry and poets in al-Barudi's period and on al-Barudi's own working of the system as well.

DeYoung's work enables its readers to examine key specimens of al-Barudi's poetry in the context of the life experiences and historical context surrounding their composition. This is the fundamental task of any literary biography of a poet, and DeYoung's work accomplishes it well. In this regard, inclusion of the original Arabic texts of the quoted poetry in an appendix or otherwise would be a welcome and perhaps necessary enhancement. Moreover, DeYoung's work, by making the life and poetry of a founding figure of modern Arabic literature accessible to an Anglophone audience, constitutes a significant contribution to current scholarship on the period of the "nahda" or Arab renaissance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. DeYoung's book is a fine addition to her previous excellent literary biography of the celebrated modernist poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab. ✨

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MAHA EL SAID, LENA MEARI AND NICOLA PRATT, EDS. *Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance: Lessons from the Arab World*. London: Zed Books, 2015. ix + 244 pages, acknowledgment, introduction, about the contributors, index. Paper US\$47.00 ISBN 978-1-78360-283-4.

This book discusses the ways in which movements of socio-political transformation in the Arab World, especially the Arab Spring reshape the discourse of gender and sexuality. The book consists of a collection of scholarly essays analyzing the subversive strategies and acts of resistance employed by women during the 2011 uprisings. The articles situate their analysis within a historical context showing continuity between the discussed actions of 2011 and precedent forms of female activism. Women

subverted the actions that were meant to intimidate, scare, and shame them and transformed these actions into elements of resistance and empowerment signaling shifts in gender identities, gender relations, and gender norms that have occurred since the outbreak of what has been labeled the Arab Spring. The book consists of three main parts entitled: “The Malleability of Gender and Sexuality in Revolution and Resistance”; “The Body and Resistance”; “Gender and the Construction of the Secular/Islamic Binary”. In part I, Shereen Abouelnaga’s *Reconstructing Gender in Post-Revolution Egypt* argues that new constructs of gender appeared during and after the 2011 uprisings when women, historically excluded from the public space, claimed it back as a space of reappearance. They turned their victimhood into empowerment when they chose to publically address the cases of sexual assault and public shaming (virginity tests) some female demonstrators endured by the hands of the secret police. The process of reversal from victim to warrior signaled a new construct of gender. Lena Meari’s “Resignifying ‘Sexual’ Colonial Power Techniques: the Experiences of Palestinian Women Political Prisoners” exposes the ways in which Palestinian women prisoners subverted the colonial power techniques used in interrogation (by the Israeli intelligence) and aimed at sexual intimidation and shaming to construct a new category of woman and her body through the practice of steadfastness or *‘sumud’*. These women are revered as heroes and not shamed as victims of sexual assault. Hala G. Sami’s “A Strategic Use of Culture, Egyptian Women’s Subversion and Resignification of Gender Norms” discusses the ways in which Egyptian women used popular culture’s venues (Television, popular music, social media, cartoons, graffiti) in 2011 to resignify gender norms. “Bahiya ya Masr” movement for example, raised pictures of famous Egyptian female divas and icons to highlight the long history of powerful, influential women against voices deeming the presence of women in public spaces as amoral and un-Egyptian. In part II, Maha El Said’s “She Resists, Body Politics between Radical and Subaltern” explores the use of body as an element of resistance through the case of Aliaa Elmahdy “the nude blogger” and Sama El-Masry, a belly dancer, (both Egyptian) arguing that the first is a radical feminist whose practice is alien to its cultural context while the second is a subaltern agent because her technique is entrenched in popular culture. El-Said believes effective agency has to be in accordance with national and cultural identity. Abeer Al-Najjar and Anoud Abusalim’s “Framing the Female Body, Beyond Morality and Pathology?” analyzes the case of the Egyptian Aliaa Elmahdy and Tunisian Amina Sboui who posted naked pictures of their bodies during the 2011 uprisings. Mainstream media framed these bodies as sexual objects causing a widespread outrage while the two females

intended to desexualize their bodies in an act of revolution, resistance, and protest against sexual harassment. The Arab Spring and Arab media failed in encouraging new framings of women's agency. Sahar Mediha Alnaas and Nicola Pratt's "Women's Bodies in Post-Revolution Libya, Control and Resistance" explores the long history of resisting religious and nationalist discourses used by the Gaddafi regime to control women's bodies. In post-revolution Libya these women asserted their visibility in the public space through sport's events (riding bikes), wearing the traditional white Libyan dress versus the black Islamic one and demanding political participation to subvert and re-signify religious and nationalist discourses. In Part III, Omaila Abou-Bakr's "Islamic Feminism and the Equivocation of Political Engagement" critiques the strategy of unconditional alignment of some feminist movements, such as Islamic feminist movements with the state. While achieving some gains, such alignments transform women into agents of patriarchal, corrupt institutions. Aitemad Muhanna "Islamic and Secular Women's Activism and Discourses in Post-Uprising Tunisia" argues that feminist movements should transcend the dichotomy of Islamic feminism versus secular feminism constructed for political reasons. The two groups have common goals like social justice, equal access to education, employment and political participation, and ending violence against women. Feminist movements can work together to achieve these goals if they transcend the dichotomy of Islamic/secular feminism.

The book offers an epistemological and ontological analysis for the kind of transformations of gender discourse and politics since the upheavals of 2011 and the outcome that followed. This research uses the technique of intersectionality which draws attention to the intersections of identity politics of class, race, ethnicity, time, space, and context in shaping people's and social movements' behaviors. Based on identity politics and intersectionality, some women have been able to leverage nationalism and religion to legitimize their presence in the public sphere and frame their demands. In other cases, nationalism and religion have been used by others to delegitimize women's movements. Within the same context, the authors of these essays examine the intersections between time and space, the ontological and the epistemological, the socioeconomic, political elements that shape and influence gender, sexuality, and women's agency.

While clearly advocating for a more equal gender politics, the authors do not take sides or favor an approach over the other. They attempt to untangle the intricacies and intersections that factor into the gender discourse to lay out a clearer perception of the outcomes, promises, challenges, and setbacks of the different acts of revolution and resistance that women engage in

to reshape the gender discourse and its politics. For example, they don't advocate whether Arab women should adopt a western, secular agenda and oppose an Islamic, conservative one. Instead, they point out the ways in which secular and Islamic gender discourses are constructed within specific sociopolitical contexts.

This book contributes to a field of scholarly work that favors a holistic and more balanced approach driven by the theories of structuralism and intersectionality. This book shows how gender identities and subjectivities emerge in moments of revolutions and sociopolitical unrest; in such times, both men and women challenge, subvert, and resignify existing gender norms in different forms and ways. The concrete examples taken from actual incidents that took place on the streets and in the media during the Arab Spring make this book an easy and accessible read for introductory level courses in Middle Eastern studies as well as for more advanced courses. It falls into the array of works that have since attempted to study the influences of the 2011 revolutions on the state of women in the Arab world. However, it differs from other works in combining the ontological and the epistemological, giving a broader understanding of the formation of gender discourse in an Arab context. The concentration on the contextual, in some essays, gave plausible causes to consider some subversive actions as alien to the context. Certain articles deemed some practices like undressing or posing naked as incompatible with the moral structure of the context. Others have considered notions like universal feminist values of gender equality inapplicable in an Arab milieu. These stances create binary oppositions the book claims to dismantle and inadvertently acknowledge certain subversive actions while condemning others. ✂

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DAVID GOVRIN. *The Journey to the Arab Spring: The Ideological Roots of the Middle East Upheaval in Arab Liberal Thought.* London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014. xvii + 334 pages. Biographical appendix, Index. Cloth US\$89.95 ISBN 9780853039174.

Until relatively recently, natural history museums were preoccupied with taxonomy. Row after row of glass cases (and in the back, drawer after drawer of samples) sought to group insects, fish, reptiles, and mammals