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Cairo-Paris: The Urban Imaginary of the Self

by

Mona A. Selim El Sherif

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Near Eastern Studies

And the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:
Professor Margaret Larkin, Chair
Professor Kristen Whissel
Professor James Monroe
Professor Xin Liu

Spring 2010

Abstract

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Professor Margaret Larkin, Chair

My dissertation *Cairo- Paris: the urban imaginary of the Self*, examines expressions of Egyptian modernity through the use of the urban experience as a paradigm for it. The dissertation uses the three different genres of the essay, the novel, and film, in order to examine expressions of Egyptian modernity in its urban context. The dissertation is divided into two distinctive parts; part one examines representations of nineteenth century urban culture by focusing on the city imaginary in the works of two major Egyptian intellectuals, while part two examines expressions of urban culture in two recent film productions that focus on Cairo and Paris as terrains for the experience of modernity.

Part one traces the emergence of the theme of *al- tamaddun*; urbanity, in the canon of Arabic literature and explains how it bound modern literary writing to modern citizenship. In analyzing the legacy of the nineteenth century literary expressions of *al- tamaddun* I aim to explain to the reader a multi- layered, multi-vocal reading of the nineteenth century texts focusing on the intricate relationship between these literary texts and the urban space which inspired them. Both Cairo and Paris appear as real and imaginary terrains around which new cultural aesthetics for modernity were weaved. To analyze expressions of urban culture of the nineteenth century I focus on the two genres of the essay and the novel I explain how urban factors such as circulation of commodities and texts, encounters, and the new culture of time and space which resulted from industrial modernity found expression in the literary works of nineteenth- century Egyptian authors.

Whereas the canon of urban literature has been focused on familiar figures such as the *flâneur*, the gambler, and the blasé, such urban types are too Eurocentric in their connotations and occlude essential qualities of the global nature of nineteenth century Paris which became the Mecca of modernity for modernizers from different parts of the world. In the context of Arabic literature the figure of the sheikh emerges as a central narrator of the global space of nineteenth-century Paris. By making use of Benjamin's methodological use of the figures of urban culture, I use the figure of the sheikh to elucidate the most salient cultural themes that resulted from

Muhammad Ali's modernization program, which contributed to the Arab cultural renaissance known as *al- nahḍa*. Part one concludes by showing how the urban narratives of the modernizing sheikh raised a number of themes that bound discourses of Egyptian modernity to the rhetoric of citizenship in a new urban landscape that is predicated on a new sense of time and space that resulted from the use of technology.

The use of technology in media productions has led to significant cultural changes. Whereas in the nineteenth century essays, and novels appeared to be revolutionary media through which modernizers have explicated the experience of modernity, by the end of the nineteenth century film was introduced to Egypt only to become the most popular artistic form of expression. It was film that came to play a central role in articulating the aesthetics of the experience of modernity as it was conceived by the Egyptian modernizers. In part two, I examine the role of Egyptian cinema in performing the intellectual *flânerie* that began in the nineteenth century and how the recent depictions of Cairo and Paris act as commentaries on the *nahḍa* discourse of *al-tamaddun*.

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Introduction:

Towards a Rhetorical Analysis of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity) in Literary and Film Representations of Egyptian modernity:

My dissertation *Cairo- Paris: the Urban Imaginary of the Self* examines representations of the experience of urban modernity in modern Egyptian literature and film. I use the urban paradigm to address the recent concern with the theme of cultural authenticity (read Islamist revival) versus modernity read (secular western and inauthentic) in current debates on Egyptian modernity. By making use of the urban paradigm and its emphasis of the impact of materiality on cultural representations my study aims to contribute to three different academic conversations: 1) scholarship on Arab modernity, the main concern of which is the fate of the culture of humanism that originated as a result of the nineteenth century renaissance (*al-nahḍa*). My study relays how Arab scholars envision the impact of the development of transnational capitalism and the flare of religious fundamentalism associated with it.¹ 2) Scholarship on urban literature that addresses the impact of the modern city on cultural representation and the formation of canonical aesthetics of urban literature rooted in Paris of the nineteenth century, 3) scholarship concerned with studies of alternative modernities that seek to elaborate on how various peoples around the globe experienced the cultural transformations that resulted from industrial capitalist modernity.² In this project I trace the formation of an imaginary of Egyptian urban modernity to the beginning of Muhammad Ali pasha's reign (1805-148).³ Ali resorted to European expertise in order to modernize Egypt, the outcome of which was significant, political, economic and social transformations that created a new cultural relationship between Paris and Cairo woven around the rhetoric of the modern nation-state. The thematic representation of the nascent global urban space of modernity that bound Cairo to Paris was formulated in nineteenth century Arabic literature under the rubric of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity), which is the key concept that my dissertation analyzes in select literary and film narratives of modernity in Egypt. In invoking the urban paradigm in conjunction with expressions of modernity in Egypt, I aim to point to the significant role of technology and material reality in changing cultural perceptions in Egypt. The interplay between capitalist expansion, industrialization, military and economic colonization significantly shaped the cultural discourse and influenced the formation of new ways of belonging to the space of one's lived reality. The rhetoric of the 'authentic' versus 'the modern', I believe, must be examined in relation to the material reality in which it takes place.

¹ For the theoretical discussion of the topic see Cheah, Pheng and Robbins, Bruce (eds.) *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998.

² A range of the thematic concerns of scholars of alternative modernity can be found in Goankar, Dilip Parmeshwar. *Alternative Modernities*. Durham North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001.

³ According to Ahmad al-Sahalqq's study *Al-hadatha wa'l-imberaliya: al-ghazū al-firinsī wa-ishkāliyat nahḍat miṣr*, scholars of modern Egypt are divided about whether Egyptian modernity began with Napoleon's expedition in 1798, or whether it predates the expedition. The historian Peter Gran in his *The Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, sees that Egyptian modernity was already underway in the eighteenth century since that there was a vibrant intellectual culture that would have led to the beginning of Egyptian modernism regardless of the expedition. I have chosen to focus on Muhammad Ali's reign as a starting point for Egyptian modernity because it was under the Ali dynasty that urban modernity developed significantly leading to the proliferation of print culture and technology in the country. In spite of my agreement with Gran's contention that there was a mature intellectual atmosphere at *al-azhar* during the eighteenth century, I believe that the ideas of the progressive sheikhs would not have flourished without Ali's centralization of government.

My analysis of expressions of modernity in this dissertation is in line with its definitions as a state of transformed consciousness of time and space as a result of the introduction of new means of production such as the factory system and the assembly line typical of Fordist Capitalism.⁴ With the introduction of new means of production new modes of social expression emerged as a result of the new industries, commodities, and urban trends all of which found expression in new literary and film forms.⁵ Literary representations of the early modern space in Arabic narratives resemble western representations of urban modernity in their concern with the novelty of the experiences of modernity, and the sense of transient and fleeting temporality that characterizes modern culture. However, with military colonialism, a significant transformation in representations of modernity took place when the fascination with novelty became coupled with a concern for cultural authenticity. This was especially the case in light of the proliferation of belligerent representations of Islam as a religion that was alleged to be incompatible with modern urban culture.⁶ The urban culture of the modern city which revolves around the proliferation of new technologies, new trends and social practices that resulted from the expansion of capitalism played a significant role in shaping representations of modernity in Egypt. The theme of *al-tamaddun* emerged around 1834 as a canonical representation of the new experiences of the individual in modern mass society signaling a radical break with all forms of social interaction.⁷

The Arabic word *al-tamaddun* is directly related to the word *madīna*, which means ‘city’, both words are extracted from the root *maddana*-that is, to establish a new urban system, to urbanize, or to modernize. The modern use of the term *al-tamaddun* appeared for the first time in Shaykh Rifa‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s (1801-1873) book *Talkhīṣ al-Ibrīz fī waṣf bārīz* (published in 1834) when he referred to Muhammad Ali’s project of modernization. Prior to that, the term had been introduced by the fifteenth century Arab sociologist Ibn Khaldūn in that context of his book *al-‘Ibar*, which Arab scholars consider to be a methodological introduction to the study of modern sociology. In his study, Ibn Khaldūn measured the degree of civilization and prosperity of any given society with reference to the life of cities and the degree of civilization associated with them. He, thus, centralized the urban model as a point of reference to the analysis of cultural development. However with al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s use of the term in the nineteenth century it assumed new connotations that connected it to the power of modern industrial capitalist culture. With the development of literary writing in the nineteenth century the term came to be debated in relation to two historical periods: one before industrial modernity and another after it. A good example of this is to be found in ‘Alī Mubārak’s novel *‘Alam al- Dīn* (1882) where the author makes a distinction between *al-tamaddun al-qadīm* (classical urbanity) and *al-tamaddun al-jadīd* (modern

⁴ The conceptual framework of my analysis of modernity is based on its definition in: Habermas, Jürgen. *The philosophical Discourse of Modernity: twelve lectures*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1987. And Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1988. And Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990. And Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.

⁵ Sabry Hafez’s study of narrative discourse mentions that Arabic narrative discourse emerges in the context of new experiences however, it never binds the birth of narrative discourse explicitly to urban culture. Hafez’s study alludes directly to the influence of the press on the development of literary writing particularly in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Like Hafez, I believe that it is important to take into account the material reality in which narrative originates, however my project focuses on narratives from the early part of the nineteenth century. For more on the origins of narrative discourse in Arabic see: Hafez, Sabry. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A study in the sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*. London: Saqi Books, 1993.

⁶ Edward Said’s *Orientalism* abounds with examples of the sort of reification that resulted from the manner in which Europeans used Islam and not political and economic conditions to explain culture.

⁷ Wagner, Peter. *A Sociology of Modernity, Liberty and Discipline*. London: Routledge, 1994.

urbanity). The new rhetorical connotations of the term *al-tamaddun* associated it with modern urban culture in which encounters, mobility, circulation of commodities and ideas and the emergence of new social practices resulting from the re-planning of cities were to become distinctive features of a constantly changing culture. The usage of the term *al-tamaddun* in nineteenth century texts establishes a continuity with the indigenous intellectual tradition embodied in Ibn Khaldūn's sociological analysis of progress in the realm of the cities. However, nineteenth century usage of the term established a rupture with the old meaning of the concept particularly as it appealed to novelty and fast-paced changes that resulted from industrialization. In effect, the connotations of the concept changed and particularly the temporal consciousness associated with it. In this manner it put an end to the cyclical temporal model that was implied in Ibn Khalūn's work.

With Egypt's modernization, the word *madanī* (civil) which stems from *al-tamaddun*, began to describe the modern institutions of the country that were founded on industrial-capitalist modes of production, similar to those erected in eighteenth century Europe. Most notably, the transformation in the institutional organization of the country resulted in a re-organization of the economic and political systems and founding them on the rule of rational civil law, and not Islamic law as was prevalent during the Ottoman era (1516-1798). This re-organization of the institutions of the country was not a smooth one, since Egypt was struggling to gain independence from the Islamic Ottoman Empire, only to fall victim to the colonial encroachment of the European powers. The cultural discourse on *al-tamaddun* (modern urbanity) was, thus, rooted in a transitional political reality similar to the transitional geographical reality of the early nineteenth century where the nation state was still in its nascent stages.⁸

Egypt's capital played a significant role on all levels, since that it was in the city that the first institutions of urban modernity were to be erected, and where the implementation of new economic and political laws was to lead to new social transformations. In this process, it was Paris that served as a model form implementing the necessary transformations in Cairo in order to equip the city to become the capital of the modern Egyptian nation-state. The narratives of modernity woven around the relationship between Cairo and Paris reflect the centrality of the two cities to expressions of modernity and their importance in understanding the formation of a new canonical imaginary of the self in modern times. In this process of transformation, the figure of the sheikh emerged as a narrator of the global urban experience, a new function that led to his transcendence from the confines of *al-azhar* mosque. The sheikh's emergence from the mosque and his participation in the culture of urban modernity resulted in a novel practice of writing which I will refer to in this dissertation as "intellectual *flânerie*". This new writing focused on describing the sheikh's impressions of his urban experiences in Paris of the nineteenth century and as such it shared affinity with the indigenous French practice of *flânerie* which was popular in Paris of the nineteenth century. Notably, *flânerie* was closely related to the novel practices of the modern city.

⁸ It is important to note that the modern European nation state was still in the process of development independently from the religious establishment as the events of the revolutions of 1830, and 1848 in France showed.

The Modern City, Flânerie, Orientalism, and Cultural Representations of Modernity:

According to urban sociologists, the modern city was one of the main sites for observing the experience of modernity in the nineteenth century.⁹ As Louis Wirth's "Urbanism as a Way of Life" established, the modern city has come to exert an extended influence on social life. The cities of modernity, Wirth noted, are touched by industrialization, and their urban culture differs from earlier forms of urbanism that prevailed in pre-industrial times. The urbanism of modern times, according to Wirth, imposes a new definition of the city that necessitates that we see it as a set of attributes that exist beyond the city itself. Writing in the 1930s he argues that,

The technological developments in transportation and communication, which virtually make a new epoch in human history, have accentuated the role of cities as dominant elements in our civilization and have enormously extended the urban mode of living beyond the confines of the city itself.¹⁰

Wirth's observation about the impact of the city or the metropolitan center was entirely focused on the western context. However his contention that the prevalence of 'urbanism as a way of life' has led to major social changes can be noted in different non-western cultural contexts. In particular, the impact of technological development and the expansion of capitalism that began to shape the social practices of the modern city in accordance to its own logic could be observed in different cities around the globe where new social modes of being emerged. Of particular relevance to my inquiry is cultural theory's resort to urban figures in order to explicate the aesthetics of social modernity that resulted from capitalist expansion.

The urban sociologist Georg Simmel has shown that the material developments that resulted from money economy forged new forms of social interactions. Based on this he traced the appearance of new social figures in modern cities, the most famous of which is his blasé stereotypical urbanite whose social interactions are reduced to mathematical calculations in accordance with money economy. The blasé type, Simmel noted, developed a purely intellectual approach by way of protecting himself from the shocking impact of the frequent exposure to urban stimuli in the metropolis. Simmel's methodology, which focused on urban figures of the metropolis, became the methodological model for further cultural inquiry about the interrelatedness between money economy and new modes of social interaction.¹¹ Most remarkably the influence of Simmel's methodology of social analysis can be seen in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, which sought to develop a history of modernity woven around nineteenth century Paris. Benjamin's work aimed at narrating the experience of modernity by identifying and analyzing modern "types" found in the urban landscape such as the gambler, the *flâneur*, the rag-collector, among other, to explicate the experience of modernity. His work identified Paris of the nineteenth century as the capital of modernity, in turn the figure of the *flâneur*, readily associated with the nineteenth century poet Charles Baudelaire, and most recently with Benjamin himself,¹² appeared as the primary narrator of the urban experience. But,

⁹ Frisby, David. *Cityscapes of Modernity*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2001.

¹⁰ Wirth, Louis. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." *American Journal of Sociology* vol.44 no.1 July, 1938. P. 63.

¹¹ Simmel, Georg. "The metropolis and Mental Life" in *Simmel on Culture*, David Frisby (ed.) London: Sage, 1997, PP. 174-185.

¹² This is according to David Frisby's study "The Flâneur in Social Theory" where he contends that Benjamin's activities in the national library should be seen as an act of *flânerie* particularly in his attempt to construct a history

indeed, the activity of the *flâneur* seems to have influenced non-Parisian visitors of the city such as sheikh al- Ṭaḥṭāwī whose writing about nineteenth century Paris signaled the beginning of an Arab cultural renaissance known as *al-nahḍa*.

Flânerie, the act of strolling the city with the intention of converting the experience of novelty and fleeting spectacles into narratives, was a popular activity in Paris of the nineteenth century. It was related to the development of the bourgeoisie whose representative figure on the streets of the city was the *flâneur*. The *flâneur*'s livelihood depended on the expansion of the press as mass media and the appearance of new literary forms such as the *feuilletons*.¹³ In western theories of urban modernity, the figure has been associated with the poet Charles Baudelaire who, in "The Painter of Modern Life", described the *flâneur* as the artist of modern life whose creativity lay in capturing the fleeting, transient, and ephemeral encounters typical in the modern city.¹⁴

An important aspect of the literary tradition of *flânerie* is the fact that it revolves around the conversion of urban experiences into narrative. This basic quality brings to the fore the transformative impact of the practices of daily life and it places emphasis on the agency of the writer as an important element in the emergence of a body of literature associated with modernity—a factor that postcolonial studies of modern literature tend to overlook.¹⁵ The literary practice of the *Flâneur* inevitably binds the meaning of modernity to the interpretation of new experiences that emerged in the modern city as a result of industrialization. Its importance lies in the fact that it captures the transformed modern spatio-temporal awareness that resulted from industrial modernity and characterized by a rupture with the past and a projection onto an unknown future. As a body of literature, thus, *Flânerie* emphasized agency while pointing to the significant role of material reality on the imagination.¹⁶

Upon examining the imaginary of Egyptian modernity that originates in sheikh Rifa‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's (1801-1873) narrative about his urban experience in Paris during the nineteenth century, it appears that he adopted the activity of the *flâneur* following his exit from the mosque of al-azhar—an event that signaled the beginning of a new cultural discourse in Egypt. Sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was the first Egyptian sheikh to write a first hand account of Paris,¹⁷ which came to be

of modernity out of the "transient", the "fleeting" and "ephemeral" interactions of the modern metropolis. Frisby, David. *Cityscapes of Modernity*. Oxford: Polity Press, 2001.

¹³ Feguson-Parkhurst, Priscilla. "The *Flâneur* on and off the Streets of Paris" in *The Flâneur*. Keith Tester (ed.). London: Routledge, 1994.

¹⁴ Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life" in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Johnathan Mayne (ed. and trans.) London: Phaidon Press, 1964.

¹⁵ In Edward Said's *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, he was to note that postcolonial literary theories, particularly those that took his earlier study *Orientalism* as their theoretical text tended to drown the very agency that distinguishes modern writing in political and philosophical rhetoric that bordered on abstraction. An example of such an approach is to be found in Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt* which deals with the Ṭaḥṭāwī's and 'Alī Mubarak's writing in the context of a sweeping political theory approach to the experience of modernity in Egypt without paying attention to the historical specificity of each text, and the particular historical references that shaped the authors' views.

¹⁶ Harvey, David. *Paris the Capital of Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹⁷ Whereas the translator of Ṭaḥṭāwī's book contest the author's statement that his book is the "first" to be written about a modern European nation by alluding to the presence of tenth century accounts of Europe by North African travelers to the continent, I would like to emphasize the word *modern*, which marks a significant difference from earlier cultural aesthetics.

considered the cornerstone of modern Arab liberal thinking.¹⁸ While there, Ṭaḥṭāwī partook in the activity of strolling the city and converting its spectacles and its transient experiences into narratives. During this process, he reformulated the concept of *al-tamaddun* with reference to the space of the modern city. Ṭaḥṭāwī's writing focused on the modern city and the transformative power of capitalism and industrialization, which led to the formation of new political and social aesthetics that demanded a departure from pre-industrial cultural aesthetics. His early writing captured the dilemma of the liberal Muslim sheikh whose experience of the space of the modern world took place in unstable political and economic circumstances because of the impending European colonial enterprise. Later in the nineteenth century the proliferation of print culture and the participation of various graduates of *al-Azhar* in the discourse on *al-tamaddun* there emerged a dichotomy in the representation of the experience of urban modernity. On the one hand, there were the liberal sheikhs like al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, who believed in cultural change and the importance of changing educational policies in order to suit the new global reality; on the other, there were those who remained in the confines of al-Azhar mosque, regarding every novelty as “a misleading innovation.” (A clear representation of this dichotomy will appear when I analyze ‘Alī Mubarak’s novel ‘*Alam al-Dīn* in chapter two, where the main narrator sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn states that his views were transformed as a result of his travel experience in Paris). Through his urban experiences in Paris and Cairo, the figure of the sheikh emerged as a central narrator of the global urban space where the discourses on the Arab humanist renaissance *al-nahḍa* were shaped.

So far, English studies of *al-nahḍa*, most notably Albert Hourani’s seminal study *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod’s *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, have rendered summaries of the main liberal ideas adopted by *al-nahḍa* thinkers across Arab countries from the European industrial capitalist system of the nineteenth century in the process of modernization in different Arab countries. In spite of their uncontested importance, however, these studies focus on the ideas of “an Arab liberalism”, as Hourani’s study does, or on modernization, as in Abu-Lughod’s study, and so they present a discursive analysis of a complex literature that developed from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth centuries in different geographical locations and with reference to different historical realities. As a result of their focus on the historical process of modernization they fall short of addressing the rhetorical particularity of each narrative account written by different *nahḍa* thinkers.¹⁹ The same gap has been noted in the Arabic studies of the *nahḍa*, where there is a plethora of cross regional descriptions of the ideals of a modern liberalism that do not pay attention to the historical or geographical differences that shaped them.²⁰ This general approach in studies of *al-nahḍa* has resulted in a rather vague understanding of socio-cultural modernity in Egypt and the

¹⁸ Hijāzī, Mahmūd. *Usūl al-fikr al-‘Arabī al-ḥadīth ‘inda al-Ṭaḥṭāwī ma‘a al-naṣ al-kamil likitābihi Talkhīs al-Ibrīz fī waṣf barīz*. Cairo: al-hay’ah al-miṣriyya al-‘amah li’l-kitāb, 1974.

¹⁹ Abu-Lughod, Ibrahim. *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1963. Hourani, Albert. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

²⁰ This lack of rhetorical analysis is noted by the Tunisian scholar Munjiah Mansiya, whose Arabic study *Sulṭat al-Kalima ‘inda mufakerū al-nahḍa* offers a meticulous analysis of the language of *al-nahḍa* and the circumstances that shaped it. But Mansiya’s study remains one of a kind, and there remains a wide gap in understanding the literary legacy of *al-nahḍa* thinkers and the historical factors that influenced their representational language which according to kamal ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, was a transitional language from medieval Arabic into modern Arabic. For more on the lack that characterizes studies of Arab modernity see the publication of the conference proceedings *al-Ḥadātha wa al-ḥadātha al-‘Arabiyyah*. Damascus: Dār Betra Li’l-nashr wa’l-tawzi’, 2005.

Arabic speaking world at large, mainly because it does not take stock of the different registers of the experience of modernity.²¹

Important unanswered questions remain as a result of the lack of rhetorical analyses of Arab narratives of modernity that originated in the early nineteenth century.²² The fact that the canonical origins of modernist Arabic literature were conceived in the period of the early encounter between Europe and the southern shores of the Mediterranean has led scholars to question their originality, particularly because of the cooperation of early Arab thinkers with European orientalists. Indeed the latter has led some critics to contend that the productions of Arab modernists were self-orientalizing and consequently “fake” or inauthentic.²³ In these studies, the novelty of the circumstances in which such scholarly interactions took place, and the new sense of time and space that resulted from the introduction of industrial capitalist systems to Egypt have not been taken into account when studying the legacy of *al-nahḍa*. Taking into account the transformed geography of capitalism in which early Arab modernist thinking was shaped, I believe, will lead us to question some of the currently popular ideas about the binary oppositions that currently structure our understanding of modernity in Egypt and the Arabic speaking world. I argue that early Arab thought relied on the culture of the modern city to gain impetus and to part ways with the medieval religious rhetoric that had characterized representations of the world in the pre-industrial period. Ali’s modernization of Cairo and Paris fostered an atmosphere of citizenship by virtue of which non-Muslim Arab writers published their views alongside their Muslim counterparts. This appeal of citizenship over religious identity was established for the first time in the Arabic canon in the writing of sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭāwī.²⁴ His use of the Arabic language is exemplary of the narratives of *al-tamaddun* that represent the frame of thought through which *al-nahḍa* took shape. In these narratives there appears a complex interplay between representation and material reality that transcends the binary oppositions of authentic versus modern and orientalist versus indigenous merely because of the cosmopolitical aspirations of these early narratives.²⁵ An accurate understanding of the

²¹ Ibid

²² Peter Gran’s aforementioned study argues that the origins of Arab modernism can be found in the writing of eighteenth century Egyptian intellectuals such as sheikh Ḥasan al-‘Attar and the historian ‘Abdelraḥman al- Jabartī.

²³ An example of this is to be found in Muḥsin al- Musawī’s study *Istishraq fī al-fikr al-‘Arabī*. And an implied understanding of the inauthenticity of early nineteenth-century Arab representations of modernity runs through Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonising Egypt*, which argues that early Arab thinkers adopted European views of the world, particularly geographical studies written by Humboldt, among others, without discretion. However, upon examining the methodology adopted by sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭāwī whose translations supplied the theoretical base for Arab scholars to build upon, it is clear that he was correcting many of the European misrepresentations of the Arab Islamic world in his works while explicitly pointing to the fact that he was going to do so. Both Mitchell and al-Musawī’s studies were written from a postcolonial studies perspective which surprisingly overlooks the agency of the writer in undertaking to represent a new reality. In most recent debates in Egypt the famous economist and cultural commentator Jalal Amīn has tagged the cultural revival *al-nahḍa* a “fake project” in his *al-tanwīr al-za’if* because of its Eurocentric sympathies. Jalal Amīn’s contention will be dealt with in the conclusion, but it is important to note here that his study, like postcolonial studies, overlooks the manner in which literary texts address a transient geography that is impacted by an ever-changing capitalist system.

²⁴ It was in the context of Ṭaḥṭāwī’s *Manāḥij al-albbāb al-miṣriyah fī mabahij al-adāb al-‘aṣriyah* that he introduced an explanation of the prophetic *ḥadīth* which states that the brotherhood in religion is a bond that binds Muslims to one another. Ṭaḥṭāwī went farther than this by adding that patriotic bonds were also another form of brotherhood that transcends religious differences.

²⁵ The term “cosmopolitics” is introduced in Bruce Robins, and Pheng Cheah’s edited volume *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, to argue that cosmopolitanism without the nation-state as a solid terrain that mediates one’s relationship to the global space turns into a type of imperialist rhetoric. For more on the term in

literary heritage of *al-nahḍa* and its relationship to the experience of modernity must take into account the agency granted to the individual in this process. Precisely by reading the individual narratives of early modernity while paying attention to the historical and geographical orientations that shape their rhetoric, we can produce an accurate understanding of Arab cultural representation that transcends binary oppositions and charges of self-orientalizing and inauthenticity.

In my project, I have chosen to focus on the theme of *al-tamaddun*, which points directly to the material reality of the modern city as a terrain for the formation of new aesthetics of belonging and of being in the modern world. A main argument of my dissertation is that geopolitical space plays a significant role in the formation of the aesthetics of modernity. In order to understand today's discourse on Egyptian modernity, it is crucial to analyze expressions of global urban experience and trace them back to their origins in the nineteenth century where the relationship between previously disparate cultures began to acquire a new sense of proximity to one another as a result of new technologies of transportation and communication. It was in the context of this early stage in the history of Arab Islamic modernity that the figure of the sheikh began to practice intellectual *flânerie* and emerged as an interpreter of a global urban space that was formulated under the rubric of *al-tamaddun* in the Arabic narratives. In attempting to render a rhetorical analysis of the theme of *al-tamaddun*, (urbanity) and its intricate relationship to the space of the modern world, I am concerned with the following questions: how will our understanding of the experience of modernity in Egypt differ when examined from an urban perspective? What is the relationship between Cairo and Paris? What role does the urban imaginary play in articulating the project of modernity? What role did the sheikh play in the context of the global modern urban landscape? What symbolic meanings do the two cities acquire in the cultural debates on modernity? How can the material terrain of the city help us address the recent calls for a return to an 'authentic culture', especially in light of the demise of the postcolonial nation state and the flagrant emergence of religiously fundamentalist movements in modern Egypt?

My main contention in addressing the aforementioned questions is that with the introduction of new technologies such as printing machines, steamships, and later the telegraph, telephone, trams, and automobiles, a new material reality dawned on the Egyptians. The introduction of new modes of production and the integration of the Egyptian economy into the world market led to drastic transformations in the social and political realms. These transformations led to the emergence of new narratives of the experience of urban modernity that reflected the formation of a cultural imaginary that took the modern space of the city as its inspirational terrain. Cairo was slowly transformed from a medieval city to a modern city comely of the ambitions of a ruler who wanted to establish an empire for himself with Egypt as its base. Muhammad Ali's initiative to bring to Egypt the technologies and the knowledge of the West-what al-Taḥṭāwī referred to as *al-tamaddun* mark the inception of the experience of modernity in Egypt and the gradual transformation of Egypt into a modern nation organized by modern scientific knowledge. The historical circumstances that surrounded this process, and the manner in which Cairo was transformed, are the topic of the next section, which provides the historical background to the discourse of urbanity in representations of Egyptian modernity.

cultural theory see Cheah Pheng, and Bruce Robins (eds.) *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Global Urban Culture of Encounters: the bridges between Cairo and Paris and the Origins of the Dialectic of Authenticity and Modernity

The arrival of the Napoleonic troops on the Alexandrian shores in 1798 heralded a new stage in the encounter between Europe and the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Almost a century after the materialization of the Industrial Revolution, Napoleon's troops represented the military aspect of technological modernity that was molding Europe into separate nation states. In the cultural realm, the proliferation of print media inevitably led to the transformation of the public sphere (as the work of Jurgen Habermas has shown),²⁶ as well as the reinterpretation of earlier cultural practices (as Raymond Williams has argued).²⁷ Firing gunshots at a terrified populace in Alexandria, Napoleon declared himself to be the new Hellenizing Alexander whose advent should not be seen by the natives as a threat. In the flyers that were circulated among the literate Egyptians he declared that, "From now on Egyptians should not give up on participation in high ranking offices and acquiring honors because their scientists, nobility and their rational citizens will organize their affairs, and in this way the nation's conditions will be reformed."²⁸ Janus-faced urban modernity dawned on the Egyptians in the gap between the terror of the guns and the liberating possibility established by a print culture in which the dissemination of knowledge ensures the propagation of democracy. Scholars have given various interpretations of the significance of the French expedition on Egypt: while some contend that the French expedition was a point of transformation in Egyptian cultural and social practices, others argue that the French expedition itself did not affect Egypt in a significant manner. Arab historians Muhammad 'Imāra, and Yūnan Labīb Rizq, among others argued that the French invasion served as an eye-opener to the Egyptians. 'Imāra contended that the images that were circulated as a result of the French expedition to Egypt resulted in a new cultural awareness of Europe.²⁹ But according to André Raymond the cultural influence of the encounter with the French would not have lasted had it not been for Ali's accession to power.³⁰ Indeed, following the departure of the French there ensued a period of lawlessness and chaos that came to a halt only as Muhammad Ali took charge of the situation.³¹ Hence the incursion of the French into Egypt- then a province of the Ottoman Empire- signaled the necessity of transforming Egypt's political and economic system from a feudal one to a modern one based on industrial modes of production. Such was the philosophy of the modernization program initiated by the Albanian born Muhammad Ali.

Although Muhammad Ali (1805-1848) was appointed a viceroy over Egypt by the Ottoman Sultan, his rule was quite independent from the Empire. During the Ottoman Empire, Cairo was considered nothing but a provincial city where taxes were collected from the

²⁶ Habermas has shown in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, how the proliferation of print culture, and the emergence of urban practices such as café attendance in the context of Europe led to the development of a democratic public sphere ultimately leading to the development of the aesthetics of modern citizenship.

²⁷ In his seminal work, *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams has shown how a semantic shift took place with the development of industrial modernity, ultimately leading to a redefinition of key concepts, such as 'democracy' and 'class' among others.

²⁸ 'Imārah, Muhammad, *al-a'māl al-kāmilah liRifa'a al-Taḥṭāwī*. Beirut: al-mou'assassa al-'arabiyah li'l-dirasāt wa'l-nashr, 1973 vol. 1, p.14.

²⁹ Ibid, 16

³⁰ Raymond, André. *Cairo: City of History*. Cairo: The American University Press, 2001.

³¹ Fahmy, Khaled. "The Era of Muhammad Ali Pasha 1805-1848." *The Cambridge History of Modern Egypt from 1517 to the end of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

inhabitants. With Ali's advent to power, the city was transformed from a mere province into a center of political power. Ali reorganized the economy around cash crops such as cotton and in doing so joined Egypt to the rapidly developing capitalist market.³² He undertook major steps to redirect the destiny of the country, establishing Egypt as an autocracy where the state imposed order and maintained power through the newly structured army. Bureaucratic transformations, such as the initiation of a new schooling system that focused on the empirical sciences and not on religious disciplines as was prevalent in the medieval system, helped initiate the project of *al-tamaddun* (modernization). *Al-tamaddun*, as the historian Rizq has argued, put an end to the medieval sectarianism that prevailed in the Ottoman Empire under the religious system of governance, and so it signaled the formation of a new cultural aesthetics based on modern citizenship.³³ Within the context of Egypt the theme of *al-tamaddun* began to appear in the literary narratives of the time tying writing to modern citizenship and taking the modern city to be the primal terrain of this project.³⁴ With Ali's project Egyptians were exposed to new urban realities such as frequent encounters with European cultures, and the circulation of new ideas, and mass produced images resulting from the new technologies.

Given that Ali's project of modernization was military in essence it focused on building a strong modern army that would enable Egypt to compete militarily in the new historical era. It was in the name of that army that he started sending student missions to Europe in order to bring back to Egypt the latest advances in technology and scientific knowledge. In order to ensure that the knowledge acquired through the scholarships was circulated throughout Cairo he opened the first printing house in *bulāq* in 1822, which eventually facilitated the circulation of books and made them available to the increasing numbers of literate Egyptians. During his rule a number of projects that facilitated mobility and re-ordered the spatial relation between cities were started. For example, he ordered the digging of the Maḥmūdīah canal that joined Alexandria and Cairo, thus facilitating the nascent tourist industry. Ali's establishment of a modern army, a modern educational system based on empirical and scientific knowledge along with the construction of aqueducts, canals and palaces, was meant to facilitate opening Egypt to international trade—a plan that inevitably made the country a destination for European capitalists whose appearance in non-military context established an unprecedented cultural and social proximity between Egypt and Europe. To facilitate conditions for trade, Ali also gave asylum to the religious minorities that were persecuted in the Ottoman Empire, this, in turn, enabled the development of free trade in Egypt and led the Christian and Jewish writers to establish printing houses in Alexandria and Egypt. Ultimately, this free trade policy led to the development of a cosmopolitan cultural milieu that continued to characterize Egyptian modernity until the middle of the twentieth century. In this manner, Ali initiated Egypt's rejoinder to emergent urban culture based on industrialization and capitalism.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Ali dynasty continued the march toward modernizing the country, although with varying degrees of commitment. For instance, Ali's grandson Khedive 'Abbās (1848-1854) closed down many of the schools that were opened during Ali's time, and showed a noticeable degree of hostility to French education. For this reason he redirected the student missions to Austria³⁵ and sent some of those who were educated

³² Cannon, Byron. *Politics of Law in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988.

³³ Rizq, Yūnan Labīb. *Miṣr al-madaniya: fusūl fī al-nash'ah wa al-taṭawūr*. Cairo: Salība lildrasat wa'l-nashr, 1993.

³⁴ 'Abdel-Malek, Anouar. *Nahḍat Miṣr*. Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'āmmah li'l-kitāb, 1973.

³⁵ Sa'd, Farūk. *Faṭḥ Malff Kutchouk Hanem*. Beirut: maktabat al-ma'ref, 2003. P. 116

in France including, Sheikh al – Ṭaḥṭāwī, into exile in Sudan. But during his reign minor urban developments took place, such as the extension of the railway road between Cairo and Alexandria and Suez, was executed in two stages in 1854 and 1858. With the inauguration of the railway, Cairo became easily connected to other parts of the country. Other developments included the building of seven new palaces in remote areas around Cairo and the development of a new suburb called al - ‘Abbasiyah.³⁶

The Khedive Sa‘id (1854-1863) revived the commitment of his grandfather to build Egypt as a modern nation and, as a result, the student missions to France were reinstated and he resumed appointing Egyptians to government posts. He signed the agreement to allow the French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps to start the digging of the Suez Canal, which was inaugurated during the reign of Isma‘il in 1869. This marked the most important event in the history of modern Egypt because Egypt: the canal centrally located Egypt on the map of international capitalist routes further enhancing the sense of geographical proximity between Egypt and Europe. And it was the completion of the canal that led Khedive Isma‘il to utter his famous proclamation “Egypt is no longer part of Africa, it is now part of Europe.”³⁷

Khedive Isma‘il (1863-1879) is the one during whose reign major urban transformations took place in Egypt in general and in Cairo in particular. The sixteen years of Isma‘il’s reign heralded significant changes in the judicial, political, administrative, and economic systems in Egypt. His reign started with an economic boom because of the shortage of cotton in the world market as a result of the civil war in the U.S (1861-1865), however his reign also precipitated the beginning of an economic crisis as a result of his heavy spending, which drove Egypt to a debt crisis with international money lenders, and eventually led to Isma‘il’s deposition by the Ottoman Sultan. For this reason Khedive Isma‘il’s reign is a controversial period in the history of Egyptian modernity.

Isma‘il’s reign marked a complete revival of the modernization program initiated by his grandfather, making him, in historian Robert Hunter’s words, the second great reformer of the nineteenth century.³⁸ He opened Egypt to international capital, encouraged investments by foreigners, and at the same time sought to modernize the various systems of the country. For this reason he increased the number of secular schools in order to increase the ranks of educated Egyptians. He also decreed the revision of the law in accordance with the new penal code of the Ottoman Empire (which was based on the French law), and decreed that it be incorporated into the Egyptian system. Isma‘il’s decree to modify the Egyptian constitution was meant to modernize the legal system in order for it to be compatible with capitalist modernity.

In terms of urban improvements, Isma‘il replaced the steam navigation company with a new one. The railway between Cairo and Alexandria was extended from Zagazig to Isma‘iliyah and Suez. Telegraph lines were increased to 200 posts and five hundred bridges were built. This was the time when Cairo was provided with new services such as gas and drainage. The number

³⁶ Tammraz, Nihal. *Nineteenth Century Cairene Houses and Palaces*. Cairo: The American University Press, 1998.

³⁷ The comparative geographical imaginary between Egypt and Europe actually predates Isma‘il’s proclamation as it first appears in Ṭaḥṭāwī’s 1834 book *Talkhīs al- Ibriz* in which he states that upon visiting Marseille he found it very much like Alexandria in terms of its reliance on trade, and the existence of various ethnic groups in the city.

³⁸ Hunter, Robert. *Egypt under the Khedives 1805-1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh press, 1984. P.70

of factories increased, and as a result, the revenues of the government increased.³⁹ Isma‘il also encouraged the establishment of presses around the country, and he sponsored *Rawḍat al-Madares*- the journal edited by al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and Ali Mubārāk and that enabled the circulation of the Arabic language at a time when Turkish was still the official language. In addition, he inaugurated a council of deputies where all strands of the population were represented- whether they came from rural, urban, or Arab Beodouin backgrounds.⁴⁰

By the end of Ismail’s reign, dramatic urban transformations could be seen in Cairo where he ordered the building of the *Azbakiyah* Opera house designed after Milan’s *La Scala*, and the building of new neighborhoods such as *Azbakiyah*, *Isma‘ilyah*, and *al-Jazirah*. These neighborhoods, which were strategically planned in proximity to the Nile, bore features of European cities and were designed by famous European architects such as Julius Franz, Max Hertz, Pierre Grand, as well as Armoise Baudry who received a medal at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1867.⁴¹ All these physical embodiments of modernization were emblematic of the expansion of industrial capitalist modernity into Egypt. The modernization program initiated by Muhammad Ali, and developed by his son and grandson Isma‘īl, came to a halt when the foreign investors raised the interest on the loans that he had accrued from them in order to fund the different projects that he initiated around the country. This was the second direct confrontation between the modernizing nation and the colonial powers who had already placed sanctions on Muhammad Ali’s ambitious colonial expansions in 1841. It did not take long before they mobilized their troops to colonize Egypt in 1882. The beginning of military colonialism signaled a new stage in Cairo’s relationship with Paris as it made directly clear Europe’s colonial interest in Egypt, which cast a shadow on the cultural discourse of *al-tammaddun* that had so far attempted to forge a social imaginary of the ‘self’ based on the aesthetics of modern citizenship based on the capitalist restructuring of the Egyptian economy.

Capitalism plays a significant role in the narrative of modernity and, in particular, in how it inscribed new modes of social interaction that began to appear as a result of the new policies implemented by the khedives. An illustration of the social change that transpired during Isma‘il’s time is the transformation of the domestic system from one based on slavery and the domesticity of women to one where the household became open to the public through novel practices such as the education of women and the adoption of new modes of consumption including shopping practices.⁴² Such changes transformed the sense of social space and altered the relationship between the household and the public. By 1860, before British colonialism (1882) and with the establishment and the structuring of a capitalist system, monetary wealth came to play an important role as new habits of consumption emerged alongside new social practices. Such change was made visible in the appearance of the inhabitants of Cairo, who, according to the American consul Edwin de Leon, were seen wearing Parisian fashions, the seemingly superficial phenomenon indexed the frequency of exchange between Cairo and Paris among the upper class and the nascent middle class whose education had been closely related to the French capital. Within Egyptian culture, the new urban space and the emergence of new cultural trends led to

³⁹ Ibid, 40

⁴⁰ ‘Awad, Luwīs. *Tarikh al -fīkr al- miṣrī min ‘aṣr Isma‘īl thawrat 1919*. Cairo: al- Hay’ah al- Miṣriyyah al- ‘ammah li’l-kitab, 1980.

⁴¹ Ahmed, Heba Farouk. *Precolonial Modernity: The State and the Making of Nineteenth Century Cairo’s Urban Form*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of California Berkeley, 2001. P. 100

⁴² Russell, Mona. *Creating the New Egyptian Woman. 1863-1922*. New York: Plagrave McMillan, 2004.

debates about the suitability of *al-tamdaddun* to Egyptian culture, particularly as the relationship between public and personal space was reshaped. A good illustration of this, can be found in the autobiography of the Egyptian Feminist Huda Sha‘rāwī⁴³, who tells that when she expressed a desire to go shopping at a new department store in Alexandria her wish was met with social dismay from her mother. In the early twentieth century it was the habit for women to receive merchants at their home; when the new department stores opened, Sha‘rāwī contends, the variety of goods made it more enticing for women to go out into the public space.

The modern city thus became a *terra nova* for the creation of new social practices and relations. The divergence between the new urban trends that resulted from the expansion of capitalism and the pre-industrial capitalist social practices came to be a central theme in discourses of social modernity. New practices came to be associated with western capitalist modernity, leading to the emergence of a crisis of meaning that polarized expressions of modernity between the authentic and the modern. The literary narratives of *al-tammaddun* addressed the manner in which modern urban culture impedes social meaning in the visual order,⁴⁴ thus imbuing the urban space with a dialectical quality. Writing in 1871 Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī, argued for the necessity of distinguishing between an apparent material urban modernity; which he referred to as “*tamaddun madī*”, and a mental urban modernity which he referred to as “*tamaddun ma‘nawī*”. As a result of the dichotomy between the new visual terrain of the city and the mental attitudes that were necessary for it, there emerged a need for urban narratives that could explicate the philosophy of the modern urban culture (al- Ṭaḥṭāwī’s “mental urbanism”). The literature of *al-tammaddun* that first appeared in the nineteenth century was thus a literature that attempted to establish a cultural imaginary that addressed the apparent duality that riddled the urban landscape and led the social and cultural discourse to be polarized between proponents of “authenticity” and proponents of modernity.

Debates addressing the practices of the modern city and the capitalist culture that it entails are in line with a so-called “authentic culture” never disappeared from Egyptian modernity. In recent years debates on modernity in the Arab world at large and in Egypt specifically have resurface, especially in light of the emergence of Islamic movements that call for the establishment of an Islamic system of governance. As a result, recent debates on modernity in the Arab world and Egypt, in particular, focus on secularization as a correlate to *al-tammaddun*; they posit the dichotomy between authenticity and westernization/modernization along political lines that equate Islamism with the former and secular civil society with the latter. The neoconservative groups that call for Islamism usually use urban artifacts such as books, cassettes, videos, and in recent years, satellite channels, and the World Wide Web in order to propagate their ideologies of social interaction. In their challenge to the structures of modern society, these movements aim to overwrite the social history of *al-nahḍa* that was formulated in the nineteenth century in the context of a global urban culture in which the threat of colonialism was never absent.⁴⁵ The scope of their challenge to the social history of modernity is best

⁴³ Sha‘rāwī, Huda, Margot Badaran (trans.) *Harem years: The memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist 1879-1924*. New York: The feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987.

⁴⁴ According to the urban sociologist Louis Wirth, urban dwellers develop social aesthetics based on their recognition of visible symbols of identity, uniforms become signs of identity that replace interpersonal relations.

⁴⁵ See for example the analysis of the Egyptian sociologist ‘Abdallah Shalabī where he explains that Saudi wahabi movements fund cassette tape productions that accuse Arab intellectuals beginning with Sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭawī and on to Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz among others with apostasy. Shalabī, ‘Abdallah. *Al-Dīn wa’ l-Sira’ al-Ijtima’ī fī Miṣr (1970-1985)* Cairo:: Kitāb al – hilāl, 2000. P.43.

captured in the following quote from ‘Abd al-Wahhab al- Misirī’s detailed study *al-‘almaniyah al- juz’iyah wa al- ‘almaniya al- shamelah* :

In recent years, expressions such as “modernization” “enlightenment”, “rationalism” and “secularism”...etc..., have gained wide circulation, particularly the last term has gained an unusual circulation in our Arab Islamic region, and even around the world, thus becoming one of the most important terms in (social, philosophical, political) discourse of the East and the West.⁴⁶

Missirī’s quotation captures the problematic representations of Egyptian cultural modernity between, on the one hand, conservatives who deem the culture of modernity that developed as a result of Muhammad Ali’s modernization an ‘inauthentic’ construct because of its reliance on western organizational methods, and, on the other, liberal thinkers who believe that in light of industrial modernity and recent technological advances, cultural discourse must be geographically and historically specific.⁴⁷ Misirī’s three- volume- study reflects the concern of liberal intellectuals with an accurate understanding of modern civil society, particularly in light of the revival of fundamentalist religious movements in Egypt and in the Arab- Islamic world. The author’s invocation of the terms “modernization” “enlightenment” and “rationalism” before delving into his study of the term ‘secularism’ pins down three central concepts that have come to be increasingly problematic in Egyptian culture. The origins of these concepts go back to the nineteenth century when, as a result of Ali’s modernizing policy, there emerged a new geographical imaginary of the self that bound Cairo to Paris via the Mediterranean sea. The thematic representation of the aesthetics of modern urbanity was formulated under the rubric of *al-tammaddun* which originated in the narratives of figure of the sheikh who emerged as an intellectual *flâneur*, translator and a narrator of modernity in Egypt. The aesthetics of modernity according to early nineteenth-century Arabic narratives and its intricate relationship to the space of the modern city is the topic of my dissertation.

Part I of my dissertation, *The Sheikh, the City and Intellectual Flânerie*, focuses on literary expressions of Egyptian modernity in the nineteenth century urban context. It offers a rhetorical analysis of narratives of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity) which began with Sheikh Rifa‘ Rafi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s publication of a collection of essays about his nineteenth-century travel experience to Paris. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s book *Talkhlīs al- Ibrīz fī waṣf Barīz* (*The Golden Summary in Describing Paris*) signaled the beginning of a trend of, what I will call, ‘intellectual *flanerie*’ that weaved an imaginary of modernity around Paris and Cairo. Chapter one traces the emergence of an imaginary of modernity that revolved around a new geography largely influenced by the expansion of capitalism in the nineteenth century. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s concern with the geography of modernity, and the emergence of new social and political aesthetics, which he described under the rubric of *al-tamaddun*, was the beginning of an intellectual discourse of humanism that bound *al-nahḍa* to the urban context. The sheikh’s narratives of the urban space reflect the manner in which nineteenth century liberal Muslim thinkers attempted to develop a new imaginary of the self in light of the introduction of new technologies that promised to radically alter the relations between previously disparate cultures.

⁴⁶ Al- Missirī, ‘Abd al- Wahab. *Al- ‘almaniyah al- juz’iyah wa al- ‘almaniya al- shamilah*. Cairo: Dar al- Shurūq, 2005. (vol.1)P.5

⁴⁷ Abdelmalek, Anouar. *Al-waṭaniyah hiyya al-ḥal*. Cairo: dār al- shurūq al- Dawliyah, 2006.

In chapter two, I analyze the significance of the fictionalization of the journey of the sheikh to modern Paris in ‘Alī Mubarak’s novel *‘Alam al- Dīn* (1882). I argue that upon examining the early narratives of the urban experience in Egypt, it is the figure of the sheikh, the graduate of *al-Azhar* mosque who was educated in the religious traditions of pre-industrial times that emerges as the central narrator of the experience of urban modernity. The sheikh’s intellectual relationship with the space of the modern city became a central theme to literary discourse especially with the introduction of the printing press in 1822 and the ensuing proliferation of print media and literary works, whether essays or novels, began to dramatize the aesthetics of the new urban culture. The complexity of the new cultural role of the sheikh was best captured in the novelistic depiction of the figure by the Egyptian intellectual modernizer, ‘Alī Mubarak Pasha, whose novel *‘Alam al- Dīn* centralized the figure of the sheikh as a narrator of a complex urban culture. Mubarak’s novel, I argue, is an important literary representation of the dialectical nature of global urban modernity where dichotomies between religious versus secular and authentic versus modern became central to representations of the experience of urban modernity in Egypt and the Arab world. The theme of *al- tamaddun*, which was originally described by sheikh al- Ṭaḥṭawī as novelty, acquired inauthentic connotations as capitalism developed in the second half of the nineteenth century heralding with it the advent of European colonialism.

I conclude part I with chapter three that sums up the main tenets of *al-tamaddun* and how my resort to the urban paradigm to analyze its literature rescues our understanding of the experience of Arab modernity from the binary oppositions of secular versus religious, authentic versus modern. Part one of this dissertation makes use of the essay and the novel as two media that began to proliferate in Egypt ultimately leading to what I call “intellectual *flânerie*” which found its ultimate expression in Taha Ḥusayn’s theoretical work, *Mustaqbal al- thaqafa fī miṣr* (1938).

Part II *The Medium and the Message* picks up where the literary narratives fall short. Here I argue that the ideals of *al- tamaddun* that were originally established by the narratives of the sheikh found popularity through the use of cinema as a medium for cultural representation in Egypt. It argues that the development of Egyptian cinema as early as the late nineteenth century helped develop the understanding of the ideals of liberal humanism embodied in the concept of *al-tamaddun* by making use of the vernacular and the visual representations of modernity. Part II addresses the dialectic of authenticity versus modernity/ secularism versus religion by focusing on two recent film representations of Cairo and Paris as crucial terrains polarized between discourses on liberalism, capitalism religious fundamentalism and modernity, that is; the discourse of *al-tamaddun*.

Chapter 1

Rif a‘a al- Taḥṭāwī’s Description of Paris and the Beginning of Literary *flânerie* in Egypt **Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī: From Imam to Intellectual *Flâneur*:**

Sheikh Rifa‘a Rafe‘ al- Ṭaḥṭāwī’s (1801-1873) myriad writings signaled a break with medieval Arabic scholarship and the beginning of literary modernism in the Arab world, which he articulated under the rubric of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity). There is hardly any serious literary study of modern Arabic literature and culture that does not mention his contribution as the founder of the Arab *renaissance* (*al-nahḍa*) that signaled a revival of Arab humanism and the modernization of the Arabic language. In the context of Egypt, Ṭaḥṭāwī embodies the figure of the modernizing sheikh, the scholar of classical times who was well-educated in Islamic disciplines as well as Arabic literature at al-Azhar mosque, which operated as a university and a center of learning for Muslim scholars from different parts of the Ottoman Empire. With the advent of technological modernity and the reorganization of society according to the industrial capitalist model, classical Azharite scholars had to learn new disciplines that led to their exit from the mosque into a novel modern space. In the context of processes of modernization, the social role of the intellectual was transformed from one limited to instruction and the development of the study circles at the mosque into one of engaging with the emerging public sphere that resulted from the introduction of the press and the beginning of the proliferation of print culture. Modernization thereby wrought a change in the perceptions of time and space that lead to the formation of a new literary imaginary largely shaped by the aesthetics of modern urban culture where mobility, circulation, encounter and the spread of new trends became common place. Of particular importance to me as I analyze the significance of the urban paradigm to representations of Egyptian/Arab modernity is Ṭaḥṭāwī’s depiction of the novelty associated with the space of modernity, the themes that emerged in conjunction with the transformation in perceptions of times and space as a result of industrialization, and his description of modern Paris as the main protagonist of *Talkhīs al- ibrīz*.

When he arrived in Paris Ṭaḥṭāwī was one of twenty six students sent there to study various disciplines in order to return to Egypt with the knowledge necessary to enable Muhammad ‘Ali to implement a modernization program that would transform Egypt into a modern nation with a modern army.¹ Early on in Ṭaḥṭāwī’s life he was affected by the modernization laws when ‘Ali confiscated Ṭaḥṭāwī’s family land as he reorganized the economic resources in Egypt in preparation to join the emerging global capitalist market. Ṭaḥṭāwī was born in Ṭaḥṭa, an Upper-Egyptian village on the Nile, where his family had resided since their immigration from Arabia to Egypt. According to the prevalent educational system, Ṭaḥṭāwī received a religious education. When his family lost their land and was reduced to poverty when ‘Ali cancelled *al-iltizām* (the system of tax farming), they had to move from one village to the other as they sought help from their relatives along the shores of the Nile. During this time Ṭaḥṭāwī memorized the Qur’an under the supervision of his father. When he was twelve his father died and, as a result, his mother took him back to Ṭaḥṭa where his erudite maternal uncles took over the mission of educating him. When he was sixteen years old, he traveled to Cairo to join al-Azhar mosque-university, the oldest center of learning in the Arab Islamic world, where he completed his religious education. Evidently, during the early years of his life Ṭaḥṭāwī was reared in a pre-modern system that was slowly changing as modernization was about to

¹ For more on the military nature of Muhammad Ali’s modernization program see Khaled Fahmy’s study *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmet Ali, his Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Cairo: American University Press, 1997.

transform the living conditions in Egypt. In the context of that system his education was focused on training in the religious disciplines (*al-'ulum al-naqliyya*). But due to an encounter with a sheikh who taught at al-Azhar, however, Ṭaḥṭāwī was not entirely limited to the system of education that prevailed at al-Azhar where knowledge was quite entropic.²

The encounter was with Shiekh Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār, whose earlier cooperation with the French scientists that accompanied Napoleon's troops to Egypt led him to realize that the absence of empirical knowledge in Egypt had dire consequences. As a result, he was to declare that the "state of knowledge in our lands must change"—meaning the state of knowledge in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It was with this professor that Ṭaḥṭāwī studied geography, history and literature (disciplines that were considered heretical at al-Azhar where the sheikhs constituted a clergy that helped the Ottoman-appointed rulers maintain order in society under the banner of Islam). Unlike those orthodox scholars, Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār had traveled extensively in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire and was aware of the danger of isolation. He understood that the redundant knowledge that prevailed at al-Azhar limited scholarship to writing commentaries and interpretations while banning creativity. Unlike his peers, he conceived of the occasion to cooperate with the French scientists as a chance to understand the empirical knowledge heralded by the arrival of Napoleon's troops.

In the encounter with Napoleon's expedition, (as it appears in the accounts of Ḥaṭṭār's contemporary, the chronicler al-Jabartī) the late eighteenth century Egyptian intellectuals found themselves caught between the colonial threat of modernity and its potential to create a liberating public sphere based on knowledge and citizenship. In the context of urban modernity these sheikhs who studied and produced scholarship in a religious institution had to don new robes in order to suit the new capitalist order when they experienced modern institutional organization in the context of the scientific council established by Napoleon. Indeed, for al-Āṭṭār and his contemporaries the French Expedition to Egypt represented the beginning of a Janus-faced urban modernity where the Industrial Revolution was announced through the roar of the guns as well as the printing machine. On one hand, gun powder meant colonialism, even if Napoleon tried to pose as a Hellenizing Alexander who came to Egypt to rescue her from *Mamlūk* corruption. On the other hand, the printing machine enabled Napoleon to distribute flyers among the inhabitants of Cairo promising them 'a new social contract' where the system of governance was to be based on citizenship and not on ethnic-religious ties that held sway throughout the Ottoman Empire.³ Such forceful changes, no doubt, had a strong influence on the learning environment at al-Azhar where sheikh Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār taught.

Ḥasan al-Āṭṭār played a crucial role in preparing Ṭaḥṭāwī for his role as someone who would, eventually, inspire a significant transformation in cultural discourse in Egypt. It was his instruction that led Ṭaḥṭāwī to develop interest in empirical knowledge, philology, literature, and an awareness of the importance of geography and history as two disciplines that were essential to understanding modern culture where space and time would play a crucial role in determining

² For more on the learning conditions at al-Azhar during the nineteenth-century see Muhammad 'Imara's thorough editorial introduction in *Rifā'a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī: al-a'māl al-kāmila*, volume 1 Beirut: al-Mawsū'a al-'arabiyya li'l-dirasāt wa 'l-nashr, 1973.

³ The gun roars, and the liberating possibilities created by the print industry is the dialectical imaginary that haunts scholars of Egyptian modernity according to the recent Arabic study by Aḥmad al-Shalāq *al-ḥadātha wa'l-imbiriāliyah: al-ghazū al-firinsī wa ishkāliyyat nahḍat miṣr*. Cairo: dār al-shurūq, 2005.

new social and political practices. However al-‘aṭṭār’s efforts to transform educational philosophy in Egypt were not likely to succeed because there were no state structures or a developed press to help affect the transformation and, as a result, access to his ideas was limited to a few educated elites. Arguably, however, without al-‘aṭṭār’s vision, Egyptian intellectual *flânerie* would have never materialized: after all, he was the one responsible for Ṭaḥṭāwī’s appointment first as an Imam in the army of Muhammad ‘Ali, then as a student of translation.⁴

When he left Egypt in 1826 on board of *la Truite*, Ṭaḥṭāwī was a twenty- five year old who had already experienced a significant cultural transformation when he left upper-Egypt for the modernizing city of Cairo. Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha had already opened Cairo to international capital when he issued friendly policies to foreign investors, and his interest in modernizing the city had already caused major social changes as he dedicated his attention to establishing modern institutions similar to the ones that had been developed in Europe over the course of the eighteenth century. According to Anouar ‘Abdel- Malek, Cairo became a refuge for the followers of St. Simon who had traveled to Egypt in order to actualize their dream project of creating a universal humanity via the use of science and technology, which they had hoped would lead to the joining of the world through canals such as the Suez canal in Egypt.⁵ Their idea, along with those of other European entrepreneurs and educators, found tolerance in Muhammad ‘Ali’s Egypt where a shift in social and cultural order was taking place and had repercussions among the indigenous intelligentsia whose education had thus far been purely in the Islamic sciences (*al-‘ulūm al- naqliyya*). The graduates of al-Azhar mosque faced a new social era that valorized technical expertise and was beginning to subordinate their religious and *sharī‘a*- based – legal knowledge to the new socio-economic reality. When Ṭaḥṭāwī graduated from al-Azhar it was challenging for him to earn a good living while remaining at the mosque teaching in the fashion of pre-industrial times. For this reason, and with the help of his mentor sheikh al-‘Attar Ṭaḥṭāwī sought work outside the confines of the mosque when he accepted work as an Imam in Muhammad ‘Ali’s army. Although his job was true to the religious training that he had received at the mosque, it did not fulfill his intellectual aspirations, which might have been developed had teaching at al-Azhar been a possibility for him. But the chance to develop his intellectual capacities presented itself to Ṭaḥṭāwī when he was elected to become a student of translation in the 1826 mission, which heralded the beginning of a long intellectual career that was inspired by the aesthetics of nineteenth century Parisian *flânerie*.

Ṭaḥṭāwī’s trip to Paris transformed his perceptions of the city and impacted his representation of the social space of modernity as it made him aware of a new global network that connected separate places around the world. Through his travel he developed an awareness of the manner in which technological inventions, such as steamships, newspapers, telegraphs were annihilating time and space in a way that promised to transform the world. In paying attention to the material space of modernity and in seeking to capture its transformative impact on social life, Ṭaḥṭāwī resembled the Parisian *flâneur*.

⁴ Most Arabic and recent English studies of Ṭaḥṭāwī’s work have mistakenly held that Ṭaḥṭāwī was sent to Paris as an Imam but in fact this was a common mistake that persisted until Iman Jalal al- Sa‘īd’s study *al-Mustalah ‘ind Rifa‘a al-Thaḥāwī Bayna al- Tarjamah wa al-Ta‘rīb*, has shown through close analysis of the text that Ṭaḥṭāwī was sent to Paris to study translation, and not to be an Imam. He was an Imam in Muhammad Ali’s army prior to his departure to Paris, but later on he became a student in the mission of 1826, and he states that clearly in his introduction, as Sa‘īd has shown.

⁵ ‘Abdel Malek, Anouar. *Nahḍat Miṣr: Taḥawūr al fikr wa’l-idūlūjiyyah fī nahḍat miṣr al-waṭaniyyah*. Beirut: al- mu’assasah al-‘arabiyah li’l- nashr, 1973. P.204

The *flâneur*'s centrality to representations of urban modernity developed in the context of nineteenth-century Paris where new modes of production enabled the circulation of new forms of writing such as the physiognomies of urban types and the *feuilletons*. The *flâneur* emerged as a prototypical urban figure closely related to the development of the bourgeoisie. In the context of the early urban space, according to Baudelaire, the *flâneur* detached himself from his surroundings and assumed the role of the spectator of the city who could decipher its spectacles and elucidate the experiences of its crowds.⁶ The urban space of nineteenth-century Paris was the spring board of the literature of the *flâneur*, and the city's transformative space was central to the identity of this urban narrator. The literary significance of *flânerie*, accordingly, was in binding the experiences of daily life to new narratives that could help readers understand social modernity. It was Benjamin's *Arcades Project* that connected the figure of the *flâneur* to Paris of the nineteenth century, dubbing it the capital of modernity.⁷ However, recent studies have shown that the practice of *flânerie* was not limited to the urban space of Paris but rather was also present in London of the nineteenth-century and had started to develop in mid-nineteenth-century America where urbanism was beginning to develop.⁸ The appearance of the figure of the *flâneur* on the streets of the modern city was closely tied to the development of capitalism, which led to the emergence of new ways of socialization in public spaces outside the home, and new modes of consumption. His function became that of the interpreter of new experiences. The *flâneur*, thus, was not merely a visual representation, or an urban stereotype of nineteenth-century urban culture, but rather he was, according to Balzac and Baudelaire, an artist who produced texts based on urban experiences and his ability to transform perception of the visual stimuli into narratives. The intricate relation between literary writing and urban experiences is the trope of *flânerie* that Ṭaḥṭāwī adopted.

Admittedly, sheikh Rifa'a al- Ṭaḥṭāwī 's appearance differed significantly from that of the *flâneur*. For one thing Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī, was a stately man whose turban was as big as his status.⁹ In contrast to the appearance of the sheikh in his Egyptian robes, the figure of the *flâneur*, as we understand it in cultural theory, was that of a male who, according to Balzac's description in *Physiologie du flâneur*, used to dress up in 'Top hat, frock, coat, cane, and/or cigar in hand.'¹⁰ This appearance ensured the anonymity of the *flâneur*— and his freedom to circulate through and observe the social space of the modern city, experiences which he then converted into narratives. Such anonymity, however, would not have been possible to Ṭaḥṭāwī, whose foreign clothes made him the center of attention on the streets of 19th century Paris. Indeed, as we understand from his report the Parisians liked to rally around strangers who dressed differently. However, in spite of these visual differences between the French *flâneur* and sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī, it is the latter's activities on the streets of Paris, his ability to be the eye of the crowd, his conversion of his urban experiences into narrative accounts that relate the meaning of the

⁶ See Baudelaire's article "The Painter of Modern Life" in *The Painter of Modern life and other Essays*. Jonathan Mayne (ed. &trans.) London: Phaidon Press, 1964. PP.1-40.

⁷ There is no doubt that Walter Benjamin's attempt to write a history of modernity through resorting to the figures that populate the streets of Paris has earned the figure of the *flâneur* a central position in the discourses of urban modernity. For more on this see Hannah Arendt (ed). *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

⁸ Brand, Dana. *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁹ Al- Ghitānī, Jamāl, *Malamiḥ al- qahira fī mi'at sanah*. Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1983.

¹⁰ Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst "The *Flâneur* on the Streets of Paris" in Tester, ed. *The Flâneur*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

transient and fleeting interactions of everyday life, that calls for reading his account as an act of intellectual *flânerie*.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's account of nineteenth-century Paris resembles the activity of the *flâneur* in its emphasis on the transformative impact of daily experiences, its reliance on the space of the modern city where novel experiences formulated the aesthetics of social modernity, its celebration of the culture of industrial capitalism as it made possible new subjective experiences. His description of Paris, like the accounts of the *flâneur*, designated the city as the place where the individual participates in the culture of the mass that materialized as a result of the expansion of industrial capitalism, and the emergence of new technologies that remapped public space into social space. Staging the city as his main protagonist, Ṭaḥṭāwī relayed to modern Arab readers distinctive features of the emerging modernism where the primacy of the individual over the collective, and the domination of the visual aspect of experiences emerged as tropes specifically related to the experience of modernity. His description of the social practices of the Parisians, the political unrest of 1830, and the power of the press, which lends strength to the individual, clearly expressed his conviction that the new social space of the modern city was distinctly different: its fluidity and its mutability inevitably led to important social transformations. Centralizing Paris as the main protagonist of his account enabled Ṭaḥṭāwī to use narrative as a vehicle through which he articulated the crucial modern theme of the close relationship between the self, the social, and the political as they became intertwined in a new urban space. In doing so he heralded the beginning of a literary practice best described as *flânerie* which was to develop in later Egyptian literary works.

By examining Ṭaḥṭāwī's work in relation to the canon of urban literature, I aim to situate his work amongst others that originated in Paris of the nineteenth century. Arguably, this canon of urban literature remains focused on European representations of urban modernity- contrary to the very nature of nineteenth-century Paris which was a Mecca for modernizers from different parts of the globe. So far, cultural studies of the literary figure of the *flâneur* have enriched our understanding of the impact of the urban experience on literary representation, and the influence of circulation—be it that of the press, money or even images of daily life- on the development of literary representations of modernity. In establishing a solid connection between the experience that materialized within the space of the modern city and the transformation in the literary aesthetics of modernist writing, these studies centralize the category of space as an important trope in understanding modernity. Although *flânerie* remains largely understood through French, English, and American literature, its reliance on the transformative power of the spaces of modernity, as well as the circulation of news and narratives enables it to transcend the Eurocentric quality that has come to be associated with it. Given the fact that Ṭaḥṭāwī's writing occurs at a time when *flânerie* was particularly popular in pre-Haussmann Paris, his book should be read as a kind of intellectual *flânerie* that anchored itself in a rapidly changing urban culture most visibly developed in Paris of the nineteenth century.

The Arabic thematic articulation of the experience of intellectual *flânerie* is introduced in Ṭaḥṭāwī's account under the rubric of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity), which was the conceptual framework through which he attempted to explain Muhammad Ali's modernization program. Inherent in this thematic articulation of modernity are a number of factors, including transformation in the perceptions of space and time as a result of technology, the materialization of the modern city as a site that reflects the development of capitalist modernity, the constant change characteristic of modern urban culture, and the emergence of literary narratives that

elucidates the social aesthetics of capitalist modernity. Ṭaḥṭāwī's travel account exemplifies his transitional role as an intellectual between two epochs¹¹: one whose career change from Imam to translator and subsequently, intellectual *flâneur* mirrored the economic and the political reality of the modern times which created a new role for the intellectual. The next section of this chapter explains how Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of the modern world reflected this transitional role.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's Representation of Modern Space and the Dialectic of religion and Humanist Modernism:

Talkhīs begins by establishing a close connection between modern writing and a global urban space that resulted from the development of new technologies. It reflects the philosophical implications of Muhammad Ali's modernization, (*al-tamaddun*), what we now call "development", where the quest for industrialization signaled the emergence of a relationship of interdependence among modern nations. Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of modern space reflects the transformation of cultural aesthetics from being shaped by religious sensibilities to being shaped by the formation of a new political reality that was to lead to the development of Egypt as a modern nation-state. As will be made clear from the following analysis of Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Talkhīs* the development of modern Arab humanism depended on the formation of an alternative geographical imaginary of the world where the sheikh was to emerge as a modern intellectual shaped by his sense of belonging to a modern nation- state.

The introduction to *Talkhīs al-Ibrīz* shows Ṭaḥṭāwī establishing his identity as a former graduate of al-Azhar whose education in the context of the religious school endowed him with a solid knowledge of the Qur'ān and Islamic knowledge. He recounts to his readers how he was appointed an Imam in Muhammad Ali's army and then was promoted to be a student of translation in the student mission of 1826. He explains to his readers, the majority of whom would have been the doyens and graduates of al-Azhar- the majority educated strata of the nineteenth century Egyptian society, that he undertook to write his travel experience at the behest of his mentor sheikh al- Azhar sheikh Ḥassan al- 'Aṭṭar, who was fond of travel accounts, and that in his writing he observed the precepts of Islamic law (the *sharī'a*). The reason for his travel, he explains, is the fact that *diyar al- Islam* (the lands of Islam) were in search of "empirical knowledge" (*al-'ulūm al- baraniyah*) and the arts and industries that had been developed in Europe, and particularly in Paris. Thus he frames his journey as a quest for knowledge that promised to bring prosperity to his society, a thing which was condoned by Islamic *ḥadīth* which states "seek knowledge even if it be in China." However, in spite of the openness of Islamic precepts to different kinds of knowledge, Muhammad 'Ali's critics deemed his cooperation with the Europeans as something heretical. The appearance of foreigners in nineteenth century Cairo caused social criticism which we understand from Ṭaḥṭāwī's statement that, "The commoners in Cairo, and elsewhere [presumably other parts of the country since that *miṣr* was, and still is, used to refer to Cairo] ignorantly blame him [Muhammad Ali] because he accepted the franks, welcomed them, and bestowed his blessings upon them. They do not realize, however, that he, may Allah protect him, does this because of their humane qualities and their knowledge, not because they are Christians."¹²

¹¹ Louca, Anwar. *'awdat Rifa'a al- Ṭaḥṭāwī fī zill al- adab al- muqāran*. Tunis: Dar al- Ma'aref li'l-tibā'a waal-nashr, 1997.

¹² *Talkhīs*, 18

To his critics, Muhammad Ali's consultation of European expertise was a blatant move away from the pre-modern Islamic imaginary that prevailed in the Ottoman empire, which depicted the world in binary oppositions between *dār al-Islam* (the abode of Islam) and *dār al-Kufr* (the abode of apostasy). This dichotomous division of the world appeared in the title to one of the mini-essays found in the first chapters of Ṭaḥṭāwī's book under the heading: "In mentioning the reasons behind our travel to that country which is the abode of apostasy and stubbornness, and is as far away from us as can be, and is very costly because of the high cost of living in it."¹³ As we can see from such a title there were three main categories of contention with which Ṭaḥṭāwī had to grapple: first, the geographical imaginary of pre-modern times which was steeped in religious rhetoric. Second the novelty of the practice of travel to Europe and the transformation in the sense of space. And third, the development of capitalism in Europe, which emerged as the new god of war responsible for the ensuing nineteenth-century military colonial expansion. In addressing these three points, Ṭaḥṭāwī parted ways with the abstraction characteristic of medieval travel accounts that emphasized the wondrous and the bizarre at the expense of the real.¹⁴ His departure from the confines of the mosque led to the development of a literary imaginary founded on an awareness of the geographical reality of the modern world in which mobility, movement, transnational encounters, and circulation were developing as a result of the expansion of capitalism.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's invocation of the geographical reality in which his narrative is written establishes a close relationship between cultural aesthetics and the space of the modern world. He questioned the epistemological solidity *dār al-islam* (the lands of Islam) vision of itself in opposition to its long-standing enemy of the Middle-Ages, the former crusading "other". Such an imaginary, Ṭaḥṭāwī contended, could no longer be sustained in light of the development of new technologies and new industries. The development of a modern scientific culture in Europe, he declared, made clear the negative impact of the Ottoman Empire's isolation: "Truth must be followed. The perfection of that [empirical knowledge, arts and industries] in frankish countries is an established fact."¹⁵ In light of this reality, Ṭaḥṭāwī contended, the "kingdoms of Islam" must examine their dominant ideological views of the world which were divorced from the reality of the world. Contrary to the division of the world into two parts polarized between *dār al-Islam* (the lands of Islam) and *dār al-kufr* (the lands of apostasy), Ṭaḥṭāwī explained to his readers the modern geographical division of the world into continents and the division of Europe into separate nation-states emphasizing the spatial expansion of the European political domain into the Americas. The formation of the modern world, he explained, had begun in 1492 when, "the Christians overtook Andalusia and expelled the Arabs from it [...]the time that marked the beginning of mobility (*al-siyaha*) and sailing along the coasts of the ocean leading to the discovery of new countries and lands under the patronage of their kings."¹⁶

According to his views, mobility and travel led to the development of knowledge and resources that shaped the modern Europe that the author was about to describe to his readers:

¹³ Ibid, 15

¹⁴ Mansiya, Munjiya. *Ṣulṭat al- Kalima 'ind mufakiri al-iṣlah: al-Ṭaḥṭāwī wa kayr al- Dīn*. Tunis: al-dār al tunisiya li'l- nashr, 1993.

¹⁵ *Talkhīs*, 11

¹⁶ Ibid, 150

And now mobility (exploration, movement) has come to be an art for the Franks. Not everyone is good at it and not every country excels at it. This is because when ships and natural devices became abundant, discoveries of land and maritime areas became easy to make, and travel became more frequent. [As a result] places and regions were explored and the old world annexed the new world to itself [...] Moreover with the invention of steamships, vast countries became closer to one another, and people from different countries visited one another causing business interactions (*al-mu'āmalāt*) and encounters to become frequent.¹⁷

In specifying mobility, travel, and encounters as categories that distinguish modern space, Ṭaḥṭāwī established a direct connection between them and the advancement of empirical knowledge, the expansion of Europe's political power, and the development of capitalist modernity, i.e. "business interactions". This new geographical reality led him to call on his readers to question the spatial imaginary prevalent in "Islamic countries" that appeared to disregard materialism. Is it sufficient, in light of what modern geography reflects, Ṭaḥṭāwī ponders, that Islamic countries reject cooperation with the 'Franks' in spite of the fact that intellectual isolation is contrary to Islamic precepts? Even more, how can isolation be condoned in the nineteenth century when history shows that during the prosperous reign of the Abbasids, Arab/Muslims' cooperated with the 'Christians' and preserved the knowledge of classical times, on the basis of which Europe founded its modern knowledge? Inevitably a cloud of doubt is cast over the readers' views as the sheikh points to the epistemological contribution of Arab Muslims during the Abbasid rule in Baghdad and Ummayyad reign in Andalusia. Furthermore, the insufficiency of such a philosophy appears more dangerous than ever, particularly in light of the signs of Eurocentric modernity that Ṭaḥṭāwī's readers had already encountered with the appearance of Napoleon's troops on the Alexandrian shores. Particular to this modernity, according to Samir Amin, is its formation around a mythical geographical imaginary that resulted from the shift of the capitalist world system towards the shores of the Atlantic, leading to the marginalization of the tributary Arab Islamic culture that had developed in the basin of the Mediterranean from the tenth to the sixteenth century.¹⁸ In light of such geographical reality, Ṭaḥṭāwī concludes, it was no longer possible for Arab Muslims to remain prisoners to a world view that led them to overlook the development of an advanced civilization where empirical knowledge transformed the concept of space. For Ṭaḥṭāwī, modern technology promised to create a cosmopolitan cultural sphere, and indeed, in believing that, he shared the optimism of many European intellectuals of the early nineteenth century, most notably Goethe and Marx.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's vision of the modern space of the world in general, however, remained quite ambivalent. On the one hand he referred to Europeans as "the franks"/ Christians- words which resonated with their representation in the chronicles of medieval historians of the crusades. On the other hand he articulated for the first time in Arabic writing the aesthetics of a modern nationalism, according to which he drew important distinctions between different European nations. Crucial to his depiction of the modern world was his emphasis on a new form of belonging, one that attempted to subordinate religious sentiments to national belonging. The nation- state imaginary appeared in his account as an alternative conceptual framework through which to view the modern world where mobility promised to increase encounters among people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. In that vein he explained that the French

¹⁷ Ibid, 150

¹⁸ Amin, Samir. *Eurocentrism*. New York: Monthly Press Review, 1989.

traveled to faraway lands in order to acquire knowledge and resources for love of their home country. And according to his realization of the beginning of the expansion of a culture of materialism Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī explained to his readers the manner in which they should view the culture of colonial modernity on the occasion of the French invasion of Algiers:

Know that the news of the fall of Algiers to their possession arrived a short while before the Revolution occurred [the 1830 revolution]. As soon as the news reached Prime Minister Polignac he ordered the guns to be fired as a sign of happiness, and he took to walking around the city in a self conceited manner because the French had conquered Algiers during his days in office. And when the archbishop heard the news of the conquest of Algiers, he congratulated the old king [old is reference to Charles X who was about to be deposed] when the latter went to church to thank God the Almighty for that [the victory]. The tenor of what he said on that occasion was: ‘Thank God the Almighty that the Christian sect has defeated the Muslim *milah*, and that they continue to be victorious.’ (end of the archbishop’s speech). However the war between the French and the people of Algiers is nothing but political affairs, and commercial feuds, quarrels and negotiations, the origin of which is prejudice and hubris! And a good saying states that *if disputes were trees they would yield nothing but grief*¹⁹

Ṭaḥṭāwī’s explanation of the French invasion of Algiers, as we can see, captured the essence of the culture of modernity where the ease of mobility, and the expansion of industrial capitalism brought with it the danger of colonialism, which had to be understood in a different manner from the religious wars of the Middle Ages. The binary opposition between the self and the other that was posited along religious terms in pre-modern times, Ṭaḥṭāwī was to explain, was no longer operative particularly in light of the emergence of a new mass culture where anonymity and individuality were to become the norm. The dialectical nature of modern urban culture became clear through his depiction of the modern city of Paris where the institutional organization of modern life and its impact on social relations was to be observed.

Paris: “The Bride of Regions and the Greatest of the Frankish Cities”

One who contemplates the condition of the sciences, literary arts, and industry during this age, in the city of Paris, will see that human knowledge has spread and reached its apex in this city. (Takhliṣ al-ibrīz, 159)

To sum up, this city is like the rest of the French cities and the countries of the Franks, filled with many sinful deeds, heretic inventions, and misleading things. And yet the city of Paris is the wisest of world cities and the abode of physical sciences. It is Athens for the French. (Talkhīṣ al-Ibrīz, 79)

As we can see from the above quotations Ṭaḥṭāwī’s fascination with Paris was a fascination with a city built on modern knowledge. His description shows two sides of the city: one side has to do with how capitalism leads to a reorganization of the social relations and the development of new systems of governance, and the other reflects the paradoxical relation between science, rationality, and religion, which emerged as points of cultural contestation in the early modern period. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s book relays multi-layered aspects of the city, showing the

¹⁹ *Talkhīs*, 200

emergence of a new public space where the individual is in the central position. Two themes are central to Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of the spatial dimensions of modernity all of which reflect the social aesthetics of modernity. First is the development of a solid structure organized by rational law and developed as a result of the expansion of capitalism which reshaped social relations. Second is the dialectical nature of the modern city, which oscillates between the secular and the religious powers, particularly since Paris that he visited was still in the grip of tensions between the Catholic Church and the fast-growing bourgeoisie that was to rebel against the king in 1830). The fast-paced changes that resulted from industrialism and the emergence of a culture of consumption, urban trends, entertainment, and leisure, led to the development of new social practices and aesthetics. In the sections that follow I will explain Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of each of these themes.

The Capitalist City, the Individual, and Social Relations

Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of Paris captures a sense of modernity in its entirety, in terms of its systems as well as the transitory experiences that result from it. His description of the city moves between two realms, a visible realm exemplified in the physical conditions of the city, and a metaphysical realm that belies the physical appearance. The Individual determines the system as much as he is determined by it, but this authority is enabled by the system of capitalism, which imposes new social values on the inhabitants of the city. In order to illustrate this it is useful to look at the manner in which Ṭaḥṭāwī describes the physical conditions of the capitalist city as the formative space of new social relations, the main unit of which is the individual.

“Paris is one of the most urbane cities in the world and one of the greatest of the Frankish cities”²⁰, wrote Ṭaḥṭāwī at the beginning of his description. Like the *flâneur* of the nineteenth century he conceived of the increasing number of the inhabitants of the city as a welcome sign of its growth. Paris' million inhabitants, who were on the increase, lived in a city that never slept and in which the trundling of carriages was heard night and day. The city itself was developing and its buildings were being constantly embellished and perfected. Ṭaḥṭāwī comments, “They[the French] are all active in developing the city by building great buildings.”²¹ This active development of the city was because the rulers exempted the inhabitants from taxes on new buildings.²² The appearance of grandeur, Ṭaḥṭāwī contended, was a result of different systems on which this capitalist city was based, the most important of which is the rule of justice, which, according to Ṭaḥṭāwī is the base of prosperity. Ṭaḥṭāwī's contention that ‘Justice is the root of prosperity’ meant to establish a direct connection between justice and the various material forces that enable its actualization. He explained that it was a result of the prevalence of an economic system that enabled the citizens of the city to exercise power over the ruler and the priests. He described the power that was given to the citizens as a result of the money economy in the context of his meticulous description of the events of 1830, showing a great fascination with the power and agency of the people in the modern city. In his explanation of the prevalence of justice he emphasized that it is enabled by the accessibility of modern tools of communication, such as newspapers, which, he contended, allow every man “to know what is in the consciousness of another” (*ilm mā fī al- nafs.*)²³ Both the economic and the technological

²⁰ *Talkhis*, .64

²¹ *Ibid*, 74

²² *Ibid*, 74

²³ *Ibid*, 103

levels of advancement shape social relations in the city, but it is the economic power of capital that enables individuals to be in control of their city. Nonetheless, the social relations among individuals in nineteenth-century Paris were quite alien to Ṭaḥṭāwī who hailed from nineteenth-century Cairo where society was still dominated by communal ties.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Talkhis al- Ibrīz* contrasts Paris to nineteenth-century Cairo as a capitalist city where the money economy permeates society and shapes social relations.²⁴ Describing the Parisians to his readers he noted:

All the people in Paris love profit and trade whether they are rich or poor, even the youngster who is not able to speak about anything apart from small things claps his hands in happiness if you give him a penny saying something that translates into Arabic as ‘ I have earned and acquired something.’²⁵

For him, this love of money appeared contradictory to their prosperous living conditions. His description of the role of money in the French society drew connection between modern economy, which is based on frugality,²⁶ and the prevalence of impersonal social relations:

The French offer charity (*al- muwasah*) only in words and deeds, not by giving money. However, they do not deny their friends what they need to borrow, but they would not give it for free unless they were sure to get a reward in return. In fact they are closer to thriftiness than to generosity, and we mentioned this in our translation of the summary of the Manners and Habits,²⁷ in the section on hospitality. In truth the reason is that generosity is peculiar to the Arabs.²⁸

Money and profit appear as significant and powerful factors that shape the interactions between the citizens of modern Paris. Such modes of interaction were alien to Ṭaḥṭāwī because the Cairo from which he departed was a city where values were largely influenced by a pre-modern economic system. For this reason the inhabitants of Cairo stood in stark contrast to the Parisians in Ṭaḥṭāwī's opinion. He noted that:

The people of Paris are very rich even a man of average wealth is much richer than the greatest merchant in Cairo. However, they do not conform to the saying of the poet who states:

There is no pride except in taking and giving.
For it is not the acquisition of money that brings prosperity and pride

²⁴ This theme in particular came to be the focus of study of one of the early modern urban sociologists, Georg Simmel, who devoted a considerable amount of his study to examining how money economy shapes social relations. For more on this theme see Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” in *Simmel on Culture*. David Frisby (Ed.) London: Sage, 1997. pp174-185.

²⁵ *Talkhis al- Ibriz*, P152

²⁶ This is best explained by the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin where he explains how frugality comes to be one of the secrets of leading a successful life.

²⁷ Reference to Depping's nineteenth-century book *Apreçu de Nation*.

²⁸ *Talkhis*, 76

On the contrary they are careful to preserve money, and they follow the ways of frugality claiming that it increases their earnings, and so they do not follow the saying of the poet which states:

A frugal man's preordained earning can never increase
Even if he dared storms in order to add to it.²⁹

Ṭaḥṭāwī's use of classical Arabic poetry reflects the fact that the social values assigned to money were very different in the context of Cairo. Thriftiness and frugality, were considered social flaws, particularly because nineteenth-century Cairo retained the air of a small town where communal ties still held sway. In contrast to this, Paris' capitalist economy stipulated the formation of new social relations based on anonymity and individualism. This is clear when Ṭaḥṭāwī describes the institutions of the city:

It is known that Paris is one of the most urbane/ inhabited cities (*a'amar*), and the most industrial and clever and that is why there are many institutions are intended for doing good. These institutions (*marestanant*) and the charitable organizations substitute for the flaws that result from the thriftiness and the stinginess of the inhabitants of the city. They are far from the generosity of the Arabs. Among their population there is no Hatem al Ṭai³⁰ or his son 'Udi. And their country did not yield one like Mu'en Ibn Zayida³¹ who is famous for his patience and generosity.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's transitional position as someone who traveled from a pre-modern, non-industrial city to Benjamin's "capital of modernity" is most obvious in his interpretation of the absence of direct charitable relations between the inhabitants of the city as a lack among the Parisians. Such a contention was based on the fact that he had come to Paris from a society that was steeped in feudal social relations, where religious law, the *shari'a*, regulated social interactions under the rubric of "doing good." The fact that the law in Paris was based on secular arbitration led to the rationalization of human relations, which were no longer governed by cosmic divine order, but rather by individual intellect. The modern system that governed the city, he stated, was a system that made room for the development of justice and had its social advantages. For example, the French citizen's love of profit made them hard working and enterprising. In turn, the money economy made a space in the society for those who were considered, "professionals of less prestigious jobs."³² He reported that the fact that such professionals could earn more than 100,000 Francs,

was a sign of the perfection of justice in that society, which is the backbone of the origins of their political system. Consequently, it never happens that the reign of an unjust king goes on for a long time, or the term or the rule of a minister whose reputation shows that he has transgressed the rules, even if he has done it once. There is no doubt that their hearts warm up to the saying to the poet:

²⁹ Ibid, 152

³⁰ Ḥatem Ibn Ṭai is a pre-Islamic poet who is said to have lived in the latter part of the 6th century and who was famous for possessing the ideals of Arab manhood, in particular generosity.

³¹ Mu'n b. Zayid Abu al- Walīd al Shaybanī (d. 768-69) was an Arab leader who governed Yemen. In literary texts he is known for his bravery in fights and his generosity.

³² Ibid, 152

The invincible oppressor king
Has no one to guide or defend him
The people ruled by an oppressive king are meadows for war³³

The capitalist system that Ṭaḥṭāwī described had a direct impact on the relationship between the king and his subjects: it led the king to be accountable to his subjects. He noted that these subjects paid their taxes, which they considered the backbone of their justice system, “willingly.”³⁴ The prosperity of the citizenry of France was the reason why the state had large annual revenue. This revenue, Ṭaḥṭāwī stated, amounted to nine hundred and eighty-nine million francs every year. The French were rich, therefore, because they knew how to save money and manage expenses. They, Ṭaḥṭāwī explained, had perfected the art of money saving to the extent that they made of it a science to be used in the management of their kingdom (an allusion to economics). According to this science, he explained they had great tricks that enabled them to acquire riches. Ṭaḥṭāwī explained how the French government did away with things that incurred unnecessary expenses. The example he cites shows a new value for human labor, which resulted from the advent of capitalist modernity in which the kings and ministers did away with the regalia that prevailed in earlier times:

A Minister for example, does not have more than 15 servants, and if he walked on the street you would not be able to distinguish him from others because he does without guards as much as he can inside and outside his house. I have heard that the relative of the king of the French, Duke d’ Orleans, who is now the ruler, in other words, the greatest of the French in status, and the richest among them, has no more than 400 servants including the soldiers, gardeners and others. And the French people even think that this is too much for him. Contemplate, then, the difference between Paris and Cairo,³⁵ where even the soldier in Cairo has several servants.³⁶

Ṭaḥṭāwī’s description indirectly articulated the liberating possibility of money economy—in particular, how it forced those who would have had absolute power in earlier times to give up some of their luxuries. The image of the French king who is limited to a certain number of employees to attend to his needs stands in stark opposition to the image of a soldier in Cairo who exercises arbitrary power over a number of others without any collective supervision. The comparison invites speculation about the concepts of public policy and the rule of law in public space. The supervision of the king by the French people shows the restraints that were imposed on executive power as a result of the development of the middle class and a capitalist economy. Although Ṭaḥṭāwī’s allusion to the impact of what Georg Simmel referred to as a “money economy”³⁷ on the propagation of democracy remains implicit, we can see that he does make the connection between the development of the middle class and restriction of the executive power

³³ Ibid,152

³⁴ Ibid,152

³⁵ Ṭaḥṭāwī uses the Arabic name Miṣr which is a synonym for Egypt and Cairo simultaneously. Such name conflation reflects the centrality of Cairo as a locus of modernity in Egyptian literary writing.

³⁶ *Talkhīṣ al- Ibrīz*, 153

³⁷ See Georg Simmel’s foundational article “The Metropolis and Mental Life” where he designates the impact of money economy on social relations and the emergence of a detached form of individualism as the mode of interactions in capitalist societies. Georg Simmel “The Metropolis and Mental Life” in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. London: Sage,1997.

of the monarchy. He elaborates on this latter point in his description of the legal system and the relationship that binds the ruler and the ruled.

In the section that he dedicated to the law that governs the city, Ṭaḥṭāwī translated several articles from French law. At the time of his writing Egypt operated according to a *sharī'ā* based legislation system. In France, however, he read the *Social Contract* together with other philosophical works and was thus exposed to the idea that the justice system was based on man-made secular rules. He chose to incorporate excerpts from French law into his book, alerting his readers that his intention in doing so was to let them know how the French had established a legal system that was thoroughly based on the use of rational arbitration:

Their intellect decreed that justice and equity are at the source of the prosperity of kingdoms and the well being of the subjects. The rulers and the subjects have accepted the rule of law, justice, and equity, and as a result their country has prospered, and their knowledge abounded...and so you never hear anyone among them complaining from injustice: truly justice is the basis for prosperity.³⁸

Ṭaḥṭāwī saw no contradiction between the rationalist spirit of the modern legal system and that of the Islamic *sharī'a*, and in fact, in his later work he would argue that the theory of natural rights is clearly the same as the *sharī'a*. However modern law, according to Ṭaḥṭāwī, was implemented to serve an individualist spirit making it suitable for the regulation of life in the capitalist city. The novelty of this legal arrangement led Ṭaḥṭāwī to analyze the meaning of certain articles of French law. For example, in his explanation of the first clause in the French charter, which decrees that “All the French people are equal before the law” Ṭaḥṭāwī explained that it meant that law has sovereignty over kings as well as over the public. For him the first clause was proof that the French had reached the apex of justice.³⁹ He saw the law as a source of empowerment for the individual.⁴⁰ This opinion was shaped by his experience in witnessing the events of 1830, which represented a victory of the power of rational judgment over the religious establishment (the Catholic Church in France) and the executive power (King Charles X). In depicting 1830, Ṭaḥṭāwī presented to his readers for the first time the image of a king who was overpowered by his subjects because he disobeyed the law by imposing his will over that of the majority of his subjects. Through this narrative, Ṭaḥṭāwī conveyed to Arab readers the potential of modern law based on individual rights, as well as the potential of the modern city, to be the source of an overpowering collective action.

According to the Egyptian critic Fathī Radwān, Ṭaḥṭāwī gave an elaborate account of the mistakes the king had made when he attempted to change the laws pertaining to freedom of expression, publication, and journalism without taking the consent of the assembly. When the king understood that he had assaulted freedom of opinion and that the people might rise in response, he turned for support from army officers who were known as the enemies of liberalism. Ṭaḥṭāwī reported the events that unfolded in a dramatic tone:

...and spirits arose against their king because they believed that he had called for war. In effect when I passed by any street or alley I heard Arms! Arms! Long live the constitution! And Down with the King. And since that time bloodshed

³⁸ *Talkhīs*, 95

³⁹ *Talkhīs*, 102

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

abounded and the subjects took to arms from the army either through buying them or by stealing them.⁴¹

As Raḍwān noted, Ṭaḥṭāwī showed his readers how the king of France was actually deposed as a result of the will of the people. He showed his readers how those who are known as the scum of the streets and the riff- raff of the capitol participated in an effective manner in deposing the king and reforming the constitution by purging it from all the rules that restrain the freedom of the people, and providing for the election of someone who appealed to the people as a representative in the assembly.⁴² Ṭaḥṭāwī thus showed how the individual had a new role in the public matters, one which was both inscribed in and protected by the law.

The potential power of the individual was ensured by the article of the constitution which stated that, “every French citizen who is qualified could occupy any official post regardless of his background.” This inspired Ṭaḥṭāwī to expatiate on the liberating power of modern law. When he explained this clause to his readers he stressed the fact that it was responsible for motivating the French to learn more. It is because of the encouragement to learn more, that the French urbanity (*tamaddun*) did not stagnate as in other parts of the world where the professions and crafts are inherited within the family. Ṭaḥṭāwī gave an example of this hereditary professional system in India, China, and Egypt where the Copts, in earlier times, would inherit the crafts of their fathers. Contrary to the praise of this system was some historians who claimed that it was responsible for the perfections of crafts, and that the sons were naturally inclined to desire to do whatever their fathers were doing, Ṭaḥṭāwī argued that not every individual was inclined to learn his father’s profession. If the young child were forced to learn the trade of his father without wanting to he was likely to fail, whereas he would succeed if he learned another. This example is particularly interesting because it shows how capitalist modernity permeated all social relations, including family relations. In this instance, for example, children were no longer compelled to follow in their father’s paths. Capitalism enabled the individual to materialize as a unit of operation in the society.

Contrary to the view of modernity, which deemed the isolation of the individual in the modern capitalist system as a form of weakening which makes one vulnerable to what Foucault calls “systems of power”, Ṭaḥṭāwī’s account reflects his experience of early modern capitalist society as a space that empowers the individual connecting him socially through modern tools of communication. In the nineteenth-century, it was mainly newspapers that enabled the revolutionary role of the individual in the public space.⁴³ Access to this new means of communication was also protected by the law: “No one in France should be prevented from stating his opinion, writing it and publishing it unless it was a breach of the law, in which case they will be taken from the public.” Ṭaḥṭāwī deemed this as encouragement to each individual to speak his mind as long as it did not threaten the existence of another human being. Through this, “one would know what was on his fellow citizen’s mind.”⁴⁴ In explaining this article of the constitution he saw the function of the newspaper as one that uncovers a citizen’s innermost

⁴¹ *Talkhīṣ al- Ibrīz*, cit in ed. Raḍwan, Faḥḥī, *Dawr al-‘ama’em fī Miṣr*. Cairo al- Zahraa li’l- nashr al- ‘arabī,1986.

p.43

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ For a detailed account of the transformation of the public sphere in Europe see *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991.

⁴⁴ *Talkhīṣ*,.104

thoughts, and enables one to speak one's mind openly and publicly. Such a forceful description, no doubt, relays to the reader the powerful impact of the new tools of communication as Ṭaḥṭāwī saw it. Newspapers were the source from which one could know the latest news, whether inside the kingdom or outside it. Even though newspapers might contain endless lies, he warned his reader, it nevertheless produced news that enticed one to acquire knowledge, in particular when it contained new scientific topics or useful alerts and advice. Another useful function of the newspaper is the publication of the deeds of the members of society: if a man does something great or despicable, journalists write about it in order for it to be known to particular groups as well as to the public. They do so, he explained, in order to encourage those who do good deeds, and to redress those who do malicious actions. By publishing their stories without alteration, newspapers served as tools to make heard the voices of those who were subjected to injustice. Publicity would help in raising the case to the justice system, which would then apply the laws and judge it. Such Judgment would be "a lesson to those who possess the power of reason."⁴⁵

Ṭaḥṭāwī's exaltation of the new tools of technology and communication reflects a philosophical perception of the "self" (*al-nafs*) and the public space. His use of the word "self" (*al-nafs*) shows the formulation of a new sense of moral engagement with the public sphere. It reflects that a person's innermost thoughts and feelings could be made heard through the means of publicity, as long as one does so in line with the ethos of the law. In line with the freedom accorded the individual in the modern city Ṭaḥṭāwī wrote an account of nineteenth-century Paris not as "the abode of blasphemy and obstinacy", as it was referred to by his nineteenth-century contemporaries but as a city that represented the promise of an evolving modernity where industrialization, capitalism, and technology imposed new aesthetics of social perception and gave rise to new forms of social and political organization. In the context of this process, new dilemmas emerged in relation to social perceptions, particularly in regards to the relationship between the old institution of the church and the new organizational policies of the modern city. This will be the theme of the next section of this chapter.

The City of Science, knowledge and Rationality:

*One who contemplates the condition of the sciences, literary arts, and industry during this age, in the city of Paris, will see that human knowledge has spread and reached its apex in this city.*⁴⁶

Paris appeared to Ṭaḥṭāwī as the byproduct of a rational order of empirical knowledge that facilitated living conditions in the capitalist city described earlier. This modern city, the product of scientific knowledge, differed from the pre-industrial city in many ways: it was a city based on specialization of knowledge, where the scholars of the city were no longer the men of religion, as was the case in Cairo. Ṭaḥṭāwī points to his readers: "do not be misled to think that the scholars of France are the priests! Those are scholars of religion only, but there might be a priest who is a scholar as well."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid, 104

⁴⁶ Ibid, 159

⁴⁷ Ibid, 161

The new scholars, he argued, surpassed even the ancient scholars, and the French scholars in particular, he noted, were cleverer than all the other Frankish scholars.⁴⁸ Scientists in Paris, he told his readers, devoted their time to mastering one discipline, in order to be able to discover many new things, and add useful information that was not known earlier. He articulated to his readers the meaning of the modern scholar: not every teacher is a scholar, for the latter has to acquire a number of qualities; he must acquire certain degrees, and is not called a scholar except after meeting certain requirements.⁴⁹ The scholars as they are known to the French, he explained, are those who have knowledge of rational sciences. These scholars know only the slightest information about Christianity. “And so in France when it is said that someone is a scholar it does not mean that he knows his religion, but that he knows other sciences.”⁵⁰ A scholar’s erudition was no longer measured by reputation and fame, but rather was proven through his success on several exams. Learning was the business of a number of institutions such as the *académie*, *conseil* and the *institut*.

In Egypt, if one wanted to locate the equivalent of the French academy, it was to be found at al- Azhar mosque. However, there was a major difference between the ‘*académie*’ in France and that of Egypt, and that is mainly the specialization of knowledge and the separation between the scientific fields of knowledge and religious knowledge. In reference to the Arab-Islamic world he noted that they were devoid from knowledge of the [empirical] sciences. In Cairo, the Azhar, and the Ummayyad mosque in the Levant, and Zayytouna in Tunis, the Qarawīn in Fez, and the schools of Bukhara were all full of ‘*ulum naqliyya* (transmitted sciences), which are the Islamic sciences that contributed to the formulation of the legal code in the Islamic countries. But this was not because the Muslims were averse to knowledge, but rather because the rulers had stopped encouraging the acquisition of knowledge.

However, in spite of his admiration of the codification of knowledge according to the empirical system that was prevalent in France, Ṭaḥṭāwī rejected the philosophical beliefs that resulted from this system, in particular the rationalist stance on the status of the prophets:

One of their bad beliefs is their saying that the minds of their philosophers and physicists are greater and smarter than the minds of the prophets. They also have many detestable beliefs such as the denial of the concept of predestination by some.⁵¹

For Ṭaḥṭāwī, modern philosophical beliefs lay “outside the rational laws of other nations (*umam*).”⁵² But the fact that, “These philosophical beliefs are documented, and supported makes it appear as though they are honest and valid.”⁵³ Ṭaḥṭāwī’s skepticism here is quite obvious and it shows him to be a man in a perplexing situation where scientific discoveries had infiltrated philosophical arguments leading to a departure with the previous theories of the universe and

⁴⁸ Ibid, 159

⁴⁹ Ibid, 161

⁵⁰ Ibid, 161

⁵¹ Ibid, 79

⁵² Ibid, 159

⁵³ Ibid, 159

diminishing the role of God in it.⁵⁴ He shied away from the arguments that were made especially in the field of philosophy. In these fields he said “they have misleading contrived tales (*ḥashawat ḍalalya*) that are not in line with all divine revelations (*Sa’er al – adyan al-Samawyya*). Ṭaḥṭāwī’s concern here regards how modern rationalist thinking affected all monotheistic religions, and not only a concern for Islam. He warned his readers that the arguments that the French philosophers used to oppose the divine books were logical to a degree that made it difficult for one to refute them. He deemed philosophy as a realm where misleading arguments were put together, and he believed that it should be studied only by one who has studied the *Qur’an* and the *Sunna* (the laws of the prophet). Only one who had studied these two sources could undertake arguments in philosophy, otherwise his knowledge would be defeated by their arguments. In fact Ṭaḥṭāwī’s perplexed position is best summed up in a couplet that he wrote about Paris:

Is there anywhere like Paris where
The suns of knowledge never set
And where the nights of atheism have no morning?
I agree with you, this is something amazing⁵⁵

This rather conservative position, however, accorded with Ṭaḥṭāwī’s time. He was, as John Livingston argues, a transitional figure who remained rooted in his Islamic upbringing.⁵⁶ In later years, we will see that when a class of civil-educated intellectuals such as Ahmed Salama Musa, Aḥmad Lutfi al- Sayyid, Shiblī Shumayl, among others, matures, the philosophical underpinnings of scientific discoveries will be met with enthusiasm in the urban culture of the Arab world- the center of which will be Cairo well into the twentieth century. But at the time of Ṭaḥṭāwī’s life it was too drastic a transition to accept the rejection of all religious authority all at once. This had taken two centuries to develop in Europe and was not entirely accomplished in France itself at the time of Ṭaḥṭāwī’s stay, as evidenced by the events of 1830. Another important point to note in relation to Ṭaḥṭāwī’s position is the fact that the nature of the separation between the church and the state in France was based on a rejection of the authority of the Catholic Church in the public sphere.

The French, he told his readers, still hold that the Pope of Rome is the greatest of the Christians and the head of their religion. Most of the French are Catholics, he noted, but there are also Protestants and many Jews who settled in Paris. The Parisians, he explained, are nominally Christian. They are possessors of a revealed book (meaning a religion that depends on divine revelation), but they do not pay attention to the taboos or the duties enjoined by their religion. During the days of fasting only a few people, such as the priests and the house of the king who was forced to abdicate (a reference to the Bourbons) stop eating meat.⁵⁷

Ṭaḥṭāwī’ explained that the Parisians scoffed at religiosity as a result of their adoption of rationalist thinking that rejected religious rituals. For example, the Parisians refused to practice fasting because they could not understand the wisdom of not eating meat; such laws, they

⁵⁴ For more on Ṭaḥṭāwī’s stance on scientific knowledge see John Livingston’s “ Western Science and Educational reform in that thought of Shaykh Rif’a al- Tahtawi’ *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Nov.96, vol.28, no.4 p.543.

⁵⁵ *Talkhiṣ al- Ibrīz*, 160

⁵⁶ *Ibid* 146

⁵⁷ *Ibid*,155

contended are “inventions and allusions.”⁵⁸ In the modern city the, “priests are not glorified except in the churches by those who go to them. They are not sought after at all, it is as if they were the enemies of the light and knowledge.”⁵⁹ When it came to religion, he pointed out, all the countries of the Franks resembled Paris.⁶⁰

Ṭaḥṭāwī’s perceptive comment on the diminishing importance of religion in public life was confirmed by the Orientalist scholar, de Sacy, who read the manuscript and commented on it saying:

Your saying that the French do not have a religion at all, and that they are only nominally Christian, is quite perceptive. Yes, there are many of the French in particular the inhabitants of Paris, who are nothing but nominally Christian. They do not believe the precepts of their religion, and they do not practice Christian rituals. In fact their deeds follow nothing but their whims. Worldly affairs keep them busy from working for the afterlife. You see them, for the duration of their lives, caring for nothing but earning money in whichever manner. And when one of them is about to die s/he dies like a beast. But there are others who follow the religion of their ancestors, and believe in God, the Day of Judgment, and doing Good. Countless number of men and women, from the commoners and the nobles, even from among the learned scientists and literate are believers. But they differ in the levels of their piety. Some of them behave like the commoners and go to sites of pleasure such as the balls and the theatre, and the musical gatherings, while others are ascetics who give up all worldly desires, and these are fewer in number. And if you visit our churches during our great feasts you will discover that what I am telling you is right.⁶¹

Notably, de Sacy was a devout Catholic who had supported the Bourbons during the events of 1830. And Ṭaḥṭāwī rightly ascribed his commentary to his faith, saying that his motive in defending his religion was that he was a practicing Christian, but insisting that he was among the minority of the French.⁶² It seemed that the role of religion in urban life was diminishing because it contradicted the spirit of rationalism that ruled the city. Both the vow of celibacy and the confession appeared particularly aberrant in the context of modern Paris because they gave direct power to the clergy over the public:

The priest stays in the church seated on a chair called the confessional chair, and those who want to be pardoned for their sins go to the confessional chair which is kept behind a door and a barrier resembling a net separating the priest from the person. The person sits and confesses his sins to the priest, and asks for his forgiveness, and the priest grants it to him. It is known among them that the majority of those who go to the church or those who confess are women and children.⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid, 156

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

The place and function of religion in the city stands in stark contrast to Ṭaḥṭāwī's earlier descriptions of the city as the domain of rationality and the product of the application of the rules of science which reject whatever cannot be proven. For him, as a Muslim, the priest's mediation in any individual's affairs was not justifiable, and so it seemed to him that the public's rejection of the Catholic clergy was in line with reason, very much as the rejection of the ritualistic aspect of religion. The processions of the priests on the day of Corpus Christi roused his surprise. He described the procession in detail, explaining how the priests put on embroidered attire, and toured around the city holding 'le bon dieu' which appeared to him as heresy. He reacted in disbelief to the idea that 'the flesh of God' may be present in the basket of food [the host], which the priest held in his hands. He explained to his readers that it was Jesus who was meant by the "*bon dieu*." But he added that the French people knew that such "things were part of the madness which denigrated their country and contributed to the degeneration of the minds of the people."⁶⁴ Explaining why they participated in such processions, he claimed that they did so because the earlier royal family used to encourage the priests to perform these rituals. Based on this we understand that Ṭaḥṭāwī rejected the ritualistic aspect of religion that did not comply with the rationalist spirit of the modern legal system. For him the mediation of the church in the affairs of the subjects was not acceptable, since modern law gave absolute freedom to the individual. This freedom was undermined by the interference of the clergy in the affairs of the modern individual. In Islam there was no such threat of intervention because there was no clergy to intervene between the worshipper and God. However it remained to be argued in the Islamic context that the *shari'a* alone was not sufficient as a law to regulate the legal interactions among people from various religious and national backgrounds.

Ṭaḥṭāwī's views on religion in the modern city should be read in conjunction with the differences between the institutional structure of Catholicism and Islam. For him Catholicism appeared to contradict the rationalist spirit of the modern city, which he applauded and celebrated. In order to account for this direct intervention, the institutions of modernity seem to have emerged to create a new public sphere in Paris that appeared starkly different from that which prevailed in Cairo. Paris was already a capitalist city where money economy had a visible impact on the social relations and where the institutions of the city, which Ṭaḥṭāwī interpreted as a product of a will to "do good" had already replaced direct human interactions. The anonymous isolated individual, the unit of the modern city was already and operative unit in the modern city. The presence of institutions to serve individuals to Ṭaḥṭāwī as an empowering aspect particularly to help those in distress such as in:

cases when one is compelled to live on something other than his earnings, such as begging , one finds lodgings that have been constructed for purposes of doing good (charity) and so one is not compelled to beg others.⁶⁵

In such cases the institutional mediation saved the individual from the humiliation of having to ask for help from others. Ṭaḥṭāwī's reading of the institutional foundation of the city as a part of a will to "do good," however, reflected his world vision, which depended on direct human relations. As a result, Ṭaḥṭāwī contended that doing good in the city of Paris was more abundant when it concerned the 'collective whole' but not when it came to the will of each individual separately. In such instances, Ṭaḥṭāwī noted, "a patient may collapse out of hunger on

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid, 145

his way to the charitable (public) hospital, and people might curse a beggar and let him go disappointed claiming that begging should never happen, because if the beggar was capable of working he needn't beg, and if he could not work, he should seek help at the *maristanat* (the institutions).^{66,}

In spite of the abstraction of human relations, which resulted from the institutional organization of social life in modern Paris, the city's legal foundation and its strong financial and institutional infrastructure stipulated different social interactions. This was very different from Cairo, where the city was emerging from the rule of warring Ottoman appointed rulers,⁶⁷ where there were no institutions except for the charitable Islamic institutions. Although we do not get a clear image of Egyptian society in *Talkhīs al-ibrīz*, such as we are given in Ṭaḥṭāwī's later work *Manāhij al-albab a-l miṣryah fī mabahij al-adāb al-aṣryya* (*Pathways of Modern Egyptian Minds in the Delights of Modern Manners*), we can contend that at this early stage Ṭaḥṭāwī saw a liberating potential in the modern city in the public sphere it offered for the development of the individual. A modern life organized around daily interactions in which human relations were submitted to a rational law rather than a divine law gave space to the individual to develop beyond the constraining role inscribed by a divine will. This, in turn, made possible cultural crossings that were not permissible in earlier times and made Paris a tolerant metropolis that welcomed strangers from different backgrounds.

Religious difference, thus, was no longer to be considered the major category that distinguished between the French and the Egyptians; in fact Ṭaḥṭāwī exaggeratedly contended that the French were closer to Arabs than the Ottomans when it came to the manner in which they guarded their social honor. Ṭaḥṭāwī's depiction of the French focused on articulating culture through daily interactions and his contention that French habits were shaped by their environment. It was through this description that Ṭaḥṭāwī managed to articulate a humanist cultural ethos. From that moment onward, understanding the Parisians was to be done in relation to their city and the practices that such a city allowed. In the next section I examine Ṭaḥṭāwī's emphasis on daily practices as an important category in understanding culture.

The Scope of the Urban Imaginary of Modernity: Culture as a Daily Practice:

Prior to Ṭaḥṭāwī's representation of French culture, the French were known to the Egyptians through Napoleon's encounter. The military nature of that encounter had a significant impact on the ambivalent manner in which Arab historians commented on the French. For example, the eighteenth-century Egyptian historian al-Sharqāwī who commented on the French expedition, albeit in the most terse manner, gave us a mixed image of them:

The true condition of the French who came to Egypt is that they are a group of liberal/ licentious (*Ibaḥiya*), sectarian (*Ta'efiyah*) philosophers known as Catholic Christians. They nominally follow the precepts of Jesus, peace be upon him, they deny resurrection and the Day of Judgment and that the prophets were

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ The school of history called *al-Ajnad*, that is; the soldiers left us a somewhat modest account of these wars between the feudal war lords. The historian 'Abdallah al-'Azabawī contends that this school did not have a designated research method, and that their style of writing was closer to folk tales than formal scholarly productions. For more on this see 'Abdallah, al-'Azabawī, *al-Fikr al-Miṣri fī al-Qarn al-Tahmen 'ashr bayna al-Jumūd wa al-Tajdīd*. Cairo: Dar al-shorūq, 2006.PP.. 112 -139

divinely sent. They attest that there is only one God but through rational justification.⁶⁸

Such a description, the contemporary Egyptian historian ‘Azabawī notes, where the historian views the French both as Catholics and yet assigns to them denial of the Day of Judgment and Resurrection, reflects the confusion that surrounded the perception of the French.⁶⁹ However, the historian al-Sharqāwī- (and Ṭahtāwī was to follow in his footsteps)- showed his admiration of the French for upholding rationality:

They use the intellect in arbitrating and give it reign, and they reach decrees through reason and call it law (*shari’a*). They claim that Mohammed, Jesus, and Moses were rationalists and that the laws (*Shar’*) attributed to them were laws that they put down rationally in accordance with the spirit of times in which they lived.⁷⁰

In Sharqāwī’s description, the French were deemed rationalists although their rationality seemed aberrant to the historian whose education was mostly religious and who believed in the divinity of religion not in its historicity.⁷¹ This was the main reason behind the mixed views of the French in the historiography of the 18th century, among whom al-Jabartī’s account is perhaps the most famous. al-Jabartī wrote three books on the topic:

- 1) History of the French in Egypt (1213H-1216H)
- 2) The Glorious Appearance of the Disappearance of the French State
- 3) The wondrous Traces of Biographies and Reports.

The images of the French relayed to the readers in the context of these three books varied according to the purpose for which the book was written. For example, the first book, which is believed to be a personal memoir and not a history book proper,⁷² criticized the French as much as it criticized the *mamlūk* rulers of Egypt for escaping at the time of the French attack. The second book, which concerns us here for its scathing criticism of the French, was written as a gift to the Ottoman ruler Yūssef Diya’ Pasha after the defeat of the French troops.⁷³ In that book al-Jabartī depicted anything French as detestable, and it is in the context of this book that the French were depicted as mostly immoral, lacking in chivalrous qualities such as manhood, and jealousy over their women who were deemed loose. This last point is one of the most outstanding themes when it comes to cultural representation of the “Other”. Whereas in our contemporary ‘Western’ society, images of veiled women abound as a justification for the violence committed in the name of “liberating” them. In 19th century Egypt it was the opposite

⁶⁸ Ibid, 143.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Some Arab historians contend that the violent punishment with which the rationalist arguments were met (such as repressing the Mu’tazilites argument about the createdness of the *Qur’an*) was responsible for the stagnation of intellectual thinking from the beginning of the 10th century until the 18th century. Al-‘Azabawī, ‘Abdallah. *Tarīkh Al- Fikr al- Miṣrī fī al- Qarn al-Tahmin ‘Ashr bayna al- Jumūd wa al- Tajdīd*, p. 181 Also see Samir Amin’s Eurocentricism, in particular the section on the Mu’tazilites.

⁷² ‘Azabawī contends that the absence of the traditional introduction proves that al-Jabartī wrote the manuscript for himself only ., p. 155

⁷³ ‘Azabawī, ‘Abdalla, *Tarīkh al- Fikr al- Miṣrī fī al- Qarn al-Tahmin ‘Ashr bayna al-Jumūd wa al- Tajdīd*. Cairo: dar al- shorūq, 2006. P.156

image of an unveiled woman that was used to vilify the “Other” and to boast of moral superiority.

The appearance of French women in the public space in late eighteenth-century Cairo was one of the controversial practices that were held against the French. Historians such as al-Jabartī criticized French soldiers for taking their women to cafés. Such an act was reprehensible in the context of Egypt because cafes were known as the gathering spots for the riffraff. Against this notion, Ṭaḥṭāwī attempted to dismantle these images by reporting how the moral connotations of social practices differed from one city to another. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s elaborate description of place in the context of Marseilles or Paris introduced to his readers the new notion of public space, where money economy played a crucial role in determining its value. Public places and places of social events came to be distinguished according to the capital invested in them. For example, Ṭaḥṭāwī explained to his readers that in Paris there were different kinds of cafés, some for the rich and some for the poor. He described a grand café decorated with mirrors in order to impart the impressions of grandeur unto his readers. The cleanness of the place and the order associated with it implicitly alluded to the reasons why it was plausible that women would frequent such a place. Cafés in Paris, he explained to his readers, were places for people to socialize, read the newspapers, or engage in card games by way of diversion. Unlike cafés in Cairo, which were hangouts for the riffraff and were unhealthy spots for smoking hashish, there was nothing reprehensible about café culture in Paris. For this reason the fact that women were seen there was not to be taken as a sign of moral laxity on the part of the French. Rather, it should be understood as part of a culture that revolved around new public sphere.

At the moment in which Ṭaḥṭāwī was writing, women were the objects of cultural curiosity on either side of the Mediterranean. In the context of Europe, we know that the veiled women of the Ottoman Empire haunted the imagination of many authors such as de Nerval and Flaubert. In the Egyptian context the unveiled women who accompanied the French Expedition came to be the object of curiosity for the Egyptians and were even deemed immoral by some authors like al-Jabartī.⁷⁴ In very much the same manner as the discourses on veiled women are used to vilify another culture in today’s modern world, the unveiled condition of the French women was used as an exclusionary discourse to denigrate the “Other.” However, Ṭaḥṭāwī’s description of Parisian women was in line with urban modernity and the development of a new concept of commercialized leisure and the public space. In the conclusion to his book he noted:

Since all the people ask about the condition of women in the Frankish societies, I have unveiled their condition. To state it briefly it is as follows:
Confusion about women’s chastity has nothing to do with their being unveiled or veiled, but in fact this originates in good upbringing, and their getting used to loving one man above all others. [It has to do with] making this love particular to one above all others, and the presence of harmony among the couple. Experience has shown that chastity dominates the hearts of women from the middle class

⁷⁴ Al-Jabarti criticized the French for allowing their women to accompany them to the cafes because he deemed this a lack of manhood and chivalry. However as ‘Azabawī has noted in his book on Egyptian intellectual thought in the 18th century, Al-Jabarti’s book was dedicated to the Ottoman ruler who was appointed after the Expedition, so there could be a chance that his critical views of the French were somewhat exaggerated in order to please his patron.

more than it does among the women of the upper class and the riffraff. Women of these two classes are usually objects of suspicion, and are usually accusable.⁷⁵

Whereas earlier views of French women were indiscriminate in their condemnation of Parisian women, Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of their condition parted ways with generalizations and emphasized specificity. In line with his perception of the importance of space in shaping the aesthetics of modern society, Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of Parisian culture parted ways with the rhetoric of morality that was characteristic of pre-modern times and took to articulating the aesthetics of modern life in accordance with the material reality that shaped it.

Urban Culture of Knowledge, Vision, Movement and Change:

Ṭaḥṭāwī described the Parisians as participants in a fast-paced urban culture that revolved around knowledge, vision, movement and change. The Parisians are depicted as people who move freely within the boundaries of a new space that depends on knowledge:

They [the Parisians] are not prisoners of tradition, indeed they like to know the origin of anything and seek proofs for it, to the extent that their commoners know how to read and write, and they can argue with others about difficult matters, each person according to his capacity. The commoners in this country are not like cattle as is the case with the commoners of most barbarous countries. All sciences, arts, and industries are written in books, even the humble industries. As a result the worker needs to know how to read and write in order to profess his industry. And each craftsman likes to invent something unprecedented or to perfect something that was invented earlier. Their incentive in doing this, besides earning money, is their vanity and love of fame and their desire to be mentioned constantly.⁷⁶

Notably the first thing that enables Parisians the freedom to move between traditions is their access to knowledge and their subsequent ability to exercise rational arbitration. This ability is the result of a number of factors: first, the ease of their language, which enables them to engage with political matters and develop their own views about it. Knowledge protects the individual from falling victim to an arbitrary system of power. Second, there is the role of money in culture, which acts as an incentive to the workers in order to be innovative in their work. Workers in this system are so individualistic as to appear to Ṭaḥṭāwī quite vain. Ṭaḥṭāwī's image of the Parisians is an image of a people who live in a dynamic system where no one is stuck in a certain preconceived role. They are clever and agile and also moody, switching between happiness and sadness, seriousness and humor within a short span of time so that in one day a person may commit a series of contradictory actions.⁷⁷ However, they waver and change only when it comes to unimportant affairs; when it comes to serious matters such as politics, their opinions do not change. Each one keeps to his convictions and beliefs and supports it for as long as he lives. Similarly they love their home country in spite of the fact that they like to travel. They might spend years roaming between the East and the West and endure hardships for something that might be of use to their country. Such an attitude, Ṭaḥṭāwī contends, is in line with the Arab poet's saying, which states:

⁷⁵ *Talkhiṣ*, 258

⁷⁶ *Ibid*,75.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*,76

All abodes and countries are dear to me
Yet none like my home and country.⁷⁸

Such an image of the Parisians portrays them as people whose movement between traditions and cultures is enabled only through their solid belonging to a secure homeland. The idea of belonging to a homeland and a certain political party within this place appears to enable the French to discover other things and to partake in the changeable culture of urban modernity with the knowledge that one's place in the world is secure. It is according to this ethos that Ṭaḥṭāwī developed a pioneering opinion that stated that “love of one's Homeland is a strand of belief,” thus replacing the medieval value system which emphasized religious allegiance and belonging to a *'milah'* (religious group) by a modern nationalist allegiance. Such a solid allegiance to a national identity reduced the anxiety associated with change which is a characteristic of a visual urban culture where trends and visual appearances appeared to Ṭaḥṭāwī contrasted the fixity of their political identity:

in that vein[appearance] there is no stability at all, and they have not chosen one way to dress yet, but this does not mean that they change their attire completely, it only means that they wear different things. They would not, for example, stop wearing a hat and they would not exchange it by a turban. But they would wear a certain style of hats once, and then after some time take on a new style.⁷⁹

Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of the manner in which clothes and fashion emerged as important signs of identity captured the image of a global modernity that is woven around visual symbols of identity and the emphasis on the “always new” of capitalist economies. In Ṭaḥṭāwī's juxtaposition of the hat to the turban which signified status in pre-industrial *Mamlūk* Cairo, there is an early anticipation of cultural conflation between appearance and political identity which continues to riddle urban culture of today. Ṭaḥṭāwī's reference to the turban as a sign of identity was not random, for it had roots in the history of fashion in pre-industrial Cairo where the turban was a symbol of status.⁸⁰ Such a symbol, established him as a stranger in the Parisian urban landscape and made him the object of curiosity to the Parisians:

one of their traits is the love of strangers and the desire to live closely with them, in particular if the stranger adorns himself with precious clothes. In doing so they are driven by their desire to enquire after the conditions of other countries and the habits and customs of its people. This, in turn, ensures that they attain their goals whether they stay at home or travel.⁸¹

Ṭaḥṭāwī's reference to “precious clothes” as a marker of identity is very important in that it shows how appearance came to play an important role in the urban landscape, which is

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Jamal al- Ghiṭānī mentions in his *Malamiḥ al Qahira fī mi'at 'amm* that the size of the turban was worn in proportion to the status of the individual-the bigger the status the bigger the turban. Jamal al- Ghiṭānī, *Malamiḥ al-Qahira fī Mi'at Sana*, Cairo: Kitab al- Hilal, 1983. PP.32- 41

⁸¹ *Talkhīṣ*, 76

necessarily visual.⁸² The curiosity of the Parisians, although a sign of a lively interactive attitude toward people from a different culture, is not devoid of materialistic agenda such as benefiting their homeland. It caused anxiety for Egyptian travelers who felt quite conspicuous because of the attention of urban crowds, as we will see in the next chapter when I examine ‘Alī Mubarak’s *‘Alam al- Dīn*. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s description of this anxiety foreshadowed the manner in which dress codes began a significant role in urban modernity. This is still the case in particular when it comes to women’s clothes; for example, the “Foulard affair” is a case in point where the headscarf of three young teenagers caused a controversy over modernity, secularism and the compatibility between Islam and European culture.⁸³ Indeed, fashion and clothes, the visible signs of industrial modernity, were to develop into means of exclusion. At an early stage in the history of industrial modernity, they served as signs that distinguished Europeans from non-Europeans, and they made the figure of the sheikh stand out in the terrain of the modern city. They continue to operate as means of inclusion and exclusion in understanding culture. It is, perhaps, for this reason that the figure of the *flâneur* in his top hat and coat that was chosen as the invisible eye of the crowd, and the poet of high modernity who could narrate the urban experiences of Paris. By contrast, Ṭaḥṭāwī’s turbaned appearance made him the object of curiosity of the Parisians. His ability to narrate the experiences of the modern city has thus far been excluded from the canon of urban literature where a figure such as the *flâneur* has occupied a central position in cultural representation. However, the global nature of urban modernity which is predicated by the use of technology, the frequency of movement, encounter, the circulation of images, and urban trends necessitates that the literary canon incorporate narratives of modernity from non-European contexts. As we have seen through Ṭaḥṭāwī’s account of the nineteenth-century metropolis, the experience of urban modernity heralded a wide range of social transformations that resulted from the expansion of industrial capitalism. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s experience as a sheikh who was transformed into an intellectual *flâneur* as he experienced the space of modernity reflects the impact of industrial capitalist modernity on representations of culture. It was in light of a new material reality that the sheikh’s social role was transformed from one limited to preaching and instructing at the mosque of al-Azhar to being an intellectual, and an interpreter whose public influence increased with the introduction of the printing press and the emergence of circulation as a powerful force in shaping social aesthetics. The complex social structure that resulted from the introduction of new industrial modes of organization became a central concern for intellectuals who sought to explicate the experience of urban modernity through literary writing. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s narrative account was a trend setter in the context of Egypt and the Arab world in that it captured the emergence of a secular geography predicated on capitalism and scramble for resources. Through the centralization of Paris as the main protagonist of his book, he pointed to the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the formation of a culture of anonymity where the individual was to become part of a mass society, and where technology promised the transformation of daily experiences. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s description of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity) in the context of Paris heralded the beginning of a dialectical modernity polarized between the sacred and the mundane in its juxtaposition between religion and scientific knowledge. It was this dialectical nature of urban culture that led to the centrality of the figure of the sheikh to accounts of urban modernity in nineteenth century Egypt. The following chapter

⁸² In his 1938 article ‘*Urbanism as a Way of Life*’ the urban sociologist Louis Wirth elaborated the manner in which visual cognition came to play a central role in urban life, and how it came to be indispensable for understanding cultural interactions. Wirth, Louis. “Urbanism as a Way of Life” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1938.

⁸³ For more on this see Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002.

examines the first attempt at writing a novel about the experience of the figure of the sheikh in global urban modernity.

Chapter 2

'Ali Mubārak's 'Alam al- Dīn: The sheikh and the Culture of al-tamaddun. 'Alam al- Dīn and the rhetoric of al-tammaddun

Mubārak's novel *'Alam al- Dīn* was published in 1882, that is, forty- eight years after Tahtāwī's *Talkhīs al- Ibrīz* was published. Although its official publication date in 1882 coincides with the British invasion of Egypt, *nahḍa* historians Samīr Ḥemdan and Muḥammad 'Imara contend that *'Alam al-Dīn* must have been written in the fifties or sixties of the nineteenth –century.¹ The novel fictionalizes a trip of an Egyptian sheikh to Europe, thus heralding the figure of the sheikh as the central narrator of the urban experience in nineteenth century Egypt. *'Alam al- Dīn* directly positions itself² as a canonical continuation of Tahtāwī's earlier book *Talkhīs al- Ibrīz*. However, it claims to be a more accurate representation of nineteenth-century Paris. Arguably, however, Mubārak's contention about his novel's truthfulness to the representation of Paris should be taken with relative caution because it lacks historical accuracy as it overlooks the transformative impact of capitalist development³ on Paris of nineteenth century.⁴ Mubārak witnessed the *Haussmanization* of Paris where the planner built wide boulevards in order to open the city to the circulation of commodities and human traffic, and also to disperse the crowds.⁵ Later, the impact of this urban philosophy was to appear in 'Ali Mubārak's replication of the architectural design of *Rue Muhammad 'Ali Pasha* in Cairo, which he built after the style of *Rue de Rivoli* in Paris.⁶ It is true that Mubārak did witness a different Paris from the one that Tahtāwī described; his Paris was not the Paris of the arcades where *flânerie* flourished. Rather it was the Paris of the department stores, which he describes with awe, and which, as Benjamin later contended, led to the eclipse of the culture of *flânerie*.⁷ Such eclipse in the culture of artistic *flânerie* is depicted in Mubārak's novel in the sheikh's complete dependence for movement on his employer, the nameless British Orientalist, to whom I refer to as BO to avoid redundancy. However, aesthetically the novel continues the practice of *flânerie* in its attempt to relay to the readers the visual culture of urban modernity and its transformative impact on the sheikh's perception of the modern urban world.

¹ Abū Ḥemdan, Samīr. *'Ali Mubarak al- mufakir wa al mu'alim*. Beirut: al- Sharika al- 'alamiya li'l-kitab, 1993. And also Muhammad 'Immara, *'Ali Mubarak: Mu'arekh al- Mujtama' wa Muhandes al- 'umman*. Cairo: Dar al- Mustaqbal al- 'Arabi, 1984.

² Mubārak, 'Alī. *'Alam al-Dīn*. Alexandria: Matb'at Jaridat al- Maḥrousa, 1882. p.1234.

³ David Harvey's *Paris the Capital of Modernity* describes the social and political changes that took place in nineteenth century Paris and analyzes their reflections in the French Literary representations of the time. for more on this see Harvey, David. *Paris Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

⁴ In French Literature this discrepancy between Paris of the 1830s and post Haussmann's Paris appears in the difference between Balzac's and Flaubert's writing styles. The former describes a Paris where human relations were still direct, while the latter describes a Paris where the culture of anomie started to emerge. For more on the literary aesthetics that resulted from this transformation see Pirsilla- Parkhurst Feguson's *Paris as Revolution: Writing in the nineteenth- century City*. Berkeley: university of California Press. 1994.

⁵ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Viking Publishing, 1988.

⁶ In the process of re-planning Cairo Mubārak demolished more than thirty Islamic monuments in order to execute his project, an act which is described by the novelist and literary critic Jamal al- Ghitani as an act of "*taghrīb al- Madina*" or westernizing and by implication, making the city alien to its past.

Al- Ghitānī, Jamāl. *Muntaha al- ṭarab fī turath al- 'arab: dirāsa fī al- turath*. Cairo: Dar al- Shurūq, 1997.

⁷ Benjamin, Walter. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in *Illuminations* Arendt, Hannah (ed). Harry Zohn trans. Schocken Books, 1985.

In relation to the canon of Arabic literature *'Alam al- Dīn* is as a continuation of a tradition of writing that began with Taḥṭāwī's *Talkhīs al- Ibrīz fī Wasf Barīz*, which heralded Paris as a central site of modernity and was to find subsequent representations in other nineteenth-century Arabic texts.⁸ The novel's fictionalization of the novelty of the urban experience and its impact on the sense of time and space challenged prevalent social views about Europe in the same manner as Ṭaḥṭāwī's book. *'Alam al- Dīn*, like other nineteenth century urban literary works from different parts of the Arab world, captures important themes regarding the experience of global urban modernity in which new technologies led to unprecedented social transformations. Although it bears affinity with non- Egyptian-Arabic literary representations of nineteenth-century urban culture, it is in relation to Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Takhlīs al- Ibrīz* and the canonical formation of a modern national imaginary in Egypt that I will analyze it.

The reception of Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of the Parisian lifestyle was a skeptical one; it earned him severe criticism and serious accusations from the doyens of al-Azhar who declared that "the sheikh" had parted ways with Islamic precepts when he participated in French ball room dances, and various other urban activities.⁹ The book's realistic tone made Ṭaḥṭāwī particularly vulnerable to this criticism since he stated in the introduction that it was a first-hand description of his experience of Paris. Was it in order to avoid such criticism that 'Ali Mubārak Pasha chose to write a novel instead of writing a first-hand account about his stay in Paris? Or is it because the novel as a medium of artistic self-expression was starting to appeal to the modernizers as tool for social change? And does Mubārak's early attempt at writing a fictional account reflect the fact that language was starting to acquire a new social value tied to the circulation of commodities and news? These are some of the questions I will be addressing over the course of this chapter.

Theorists of literary writing in Egypt and the Arab world agree that language was transformed as a result of the introduction of the printing press, which made the birth of new literary genres or the modernization of old ones fairly inevitable.¹⁰ The circulation of texts led to changes in reading habits and introduced a wealth of opportunities to debate new topics,¹¹ mainly because the printing press led to the development of a new public sphere that altered the relationship between the private and public space. However, Mubārak's motives for writing a novel remain subject to speculation, for it is indeed surprising that a pragmatic statesman like 'Ali Mubārak Pasha (1823-1893), whose career included working as minister of labor, education, urban and city planning, among other official posts, wrote a novel at an early stage in the nineteenth century. This is particularly the case because in line with the spirit of industrial

⁸ After the publication of Ṭaḥṭāwī's book a number of different Arab authors undertook to represent Paris in their writing as governments took to sending scholarly missions to the metropolis. In Tunisia khayr al- Din al- Tunisi's *Aqwam al- Masalik fī ma'rafat aḥwāl al- mamālik*, was the closest in tone to Taḥṭāwī's writing and even established itself in relation to Ṭaḥṭāwī's text. Another text that attempted to fictionalize the journey to the metropolis was Ahmad Faris al- Shidiyyaq's book *al saqq 'ala al- Saqq*, which, as Stephen Shihee contends in his study *The Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, reflected the author's creative use of different literary tropes such as poetry, narrative, and the essay.

⁹ Al- Sayyid, Afaf Lutfi. *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

¹⁰ One may argue that Ṭaḥṭāwī's essays in *Talkhīs al- Ibrīz* are a modernization of al- Jaḥīz's essays, which were written in the 'Abassid era, and as will be mentioned below, that the novel is a modernization of the classical Arabic genres such as the *seyyar*, *mallaḥem* or *al-maqāmāh*.

¹¹ For example the circulation of journals, and periodical literature gave voice to women authors whose participation in the cultural debates of modernity began at an early stage in the nineteenth century. For more on this see Baron, Beth. *Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture Society and the Press*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994

modernity, writing fiction was often looked down upon as a leisurely activity and was regarded as something suspicious. In an attempt to ward off such accusations, Mubārak's novel retains a didactic attitude to a didactic spirit in its rigorous dedication to representing factual events and stating historical information. This factual didacticism stylistically impacted the novel, and in effect, has led literary critics to overlook *'Alam al- Dīn* in spite of its status as a creative work that reflects important literary developments within the canon of Arabic literature. I believe that Mubārak's use of the figure of the sheikh as a narrator of the experience of urban modernity merits closer examination. In line with the methodology of urban literature that takes narratives of urban figures as a vehicle for understanding the social aesthetics of modernity, I will analyze how *'Aalm al- Dīn* made use of the figure of the sheikh who appears to be the main narrator of the nineteenth century urban experience in Egypt.

So far the canon of urban literature has been focused on Benjamin's famous types such as the *flâneur*, the gambler, and even Simmel's blasé urban dweller, but in the context of a global urban modernity such focus overlooks the global character of nineteenth-century Paris. The eurocentricity of the aforementioned figures precludes understanding important social themes in relation to the experience of urban modernity where literary canons emerged as important metaphysical terrains that helped articulate the novelty of the experience of urban modernity. Understandably, the presence of the *flâneur* on the streets of nineteenth-century Paris represented a crucial social phenomenon within Europe that found expression in the literary representations of authors such as Balzac, Baudelaire and Flaubert. These literary authors captured the formation of the initial social aesthetics of urban culture in the context of nineteenth-century Paris and in turn their literary works have helped us understand the aesthetics of European modernity. But in addition to the Paris of the *flâneur*, there was also the Paris of the sheikh, whose visit to the city represents the global culture of the metropolis and the web of cultural relations that began to be woven around it. In effect, the narrative of the sheikh raises important questions about the global nature of the experience of urban modernity, and also about the relationship between the Arabic and the Western canons of urban literature. Admittedly Benjamin's capital of modernity was central to other European cities and also of great significance to modernizing cities all around the world.

In the context of the Arab Islamic world that was under the reign of the Ottomans, the figure of the sheikh¹² played an important role in deciphering the aesthetics of the landscape of nineteenth-century urban modernity. He emerged as a central narrator of the experience of modernity in the Arab-Islamic world.¹³ In Egypt, we understand from historical accounts that this literary figure is tied to the new social role of the graduates of al-Azhar who actively participated in 'Ali's modernization program. As I mentioned in the previous chapter on Sheikh

¹² Some studies such as Nezar al- Sayyad's "Ali Mubārak's Alam al- Din between the Testimony of *Alammudin*, and the Imaginary of the Khitat." in *Making Cairo Medieval* in Alsayyad, Bierman, and Rabbat, eds. New York: Lexington Books, 2005, and Wen Chin Ouyang's article "Fictive Mode, Journey to the west" *Comparative Critical Studies* 4, 3, 2007, pp331-358. contend that the sheikh who is in the novel is a certain Sheikh Ibrahim al- Desoukī who had helped the British Orientalist Edward William Lane in editing his Lexicon. However, such clear cut association cannot be made since that there are apparent discrepancies between Mubārak's 'Alam al- Din and Sheikh al- Desoukī. I believe that 'Alam, al-Dīn, should be seen as a generic hero representing the nineteenth century intellectuals who were trained at al- Azhar

¹³ All over the Arab-Islamic world the intellectuals were trained in religious schools but with modernization, as I mentioned in the introduction, a transformation took place leading to the emergence of a new class of intellectuals who came to be known as the *effendis*.

Rif‘a al- Ṭaḥṭāwī, the sheikh of al-Azhar was transformed from a sheikh into a translator whose job was the establishment of an emergent cultural ethos based on a new social reality that led to new space and time perceptions. Although, Mubārak’s sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn is a fictional figure that embodies some generic characteristics distinctive of the intellectuals of the nineteenth-century in general, ‘Alam al-Dīn’s character bears concrete associations with sheikh Rifa‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī in particular. While the sheikh’s son, Burhan al-Dīn (this name means proof of religion) represents the author’s generation. The novel’s bearing on reality could be understood by outlining aspects of similarity and difference between the two modernizers and the figures of the novel.

Mubārak’s protagonist resembles sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī who completed his studies in a religious system of education while ‘Ali Mubārak Pasha, like the sheikh’s son in the novel, chose to part ways with religious education when he was a child and insisted against the will of his father on enrolling in the newly established civil schools sponsored by Egypt’s modernizer Muhammad ‘Ali. Like al- Ṭaḥṭāwī, Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn undertook writing the novel in the name of *al- tamaddun* (urbanity), in order to socialize the readers in an urban modernity that centralized nineteenth-century Paris as a Mecca for Egyptian modernizers. But Mubārak’s novel attempts to add to Ṭaḥṭāwī’s previous literary works the social views of the new generation of Egyptians that enrolled in the civil schools. The novel captures this generational transition by narrating the different experiences of the sheikh and his son and their relationship with the various figures that they encounter in the course of their journey from Egypt to Europe. The variance in the experience between the sheikh and his son captures the transition from a purely religious view of the world to a semi-secular view of the world. The manner in which the two characters experience the modern space of the city represents the emergence of a new cultural aesthetics woven around *al- tamaddun*, first introduced to the readers in Ṭaḥṭāwī’s *Talkhīṣ al-Ibrīz*.

Similar to the previous work, Mubārak’s novel situates the cultural philosophy of *al-tamaddun*, in the historical context of trade interactions that have been taking place in the basin of the Mediterranean since antiquity.¹⁴ Taking the history of the interactions between Europe and the countries to the south of the Mediterranean into account, the sheikh develops an interest in geography and history; the two disciplines that represent the modern culture of time and space. ‘*Alam al- Dīn*, thus, attempts to depict the modern geographical reality of the world that originated in Ṭaḥṭāwī’s account. The novel attempts to dramatize the cultural dialectic between secular and sacred space which emerged in conjunction with the development of modern urban culture. It thereby heralds the emergence of later cultural debates which associated modern urban culture with materialism, and pre-industrial Arab Islamic culture with spirituality.¹⁵ However, unlike later literary works that were published after British colonialism and that seemed to have anchored itself into a geographical imaginary that associates the West with materialism and the East with spirituality, ‘*Alam al-Dīn* reflects a different view of the

¹⁴ ‘*Alam al-Dīn*, P, 1222

¹⁵ When British colonialism took place, industrial modernity, and the modern urban culture that resulted from it, came to be associated with materialism, while pre-modern world views that focused on spirituality came to be associated with the East. In early modern literary theory the works of al- manfalūfī, and Mahmūd Taymūr helped develop this dichotomous view of culture by associating the West with materialism and the East with a spiritual culture that was being corrupted by the introduction of modern science and technology. For more on this theme, see Najīb, Najī, *Rihlat ‘Alam al- Dīn*. Cairo: Dar al- Kalima li’l-Nashr, 1981.

space of the modern world. Because it is written prior to the military colonization of Egypt, like Ṭaḥṭāwī's earlier work, it shows that early modern Arab thinkers did not encounter the "West" as a reified other whose technocratic organization threatened to reduce the "East" into an objectified entity. *'Alam al- Dīn*'s thematic treatment of the space of the modern world in the early modern period reflects important cultural aesthetics that might help us better understand the nuances of the cultural theory of *al-tamaddun* which originated in Ṭaḥṭāwī's work. *'Alam al-Dīn* depicts the global culture of the modern urban space through the mobility of the sheikh and his son both of whom form new social relations with diverse figures such as the orientalist, the British explorer, and the modern woman. The formation of these new social relations takes place in the context of a new geographical reality where the culture of the modern capitalist city and the Mediterranean plays a formative role.¹⁶ Attempting to fictionalize such social transformations while adhering to the didactic spirit of industrial modernity that regarded entertainment with a suspicious eye,¹⁷ Mubārak's novel turned out to be an encyclopedic work that captured nineteenth century views on history, geography, religion, and culture. Such thematic concerns made *'Alam al- Dīn* an attractive reference to urban historians and students of political theory,¹⁸ and so existent references to the novel posit it as a historical reference. Only very recently has *'Alam al- Dīn* begun to interest literary scholars, whose interest in the productions of the nineteenth century promises to fill a significant gap in contemporary literary studies of Arabic literature.¹⁹ In the following analysis of *'Alam al- Dīn* I will examine a number of key themes that emerge in regards to the novel's concern with modern urban culture in order to explain how it used the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* to develop the canonical imaginary of modernity around Cairo and Paris.

¹⁶ The importance of city and the culture of the Mediterranean which is weaved around trade between world cities such as Alexandria and Marseille found its full expression in Taha Ḥussein's later work, *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfah al-'Arabiyya* (1938).

¹⁷ The spirit of utility which is so characteristic of industrial modernity is what the author uses as an excuse for undertaking to represent the new experiences in fictional form. In appealing to such spirit Mubārak was reflecting the 19th century use of utility as justification for using fiction to address newly emerging social themes. A good illustration of the effect of this tendency in English literature would be Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, where the father figure obsessively entices his children to abandon any endeavor that is not scientific for the sake of achieving success in life, or some of the characters in George Eliot's fiction who view literature as a waste of time. (for more on this see Sicher, Efraim, *Rereading the City Rereading Dickens: Representation, the Novel and Urban Realism*. New York: AMS Press, INC. 2003 p. 7) Ironically, however, the same spirit of utility that used technical expertise, enterprise, and scientific knowledge as the basis for organizing world exhibits that reflected the imperial progress of Europe, were the mechanics which operated as exclusionary tools to a figure such as that of sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn's. This theme will be dealt with later in this dissertation when I analyze how the sheikh was perceived in Europe.

¹⁸ See for example Timothy Mitchell's *colonizing Egypt*. Berkeley: university of California Press, 1988. Alsayyad, Nezar, Bierman, Irene, Rabbat, Nasser (eds.) *Making Cairo Medieval*. New York: Lexington Books, 2005. 'Immara, Mohammad. *'Ali Mubarak Mu'arekh al- Mujtam'a wa Muhandes al-'umran*. Cairo: Dar al- Mustaqbal al- 'arabi, 1984. Abou Hemdan, Samīr. *'Ali Mubarak al- Mufakir wa al- Mu'amer*. Beirut: al- Sharika al- 'alamiya lil kitab, 1993.

¹⁹ See for example , Wen -Chin Ouyang's "Fictive Mode: 'Journey to the West', and Transformation of Space: 'Ali Mubārak's Discourses of Modernization" *Comparative Critical Studies*,4,3, 2007. pp. 331-358. Also Stephen Sheehi's *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*. Gainesville, Florida.: University of Florida Press, 2004. And for an excellent theoretical account of the genesis of modern Arabic literature in the nineteenth century and its relationship with global culture see Omri, Mohammad Salah. *Nationalism, Islam and World Literature: Sites of Confluence in the Writings of Mahmūd al- Mas'adī*. London: Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures, 2006.

'Alam al- Dīn and the Geography of Modernity

'*Alam al- Dīn*'s thematic concern with the experience of urban modernity, and the formation of a new cultural aesthetics in conjunction with modernity reflect a transitional geography that gave impetus to the development of the novel. However '*Alam al- Dīn*'s literary status remains controversial mainly because its lack of an end reflects the open geographical space of the early modern period that preceded the formation of the nation-State, which is arguably one of the major forces that helped develop the novel. So far, literary studies of '*Alam al- Dīn*' have been divided between those who see it as a novel proper,²⁰ and those who dismiss it, or condone it with a "grain of salt."²¹ Those who contend that '*Alam al- Dīn*' is a novel-proper believe that it takes its inspiration not from the static traditional narrative known as *al-maqāmmāh* but from the Arabic narrative tradition of the *seyar* and *malḥama*.²² Such narrative theory argues that the novel as a genre is not a foreign import as has been commonly held, but is in fact a textual development from older forms of fiction.²³ The second school of thought about the Arabic novel holds that the *seyar* and *malaḥem*, which amount to mythical narrative forms indigenous to the Arab world, cannot be deemed synonymous with modern narrative forms. This school of thought argues that since myths are part of any literary heritage, including western societies, and since they have not been considered the origins of the modern novel anywhere, then the *seyar* and *malaḥem* could not be claimed as proper narrative forms that form the origin of the Arabic novel. Instead, it is argued, the novel in its modern form is clearly a byproduct of modern industrial society.²⁴ According to this view it is Mohammad Ḥusayn *Haykal's Zaynab* (1914) that is deemed the first Arabic novel, and not Muwailḥi's nineteenth century *maqāmah Ḥadīth 'Isa Ibn Hishām* (1898).

Such arguments about the origins of the Arabic novel are usually held in the name of justifying the popularity of the supposedly "foreign" genre of the novel. They usually aim to find explanation for the appeal of the novel as a form that replaces the supposedly more "authentic" narrative genres such as *seyar* or the *maqāmah*. However, I believe that an important element is often missing to critics who focus on the discrepancy between authenticity and tradition in regards to the Arabic novel as a literary genre, and that is mainly the geographical reality in which the novel acquired its form and gained popularity. The novel as a form of literary expression was tied to the emergence of the nation-state, the proliferation of print culture, and the empowerment of the individual. Franco Moretti has shown in his *Atlas of the European Novel*, how the novel as a form explicated the geographical transformations of the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, thus aiding in the illustration and enactment of the concept of the nation-state.²⁵ An example of this, according to Moretti, is Jane Austin's novels, which

²⁰ Badr, Taha. *Tatawūr al-riwāya al- 'Arabiyya al-ḥadītha fī Miṣr (1870-1983)*. Cairo: Dar al- ma'arif, 1977. Also on the nineteenth century encounters between the Arab writers and the West see El- Enany, Rashīd. *Arab Representations of the Occident: East- West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*. London: Routledge, 2006. And Moosa, Matti. *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*. Washington, DC, Three Continents Press, 1983.

²¹ El- Enany, Rashīd. *Arab Encounters with the Occident: East- West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*. London: Routledge, 2006.

²² Mohammad 'Immara's *Ali Mubarak Mū'arikh al- Mujtama' wa Muhandis al- 'umran*, argues for this view, and calls for reconsidering Mubārak's contribution to the literary canon.

²³ Salma Khadr al- Jayuusi (ed.). *Modern Arabic Fiction Anthology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

²⁴ Sakkut, Hamdī, *The Arabic Novel Bibliography and Critical Introduction 1865-1995*. Cairo: American University Press, 2000.

²⁵ Moretti, Franco. *Atlas of the European Novel*. London: Verso, 1998.

depicted the geography of the modern nation and so enabled nineteenth-century readers to become familiar with places that they had not encountered earlier. Moretti's view is particularly valid if we consider the fact that physical mobility from one place to another was not as easily accessible to nineteenth-century travelers as it is to today's voyagers.²⁶ Accordingly, we may contend along with Moretti that the novel had a geographical function in the manner it operated as a verbal map that depicted the mobility of different characters. Thus, it enacted the geographical reality of the nation-state which was becoming real to the readers both as a result of the technologically-induced social transformations and the novelistic depiction of the space of the nation. Whereas the idea of a novelistic geographical imaginary is well illustrated in relation to European modernity as Moretti's study shows, the canonical implications of the geographical imaginary of urban modernity in the non-European context of Arabic literature remains understudied. *'Alam al- Dīn* is written in a transitional phase and so it captures a modern geographical imaginary hinged on the establishment of the modern nation-state. It articulates the impact of an emerging modern urbanism on the literary form which parted ways with the vagueness of the *maqāmāh*.

The experiences of modern urban culture that depend on individualism and the circulation of modern texts led to the emergence of a new aesthetics of representing the ways of experiencing the places of modernity. *'Alam al- Dīn* reflects this in its resort to characterization in relation to the figure of the sheikh and his son in order to explicate the experience of modernity. By introducing characterization to Arabic narrative form, Mubārak's novel registered the impact of the urban individualism on the author, which was not manifest in the earlier narrative form of the *maqāmāh*.

According to James Monroe, the *maqāmāh* is a narrative of the picaresque,²⁷ tied to pre-colonial geography where political geographical boundaries were non-existent except between Christendom and Islamic Empire. The narrator of the *maqāmāh* frequently moved from one place to the next while accompanied by a vagabond named Abu al- Futhūḥ al- Iskandarānī, whose use of linguistic tricks was often aimed at extracting money from his audience. Whereas traditional scholarship has held that the *maqāmāh* was largely an exercise in linguistic and stylistic creativity often deployed to prove the author's mastery of language, James Monroe's study suggests that the *maqāmāh* was more than a mere exercise in linguistic proficiency and that it was used as a powerful social commentary. In addition to this, Stephen Shihee contends that, the *maqāmāt* expressed a loss of an age, and that they formed a commentary on identity and social practice. In his view, they exceeded being merely a "nostalgic commentary on loss or orthodox religious statement; they [were] a play on aesthetics, seeing, subjective certitude."²⁸ Like the French urban figure of the *flâneur*, the hero of the *maqāmāh* was often depicted on the move; however, an essential distinction must be established between the two figures. The hero of the *maqāmāh* often lacked fixed social traits of a specific background, social class, or age-that is,

²⁶ In that regard it is important to note that the culture of travel in the nineteenth century was radically transformed as a result of the introduction of new forms of transportation such as the trains which are said to have caused significant social transformations within Europe. For more on this see Wolfgang Schivelbusch's book *The railway Journey: Industrialization and Perceptions of Time and Space*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

²⁷ Monroe, James. *The Art of Badi' al- Zaman al- Hamadhni as Picaresque Narrative*. Beirut: The American University Press, 1990.

²⁸ Stephen Shihee, *The Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2004. P.116.

the traits that would endow his character with a sense of social coherence. He was often depicted in different situations that were not specific to any geographical location. For example, in Hamadhanī's *maqāmāt*, the hero is once seen on a pilgrimage, another time in exile, and another as a roaming merchant. These depictions, Shihee contends, endow the hero of the *maqāmah* with social instability because he does not belong to a fixed social community. The fact that the hero of the *maqāmah* does not embody avowedly individualistic social traits reflects the difference in the social geography of pre-industrial narratives and that of post-industrialization, where circulation of literary texts created what Benedict Anderson calls "the imagined community of the nation"²⁹ which depended in great part on the voice of the individual in literary and cultural representation. In addition, geographically, the *maqāmah*'s spatial point of reference was the *ummah*: the community of believers. Because the concept of the *ummah* is woven around a moral geography that united various ethnic communities over whom Islamic rule prevailed, the *maqāmah* largely appealed to morality and the enjoinder of what is good in accordance with Islamic *Sharī'a*. As a result, the narrative always returned to a point of establishing a pre-existent order without emphasizing the novelty of experiences and the sense of rupture with previous modes that resulted from the implementation of technology.

The novel, by contrast, reflects the geographical imaginary of modernity, which came with new ways to negotiate one's place in the world. This process is aptly captured by Sabry Hafez in the *Genesis of Narrative Discourse in Arabic* when he states that, "The genesis of narrative discourse in Arabic culture is (...) synonymous with the genesis of a new way of rationalization and perception of both the self and the other. As a process, it is inseparable from the emergence of the new social and cultural experiences that gave rise to a new perception of national identity."³⁰ This intricate relation between narrative and the new experiences that resulted from the altered sense of time and space appears clearly in *'Alam al-Dīn*. It thus challenges prevalent literary theories of Arabic narrative because it shows that as early as the mid nineteenth century, and prior to the publication of Muwaīlḥī's *Ḥadīth 'Isa Ibn Hishām*, the novel emerged as a genre tied to a new geographical imaginary based on experiencing the novelty of the urban space. *'Alam al- Dīn*'s hero captures the dialectical nature of this novelty in his attempt to narrate his experiences while synthesizing Islamic morality into his narrative, thereby reflecting the transitional process by which the modern novel began to articulate the aesthetics of modernity by weaving them around the practices of daily life. But because it is written at an early stage in the nineteenth century, *'Alam al- Dīn* appears to be a hybrid between the novel and the *maqāmah*. When compared to al- Muwaīlḥī's *maqāmāh Ḥadīth 'Issa Ibn Hisham*³¹, *'Alam al- Dīn* appears to be equally valuable. Mubārak's attempt to use characterization and his use of the plot as a dramatic force to illustrate the social changes that resulted from the experience of urban modernity are more futuristic than Muwaīlḥī's *maqāmah*. Nevertheless, *'Alam al- Dīn* remained a controversial literary work mainly because, like the geography of modernity it represents, its narrative space remained open without an ending reflecting the uncertainty that surrounded the fate of the newly established nation-state in which the author was an active modernizer. Mubārak's philosophy of modernization is a central part of

²⁹ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and the Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

³⁰ Hafez, Sabry. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*. London: Saqi Books, 1993 P.22

³¹ *Ḥadīth 'Issa Ibn Hisham* was published in the form of narrative chronicles in the author's family owned journal *misbah al- Sharq* starting 1898, and then was published in book format in 1907.

‘*Alam al- Dīn*’s plot. In the next section I shall examine how ‘*Aalm al- Dīn*’ challenges the current rhetorical equating of modernization with westernization.

‘*Alam al- Dīn* and the Dialectic of Modernization and Westernization in light of the Colonial Threat:

‘Alī Mubārak’³²’s philosophical concern with *al-tamaddun al-jadīd* (modern urbanity) and the dialectic between mass urban culture and earlier forms of social organization is dramatized in his only novel. The novel narrates the urban experience of a sheikh who accepts employment for a British Orientalist; their project to edit the Arabic Lexicon *Lisān al- ‘Arab* leads them to depart for Paris where they reside in order to avoid the Egyptian summer heat. The sheikh takes his son with him and together they document their experiences and impressions of the novel urban space. Their narrative captures their encounter with an urban modernity that is predicated on the use of technological inventions such as steamships, telegraphs, and printing press. These inventions lead the sheikh to change his perceptions of time and space by forcing him to realize that previously isolated cultures were acquiring proximity to and a sense of simultaneity with other nations. For this reason, he writes his experiences and his philosophical views of the new urban reality:

After people were limited to crossing lakes, small rivers, and traveling to nearby areas, they [the Europeans] crossed the ocean itself. And this way they discovered islands and coasts inhabited by people who lack *al- tamaddun* (urban institutional structure/industrial production) and its causes. Consequently they fought and conquered them forcing them to submit to their authority, and took their lands which they used for their own benefit and that of their countries not for the benefit of the original inhabitants... This was the first incentive for the Europeans to take possession of the majority of the American lands, the African coasts, some parts of Asia, the majority of the Islands of the Atlantic ocean, the southern ocean and the Indian ocean, until Europe became the richest place and the most prosperous. Similarly their kings gained more fame and power than any others. All this is because of navigation, which opened doors to various ways to earn a living. And even if there are rulers in each part of the world who rule and govern their people, they remain together with their subjects under the power of the kings of Europe because of the military might of the latter and their political knowledge which is on the increase. This is because they take ownership of all the industries that they come across, and in the meantime, they flood whoever is lesser than they are with all sorts of goods. They have not altered this way of theirs, to the contrary they adhere to it, and because of this, their influence on all parts of the earth has become public.³²

This description of colonial space is given by the British Orientalist who explicates the dynamics of modern urban culture and addresses an urban modernity that is pre-determined by the European colonial enterprise. As a result, the modern space appears as one characterized by a sense of proximity that is not altogether devoid of danger because of the encroachment of Europeans on various parts of the world through their use of new industrial inventions. The use

³² ‘*Alam al- Dīn*, 334

of technology in navigation allows for the expansion of the geographical scope of Europe³³ and with it the development of a new system of governance that is constructed around politics, which came to replace religion in governance. Such transformation leads the sheikh to contend that he must learn the new ways of modern times in order to better engage with the modern cultural space.

It is in the name of acquiring knowledge of industrial modernity (*al- tamaddun al- jadīd*) and its systems that the sheikh departs to Europe with BO hoping to acquire the knowledge that promises to save him, and by implication, his nation, from being reduced to passive consumers by European inventors “who flood whoever is *lesser* with all sorts of goods.” The sheikh justifies his quest by stating that “there is no way to [riches] except through the use of steam power because the machine actualizes human will. Man runs it as he pleases any time he wants and that leads him to acquire what he wants.”³⁴ Such zeal for the acquisition of knowledge of the technical means of modernization, we understand, was at the heart of the philosophy that was established by Muhammad Ali in the context of his modernization program, which established new spatial politics between Egypt and Europe. The author’s involvement in this modernization program came through his education when he willfully abandoned the *Qur’anic* schools in the village and joined the newly established civil schools. From there he was sent on a scholarship to France where he studied engineering (1844-1850). Thus ‘Alam al-Dīn’s attachment to the acquisition of technical knowledge could be taken as a reflection of the author’s own interest in the topic. The zealous enthusiasm for the implementation of technological and modern scientific systems in Egypt earned Mubārak the reputation of being a “westernizer.”³⁵ However, such a designation, I believe, needs to be viewed with care because of the rather unclear and reductive connotations of “westernization.”

In cultural theory “westernization” is defined as the implementation of European industrial modes of production in non-European societies.³⁶ However, the word inadvertently has connotations of unsettling an “authentic” or a “traditional” culture and replacing it with western culture. The social changes that resulted from implementation of industrial modernity are often posited as the “modern” transformation of society (also read westernizing it) and are usually compared to an earlier way of life which is often considered “traditional.” Such rhetorical description of the process of modernization remains confusing because the binary opposition between what is traditional and what is modern is predicated on juxtaposing the use of modern scientific knowledge, industrial modes of productions, and capitalist systems in the society versus their lack. The changes that resulted from these new material developments, as

³³ Most notably Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* explains how the literary depictions of the nineteenth century in England used the colonies in constructing a European imaginary of modernity.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage books, 2004.

³⁴ ‘Imara, Muhammad. *Ali Mubārak Mu’arekh al- Mujtama’ wa Muhandes al- umran*. Cairo: Dar al- mustaqbal al- ‘Arabi, 1984., p.295

³⁵ For example Alsayyad’s article “‘Ali Mubārak’s Between the Testimony of ‘Alammudin and the Imaginary of the Khatat” concludes by stating that “Ali Mubārak was a westernized Wesertnizer” (p. 62) when the author describes Mubārak’s urban planning philosophy which exemplifies a positivist approach to history and culture. Such a geopolitical description, I believe, needs to be scrutinized in particular when it alludes to industrialization, and accommodating for new technological inventions in the society. When used in conjunction with nineteenth century reformists, I believe, it conflates several registers of modernity most importantly its novelty, and how these modernizers were accommodating for it.

³⁶ Al- Shalaq, Dr. Ahmad Zakaria. *Al-hadatha wa al imberialiya: al- Ghazu al- firinsi wa ishkaliyat nahḍat misr*. Cairo, Dar al- shorūq, 2005.

theories of urban modernity have shown, led to significant social transformations in the Western context. Ṭaḥṭāwī's early nineteenth century depiction of the Parisian society captured some of these changes, and 'Alī Mubārak's novel sought to expand understanding of the implications of modernization.

'*Alam al- Dīn* captures the dialectical nature of modern life, which is polarized between the appeal of applying scientific knowledge to the regulation of social life, and attempts to adhere to an "authentic" Arab Islamic cultural ethos. Like other nineteenth-century literary works, the novel elaborates whether implementation of scientific knowledge represents a departure from a "traditional" way of life and the embrace of an indiscriminating adoption of a "western" way of life. As I mentioned in chapter one, Ṭaḥṭāwī's book *Takhkīṣ al-Ibrīz* applauded the ability of modern scientific knowledge to create better living conditions. Ṭaḥṭāwī's fascination with the application of the laws that resulted from the capitalist development of French society reflected his belief in the ability of modern scientific knowledge to establish a cosmopolitan humanist sphere in cultural relations. A similar conviction in the ability of scientific knowledge to rearrange relationships among different peoples of the world appears in Mubārak's novel in the vignette on the railways where BO explains the benefits of using the new forms of transportation. In his discussion with BO, Sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn optimistically declares his belief that technology promised to create a cosmopolitan social sphere. Because of the use of industrial technology, he reflects, nations are "able to help one another at the time of the occurrence of disasters such as famines. In such instances news circulates [fast] so that aid is delivered before people suffer the consequences"³⁷

This geographical cosmopolitanism, which resulted from the implementation of technology, was a distinctive feature of the spirit of modernity that promised to import novelty to the Egyptian society. It operated as the guiding principle for the Egyptian *nahḍa* thinkers in their endeavors to establish new systems to regulate the society on the basis of scientific knowledge. Such knowledge became known as "useful knowledge" because of its ability to transform the structures of the society, thus establishing a direct connection between knowledge and material reality. These thinkers held that religious knowledge should be limited to the sphere of personal spirituality.

In '*Alam al-Dīn*, Mubārak expresses a firm belief in the power of scientific knowledge to establish a new public sphere that is global in nature and transcends the binary opposition between what is 'traditional'/authentic and what is modern. The complexity of such a modernizing philosophy was bound to the emergence of mobility as a significant social force and is well represented in the sheikh's philosophy of the modern urban landscape that materializes as a result of his new experiences. Most remarkably, the sheikh's relationship with the British orientalist occupies the central position in the novel, because it is as a result of this relationship that the sheikh departs for Europe and begins to weave a new geographical imaginary of Egypt's relationship to Europe. The relationship between the sheikh and the orientalist symbolically embodies the emergence of a modern, humanist philosophy that is grounded in a culture of time and space where philology, not religion, appears to play a central role in cultural interactions. This is perfectly illustrated in the fact that sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn agrees to work for BO on a project of translation of the Arabic Lexicon, *Lisān al-'Arab*, which promises to establish new channels for communication between Egypt and Europe. The transformative power of

³⁷ '*Alam al- Dīn*, 178

technology orchestrates his departure from the Islamic Ottoman Empire and the isolationist policy that regarded Europe as the enemy and the “other”. Does such a departure mean that the sheikh was setting out on a journey to blindly adopt western culture merely because he accepts the implementation of the systems of industrial modernity? Asking this question in conjunction with the urban experience of the figure of the sheikh touches upon the dialectic of the modernization process in Egypt. For modernizing humanists in Egypt and the Arab world, the challenge of celebrating the novelty of the experience of modernity while remaining true to their previous beliefs emerged as a central cultural theme. In this regard, *‘Alam al- Dīn* presents the readers with a nuanced depiction of the encounter between what is considered “traditional” and the novelty that is the byproduct of industrial modernity.

The novel’s concern with the experience of modernity as novelty and modernization not as an intention to “westernize” the society but to apply scientific knowledge to it, makes it extremely relevant to understanding the cultural complexity of the process of modernization, which goes beyond the binary opposition of authenticity with modernity. Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn’s views of the modern space reflect the formation of the new cultural philosophy that accompanied modernization and revolved around introducing new cultural criteria for understanding the “other”. The complexity of the cultural transformations that resulted from Muhammad Ali’s modernization program is captured through the sheikh’s relationship to various places and modern figures such as the orientalist, the explorer, the modern woman, and his son Burhan al-Dīn who embodies the ideal of the modern citizen. By focusing on how sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn encounters various places and figures in the context of a changing social reality, I will elucidate ‘Ali Mubārak’s multi- layered vision of the experience of urban modernity.

The Lure of Urban Modernity: The Sheikh’s exit from al-Azhar Mosque and nineteenth-century Cairo:

Mubārak’s novel posits the city as a transformative space where sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn plays a new role as a result of the introduction of new technologies, the expansion of global capitalism, and his subsequent encounter with the British orientalist. At the onset of the story the reader sees ‘Alam al-Dīn in his birth place in one of the Egyptian villages, born to a father who is a *faqih*- an educated sheikh who used to guide the villagers in performing their religious rituals and was given money in return.³⁸ According to the habits of that time, the *faqih* instructs his son in the religious sciences, guides him in memorizing the Qur’an at an early age, and because he excels in his study, sends him to Cairo in order to attend al-Azhar, where he was to continue his religious learning. When his parents pass away, he decides to remain in Cairo, thereby breaking away with the communal ties of the village. This structural feature of the narrative where the hero travels from the village to Cairo and meets a new destiny, or to use a Marxist description, where a “creative destruction” takes place in his life and tears him away from the village, is distinctive in representations of modernity in Arabic literature from Egypt.³⁹ *‘Alam al- Dīn* thus foreshadows subsequent canonical works concerned with the experience of modernity.⁴⁰

³⁸ Later in the novel the author specifies that ‘Alam al-Dīn was a child when the French were in Egypt, that is to say he is born in the period between 1798-1801 which the period in which scholars from Ṭaḥṭāwī’s time lived.

³⁹ This is the story of Rifa’a al- Ṭaḥṭāwī, ‘Ali Mubārak himself, Taha Ḥusayn, Sayyed Qutb among many other prominent modern literary critics.

⁴⁰ The formation of a nationalist imaginary weaved around the village occurs only after the British invade Egypt, and appears in literature for the first time in Maḥmūd Haqqī’s *‘Azra’ Denshawī*, where he dramatized the clash

It is through the choices of the sheikh that the reader understands his character and the new social reality that shapes it. Upon deciding to remain in the city ‘Alam al-Dīn decides to marry Taqiyya. The sheikh teaches her how to read and write so that she can function as both intellectual interlocutor for him and a qualified mother who could take on the task of upbringing their offspring. Taqiyya thus embodies rudimentary features of the “new woman” who appeared to be the focus of Qassim Amīn’s widely debated and controversial book *The New Woman*.⁴¹ In the formation of the union between the sheikh and Taqiyya a new social future is produced and is embodied in their son Burhan al-Dīn who embodies the future generation of *Effendis*.⁴² Thus the novel depicts the formation of a new urban Egyptian middle class whose emergence is tied to the project of nation building.⁴³

‘Alam al- Din’s decision to set the roots of his family in the city leads the sheikh to encounter a new social and economic reality that transforms his destiny and the social role he is to play in the society. When ‘Alam al-Dīn decides to stay in Cairo he discovers that his education at al-Azhar qualifies him for a few jobs such as being a judge, vice judge, preacher or orator at a mosque. Alternatively he could earn money reciting the Quran at the houses of the rich, or at graveyards, choices that are described as shameful and unsuitable for a learned man like himself.⁴⁴ In fact, such occupations offer little attraction to ‘Alam al-Dīn, the scholar, who describes himself as an intellectual who thrives on arbitrating and debating.⁴⁵ But being a scholar of religious sciences in a modernizing city earns ‘Alam al-Dīn nothing but poverty, and so he complains to his spouse who suggests that they return to the village where his religious knowledge is sure to earn him a prestigious status in the community. In spite of the hardships that he suffers, ‘Alam al-Dīn rejects the village on the grounds that people in the countryside “do not understand, and they do not follow the right path, and their jurors are always subject to their opinions, their orders, and their censorship.”⁴⁶ With such an individualistic rejection, ‘Alam al-Dīn designates the village as the realm of backwardness and the tomb of individual aspiration- a connotation which would stay associated with the village as subsequent modernist writers migrated from the village to Cairo, breaking away from communal bonds.⁴⁷

between the peasants and the British Officers in an incident relating to the death to one of the soldiers. However, it was the city that captured the imagination of Egyptian modernists, and was made central to the expression of modernity. With the introduction of the film industry in the late nineteenth century the city came to be the visual epitome of Egyptian modernity as will be explained later in this dissertation.

⁴¹ Qassim Amin’s book *al-Mara’h al- Jadīda* (published in 1911) was centralized by scholars who studied the question of women in modern life. However it is important to note that Ṭaḥṭāwī and Mubārak’s intellectual writing preceded Amin’s study by decades and in fact paved the way for him to publish his ideas. Ṭaḥṭāwī’s *al- Murshid al-Amīn fi Ta’alīm al- banāt wa al- banīn* (published in 1873) was an intellectual vision to the future of girl’s education Egypt. In subsequent years Mubārak made girl’s education mandatory.

⁴² The *effendi* is a term applied to the figure of the government employee whose education in the newly established civil schools of the nineteenth century earned him a post in the service of the government. In a later section of this chapter we will read the distinctive features of this figure as imagined by Burhan al- Din in the context of his discussion of the future possibilities of his career with his father and BO. See Najī Najīb, *Riḥlat Alam al- Din: Qira’ah fi al- tarikh al- Ijtima’ī al- Fikrī al- ‘ Arabi al- ḥadith*. Cairo: Dar al- Kalima lil Nashr, 1981.

⁴³ Najī Najīb, *Riḥlat ‘Alam al- Din*. Beirut: Dār al-kaḥīma li’l Nashr, 1981. P. 43

⁴⁴ *Alam al- Din*, 253

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 51

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ This negative image of the village persisted in modern literary representations by both liberal and conservative scholars alike. A good example of this is the representation of the village in Taha Ḥsayn’s autobiography, *al- Ayyām* where he describes the village as the realm of a culture based on myths and where the belief in such myths caused

'*Alam al Dīn*'s Cairo is that in the early nineteenth century; a city about to be transformed as a result of the modernization plan that opens it to global capitalism. Traces of a new global culture appear in the novel through representing the presence of foreigners in the city. In addition it mentions the appearance of *kutūb al-siyāḥat* (tourist guide books), which speaks directly of the formation of a culture of travel that inspires the sheikh to take the very unusual decision of leaving for Europe. Cairo appears as a city in the grip of transformation as it opens to a world where mobility and circulation are becoming powerful cultural forces. Later in the novel, the image of nineteenth-century Cairo materializes when 'Alam al-Dīn compares it to Paris. In the context of such a comparison the sheikh designates Paris as the terrain of wondrous inventions and organization and describes Cairo as a city where the streets are narrow and by implication, closed off to the free circulation of traffic and goods. In addition to the narrowness of the streets, Cairo appears as a city divided by ethnic divisions since each alley was inhabited by a certain ethnicity or a certain professional group.⁴⁸ Such conditions, according to the Egyptian historian Yūnān Labīb Rizq, were in line with a medieval structure of society where segregation and hierarchy were shaping elements of the social fabric.⁴⁹ But with Muhammad Ali's modernization program this hierarchical division of the society was dissolved, both in terms of the structure of the streets of the city, which were re-planned in order to accommodate the increase in traffic. With the slow re-structuring of the city's streets, in which the author of the novel played a major role,⁵⁰ a social restructuring was accompanying it in order to accommodate the emergence of Muhammad Ali's modern nation-state. In the context of this process, the position of the sheikh, the graduate of al-Azhar needed to be transformed as the city became open to capitalist investment and as the state apparatus needed to be transformed. The precarious position of the graduates of al-Azhar is well- depicted in 'Alam al-Dīn's dilemma.

'Alam al-Dīn suffers poverty in nineteenth-century Cairo because it was a city where technical knowledge was starting to play a central role. At the same time religious knowledge, which had been instrumental in the pre-industrial system of governance, was beginning to be marginalized. As a result the graduates of al-Azhar lost some of their social privileges. The novel represents this social condition when it depicts the sheikh watching the city's development with a resentful eye because his scholarship fails to earn him the prestige and financial support his knowledge merits. He remains caught between his individual ambition, which leads him to refuse returning to the village where religion and communal ties still occupied a central place, and his need to find a way to earn a living. When he complains to his spouse about the conditions of poverty and his preference to remain a scholar yet suffer in isolation, she berates him, contending that his intellectual isolation is not socially acceptable. Voicing her skepticism she asks "why do you spend all your time in idle reading and reflecting?! You should divide your time into two parts, one spent in learning and worshipping, and another in making a living. And if you do not like the idea of living in the countryside as you mentioned, it is all right for you to work here and earn a good living from teaching the students and some of the ignorant among the

the author to lose his eye sight when his mother used traditional medical practices to treat his eyes. Similarly, the proponent of Islamism, and the literary critic Sayyid Qutb designated the village as the realm of irrational practices in his autobiographical account *Tiḡl min al- qariyah* where images of magicians, and mythical creatures appear to have occupied a central place in the popular imaginary.

⁴⁸ *Alam al- Dīn*, 862

⁴⁹ Rizq, Yunan Labib. *Misr al- Madaniya: fuṣūl fī al- nash'a wa al- taṭaūr*. Cairo: Ṣalība li'l- dirasat, 1993.

⁵⁰ One of Mubārak's official posts was the minister of labor and urban works, a job which gave him a great deal of freedom to redesign some of Cairo's old parts, and in the context of which he ordered the demolishing of a number of old houses in order to execute, his Haussmann inspired policy of the straight line.

public.”⁵¹ As an intellectual who is concerned with research and writing, ‘Alam al-Dīn takes Taqiyya’s advice reluctantly for he prefers to occupy himself with research rather than with the mundane tasks of preaching or teaching. Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn’s personal dilemma represents the condition of the graduates of al-Azhar in the wake of the modernization program that resulted in a change in the economic structure in Egypt and their loss of the revenue of *al-awqāf*.⁵² However, ‘Alam al Dīn’s suffering appears to be the result of his inability to adopt a mental urbanism that would allow him to find a new social role for himself in the modern city. It is his spouse Taqiyya, who draws his attention to a new professional possibility related to the nascent nation-state structure in which he could acquire a job that would make him of use to society at large instead of being isolated at al-Azhar.⁵³ However, such terms required that ‘Alam al-Dīn’s knowledge contribute to the newly established state. For this reason she advises him that “an appointed scholar should understand what people’s habit, and dispositions necessitate and channel his knowledge to such ends without veering away from the right path.”⁵⁴ In spite of the apparently reasonable tone of Taqiyya’s advice to ‘Alam al-Dīn, he feels alienated by the new social circumstances and decides to seek his livelihood in a country other than Egypt. For this reason he takes to reading travel books in order to learn about other countries and the conditions of their people.⁵⁵ It is in the context of his search that he meets the British orientalist who hires ‘Alam al-Dīn in order to help him edit a copy of the lexicon *Lisan al- ‘Arab*. And so, Alam al-Din exits from al- Azhar mosque and leaves the modernizing city of Cairo to embark on a journey of discovering the aesthetics of modern urban space with his employer.

He novel thus personalizes the changes wrought by modern life in the sheikh’s experience of modern Egypt- changes that do not appear in the historical accounts about Muhammad Ali’s state-building. Cultural historian Yūnan Labīb Rizq and literary critic Fathi Raḍwān have pointed out that the intellectuals that carried out the greatest part of the intellectual revival known as al- *nahḍa* were originally graduates of al- Azhar.⁵⁶ Their role was transformed as Cairo was rebuilt to become a city connected to other world cities via capitalist trade routes. What ‘Alam al-Dīn shows here is that the approach to knowledge was transformed into an empirical one, in effect, the scholar could no longer be isolated from the society. Learning and education came to be associated with utility. And it is on basis of this materialist bond of utility that ‘Alam al-Dīn finds a new role for himself as an intellectual in a globalizing world where the introduction of print culture and the potential of making knowledge available to a greater number of individuals promised the creation of a humanist sphere of knowledge aptly captured in the premise on which ‘Alam al-Dīn founds his relationship with BO. It is with the exit of the sheikh from the mosque of al-Azhar, the oldest university in the Arab Islamic world since its founding by the Fatimids in the tenth century, that a new dialectical imaginary of the culture of *al tamaddun* (urbanity) emerges. When ‘Alam al-Dīn’s departs with BO, he leaves behind an old way of learning where the scholars studied the Islamic disciplines in isolation from all other forms of knowledge. His departure from the mosque signals the beginning of a culture of

⁵¹ Alam al- Din, 59.

⁵² *Al- awqāf* is the economic system related to land ownerships that prevailed in the Ottoman Empire before Muhammad Ali’s modernization program. It was a system whereby a percentage of the land revenue was allocated for the mosques and the sheikhs.

⁵³ ‘Alam al-Dīn, 59

⁵⁴ Ibid, 65

⁵⁵ Ibid, 70

⁵⁶ Radwān, Fathi. *Dawr al-‘ama’em fī tarīkh miṣr al- ḥadīth*. Cairo: al-zahra’ li’l- I‘lam al-‘Arabī, 1986.

humanism that develops in tandem with his experiences and is shaped by his rationalist engagement with the urban space.

The Sheikh and the Orientalist and the Imaginary of a Global Humanist Public Sphere:

Mubārak's depiction of the relationship between the sheikh and the orientalist dramatizes the relationship between two intellectuals who represent two different literary canons. On the one hand, the scholar sheikh represents Egyptian intellectuals of the nineteenth century, whose research interests are not limited to religious. And on the other hand, the British orientalist represents European intellectuals of the nineteenth century whose interest in the "orient" straddled humanist and political spheres of interest. The encounter between the two figures takes place in nineteenth century Cairo, and is based on the premise that the circulation of knowledge through the power of the printing press will lead to the development of a global humanist sphere that privileges a humanist poetic expression of life. An illustration of this humanist imaginary appears in the novel when 'Alam al-Dīn lectures at the Orientalist association, speaking not on Islam, which seems to have been the main concern of the orientalists,⁵⁷ but rather on the poetry of Imri'ū al-Qays as the canonical representation of his subject.⁵⁸ With this, Mubārak was continuing a tradition that started in Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Takhliṣ* where he made extensive use of classical Arabic poetry to explicate his impressions and feelings about modern culture. Ṭaḥṭāwī's earlier work was the beginning of the canonical use of the figure of "the poet" as the voice of the culture of modernity. It set the tone for the humanist philosophy of nineteenth century Egyptian intellectuals, for whom the circulation of print culture promised to promote the philological tradition of the Arabs. In their belief in the emergence of a new cultural imaginary woven around philology, nineteenth-century Egyptian intellectuals reflect similar beliefs to those held by Goethe and Marx whose concepts of the formation of world literature came about as they experienced the development of early capitalism.⁵⁹ In *'Alam al-Dīn* the relationship between the sheikh and the orientalist illustrates the beginning of a global culture of secular humanism facilitated by the use of technology. Their relationship reflects the mediatory role assigned to literature in the global urban culture of modern times.⁶⁰ In 'Ali Mubārak's novel the relationship between the sheikh and the orientalist is based on an optimistic belief that the

⁵⁷ This statement is based on the fact that the sheikh receives questions about the language of the Quran, and various theological issues, in spite of the fact that he lectured on poetry and its cultural significance in Arabia.

⁵⁸ *'Alam al-Din*, vignette no. ninety seven, 1153.

⁵⁹ Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* was introduced in 1820. As Omri notes in *Nationalism, Islam, and World literature*, Goethe's concept addressed literature on a global scale. The concept illustrates the potential of literature to promote ideas of respect for difference and nations' awareness of one another. It poses free exchange and the nurturing of a common humanity as the highest ideals to be pursued through the study of literature. (Omri, P. 13) Marx's description of the formation of world literature came in the context of his theory of capitalist development and its ability to dissolve the boundaries of each society as "all that is solid melts into air" and the canonical enclosure of national literatures would be dissipated to give way to world literature. In his *Das Capital* he wrote: "In place of the old local and national self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence. And as in material, so in spiritual production. The spiritual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises world literatures. [476,77] (cit in Berman, Marshall, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988. p, 123)

⁶⁰ Mohammad Salah Omir's study, *Nationalism, Islam and World literature*, does an excellent job in raising important questions in regards to the place of Arabic literature in the canon of comparative literature, and points to the often forgotten fact that the colonies played a key role in defining the concept of the intellectual in the metropolis.

circulation of humanist knowledge between the north and south of the Mediterranean would lead to the formation of cosmopolitan sphere of exchange through the replacement of religious rhetoric with secular humanist narratives.

When ‘Alam al-Dīn accepts to work for BO, he begins an unusual relationship. I say “unusual” because the concept of cultural cooperation between different intellectuals from two different nations was alien at that time of transforming geography when the nation-state was not a consolidated entity. However cross cultural cooperation with Europe was not an alien concept for the Arab Islamic world before the Ottoman Empire, for it was under the rule of the ‘*Abassids* that a vibrant movement of translation took place.⁶¹ It was this earlier model of cultural cooperation that was used by the *nahḍa* thinkers to answer Ali’s critics who deemed *al-tamaddun* as contrary to Islamic precepts. We saw in chapter one that one of the major criticisms leveled at Mohammad Ali Pasha for appointing European experts in his cabinet was that he was seeking the help of “Christians.”⁶² However, as we have seen Ṭaḥṭāwī’s narrative of the modern urban space introduced his readers to the idea of *waṭan* which meant homeland and replaced the use of the *milah*, which denoted belonging to a certain religious denomination. With the use of the rhetoric of *al-waṭan* intellectuals could establish grounds for cooperation with Europe.

Initially the relationship between Egyptian intellectuals and their French counterparts was a controversial issue because it took place in the context of Napoleon’s military expedition to Egypt. The introduction of the printing press inspired Egyptian intellectuals such as Sheikh Ḥasan al-‘Attar, and Isma‘il al-Khashāb, among others, to emphasize the necessity of re-evaluating the utility of the isolationist geographical imaginary that prevailed in the Ottoman Empire, especially in light of the introduction of new technologies. The introduction of the printing press was a great inspiration to nineteenth-century Egyptian intellectuals who saw in it a powerful liberator from the isolation of the pre-industrial world. In ‘*Alam al Dīn* it is the printing press that establishes a new relationship between BO and the sheikh who accepts to work on the project of editing the Arabic Lexicon *Lisān al- ‘Arab*. In spite of the power imbalance⁶³ between the sheikh and his employer, who owns the capital and the machine, the humanist implications of the relationship between the two revolve around the dissemination of philological knowledge. And so their relationship promises to remedy the inequality between Europe and the southern Mediterranean countries, as the sheikh declares that the circulation of knowledge will bring about benefit to Egyptians in the same manner it enabled European

⁶¹ For more on the significance of this vibrant cultural movement of translation, and also the problematic of re-invoking it in the context of the *nahḍa*, see Stephen Shehee’s book *The Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004.

⁶² Al- Ṭaḥṭāwī, Rifa‘a. *Takhlīs al- Ibrīz fī Waṣf Barīz*, p. 18. In *al- A‘mal āl- Kāmilah vol. 1* ‘Imara, Muḥammad (ed.) Beirut: al- Mu‘assasa al-‘Arabiyah li’l-dirasat wa’l-nashr, 1973.

⁶³ This power imbalance between the main figures of the novel, represented in the orientalist’s possession of the printing machine and the capital to hire Sheikh ‘Alam al- Din has led Wedad al- Qadī to contend that it allegorically exemplifies the subservient relationship of the East to the encroaching West. According to this al- Qadī contends that Mubārak’s intention from writing the novel was to alert the East to its weak position *vis à vis* the West. See Wedad al-Qadī “East and West in Ali Mubārak’s *Alammuddin*” in M.R Buheiry, ed., *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890-1939*. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1996) I would argue, however, that Mubārak’s vision is not as dichotomous as al- Qadī’s study suggests, especially since the sheikh’s description of European progress reflects a belief that the implementation of new modes of production promises a similar material development in the Arab world. For this reason Sheikh ‘Alam al- Din makes a point throughout the novel to visit the old quarters of any city in order to understand how it has progressed thereby alerting his readers that progress and development can be achieved through the mechanical process of modernization.

progress. The imaginary of the circulation of knowledge occupies a central position in the relationship between the sheikh and the orientalist and is captured in BO's explanation of how Europe achieved prosperity and progress. As it is a central theme to Egyptian modernity it is worth quoting at length:

They [the Europeans] were not as advanced as they are now in documenting knowledge and researching its origins in order to publish it in the world. To the contrary, they used to busy themselves with nothing but religious books and they were forbidden to examine anything other than that. And if someone dared to talk of something other than what the priests preached he would be subjected to all sorts of persecution. As a result some of them died in jail, some of them were burnt at the stake, and some were exiled. [...] However, after some time it was the right group that won because people sympathized with them, and wanted to hear their views(...) When they came up with new ideas and trends people followed them because they found them useful. [An example of this is] the printing press which helped them to publicize their ideas among the people. As a result books of all kinds appeared and were accessible to the rich and the poor, the smart and the dim-witted and as a result the tree of knowledge grew around the countries and everyone could reap its fruits.⁶⁴

BO's explanation of the beneficial use of the printing press corresponds to the *nahḍa* thinkers' belief that the circulation of knowledge was going to enable the formation of a wide public sphere where knowledge empowered individuals. Such a belief is further elaborated upon in the novel in the sheikh's persistent documentation of everything he comes across, and his keenness in using narrative space as a space to explain the novelty of the experience of modernity to his readers. '*Alam al- Dīn* thus represents the *nahḍa*'s philosophy that the printing press came to symbolize the potential to create a global humanist culture that would lead to the realization of a democratic sphere.⁶⁵ The novel reflects a Habermasian idea of modernity as the byproduct of the liberalization of knowledge and its power to transform the civil public sphere.⁶⁶ The development of society, BO explains to the sheikh, did not occur except as a result

⁶⁴ *Alam al- Din*, 310

⁶⁵ The *nahḍa* historian Muhammad 'Imara contends that the flyers that were circulated by Napoleon, which promised the Egyptians that governance was going to take place on basis of merit and not on basis of ethnic background were the initial spark that inspired an indigenous intellectual awakening often summed up in sheikh Ḥassan al-Attar's contention that "the conditions in our countries" must change. See 'Imara, Muhammad, *Rifa'a al-Tahtāwi, al- a'amāl al- kamila, vol. 1* Beirut, al- Mu'assasa al-'arabiyah li'l- nashr, 1973. In a more recent study however, Ahmad al- Shalaq, questions this prevalent view of the constructive role of the Napoleonic expedition in the development of Egyptian modernity, contending along with revisionist Ottoman historians, that conditions in Egypt were ripe for a cultural transformation regardless of the circumstances of the invasion. Citing historians such as Peter Gran who do not believe that the Napoleonic expedition on Egypt was the major event leading to modernization, al- Shalaq argues that the question of Egyptian modernity remains hanging between the roar of gunshots and the introduction of the printing press, and wonders if Napoleon's printing press alone would have been sufficient for Egypt's rejoinder of the industrial capitalist world. See al- Shalaq, Ahmad, *al-ḥadātha wa al-Imberīalya al- Ghazū al- firinsī wa ishkaliyat mahḍat miṣr*. Cairo, Dar al- shorūq, 2005. I believe that such revisionist views are very valid in as much as they question the significance of the Napoleonic expedition itself and not the introduction of the printing press to the Arab world.

⁶⁶ Habermas, Jurgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of Bourgeois society*. Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1991.

of the codification of knowledge and its circulation.⁶⁷ As a result, he contends, people broke free from the religious censorship that prevailed before the popularization of the printing press.⁶⁸ Indirectly, the novel's reference to Europe's economic and social development as a result of the proliferation of print culture serves as an indirect allusion to the promise of a similar transformation in the context of the modernizing Egyptian society. Europe, BO explains to Sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn, was suffering under the yoke of the church's censorship which repressed whoever differed with its views. During that time, BO tells 'Alam al-Dīn, whoever dared to part ways with the visions of the church was persecuted and even "imprisoned, burnt at the stake, killed, or exiled."⁶⁹ But all of this ended when the printing press was introduced and the publication of books allowed "the rich and the poor"⁷⁰ to acquire knowledge. And it is as a result of the propagation of knowledge that a democratic sphere of governance emerged in Europe, and allowed for the creation of a modern society where the publication of ideas led to the proliferation of useful inventions and their development. Both the circulation of knowledge through print culture and the restructuring of public places via use of the latest technological means are crucial factors in the narrative of European development. It is possible that Mubārak's narration of this historical development was meant to address the social criticism of the doyens of al-Azhar who were marginalized by the modernization project, and from whose philosophy sheikh Alam al-Dīn breaks away. When BO explains the conditions that led to the development of knowledge in Europe Sheikh 'Alam al-Din retorts that the role of the clergy in Christianity has no counterpart in Islam. Accordingly, he concludes, there should be no obstacle for him to adopt modern scientific knowledge which promises to transform societies. However, in spite of the intention of Sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn to learn from BO the concepts and mechanics of industrial modernity, which he deems as the greatest asset to "national creativity" their relationship remains complicated because of Europe's views of Islam. In order for them to transcend the social limitations of pre-industrial times both characters debate their newly-conceived social roles in light of the transformations that resulted from the introduction of technology to the society. In that vein, both figures of the novel perform a pioneering move away from the politics of pre-industrial modernity, which is well dramatized in the opposition they encounter.

When 'Alam al-Dīn's decides to establish a new relationship with the orientalist he earns the criticism of his colleagues and students who find it unusual that their sheikh should be hired by a man who "believes in a religion other than his own in order to teach him the Islamic sciences (the *sharī'a*) coveting money."⁷¹ In their criticism they quote the Qur'an contending that it enjoins the believers not to take "the enemies" of Allah as allies. However 'Alam al-Dīn deconstructs their objections by appealing to the Qur'an, saying that it clearly states that peace should prevail between Muslims and non-Muslims particularly if the latter do not attack Muslims. In addition, he argues that the utility that will result when the copies of the Arabic Lexicon are made available to the masses of people including the Muslims themselves who cannot acquire copies of the lexicon transcends the theological impasse they conjure up to stop him from working for BO. 'Alam al-Dīn's appeal to utility aims to neutralize the isolationist views which labeled Europeans non-Muslims, and establishes a new bond based on a belief that scientific knowledge had the ability to bring about a cosmopolitan humanist modernity devoid of

⁶⁷ *Alam al-Din*, 359

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 893

⁶⁹ *Alam al-Din*, 310

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ *Ibid*

immutable theological tensions.⁷² Hoping to accomplish his goal, ‘Alam al-Dīn accepts to set sail with BO for Europe in order to do research for their project while learning about the inventions of modernity. The relationship that develops between ‘Alam al-Dīn and BO shows how the two figures relate to one another as a result of new space- time dimensions.

Like the sheikh, the British orientalist is represented as someone who plays a significant role in realizing a new culture woven around a cosmopolitan imaginary of modernity. BO represents an optimistic ideal of orientalism, not the hegemonic body of scholarship as described in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. BO is portrayed as someone who is genuinely interested in philology and humanism. Such is the ideal upon which Mubārak depicts the relationship between the two main figures of the novel. On the individual level, thus, BO serves as the mouthpiece of industrial modernity, for he is the one who explains to the sheikh the modern inventions such as the steam train, the telegraph, and the languages associated with them. He also explains to Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn how to behave in modern spaces of modernity such as the “hotel” and the coffee house, among other places. Through him Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn is instructed in the meaning of words such as the “kilometer” the “Centimeter,” the *Vapeur*, which is the French for the steam train, the Arabic pronunciation of which “*wabūr*” was incorporated into the Egyptian language and for this reason leads the sheikh to enquire about it. In the context of the industrial space, BO is the one who is at home because he knows how to decipher the urban space. For example when the sheikh and BO board the train for the first time and they hear the bell ring before the train’s departure, it is BO who explains to Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn the significance of the sound. Similarly, when they arrive at their hotel in Alexandria before they board the ship on their way to Europe, BO instructs sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn on how to behave in the hotel, telling him that he should not feel any sort of shyness if he should request assistance because the hotel managers receive money in return for their services.⁷³ Money, according to his explanation, functions as a tool through which social relationships are to be structured.⁷⁴ Similarly, this ability of capitalism to lead to a “re-structuring” of local social relations, to borrow an expression from Raymond Williams,⁷⁵ is the major force that leads to a new social relationship between ‘Alam al-Dīn and BO premised on the ability of money to reduce human relations to mathematical calculations that privilege rationalism.⁷⁶

However, even though the sheikh applies this logic of utility to justify his departure from al-Azhar in the company of the orientalist, their relationship remains at a disadvantage, because the institutionalization of knowledge as well as its circulation through print culture privileged orientalist representations of Islam that leaned towards reifications. An illustration of this appears in the conversation that takes place between the sheikh and BO, where the latter questions the compatibility of Islamic legislation with urban culture, particularly in regards to its

⁷² Such a belief was evident in most nineteenth century literary and cultural representation. In literary representations we find such belief in the ability of science to transform human relation in novels written by diverse authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Dickens, and Zola among others.

And in Karl Marx’s description of the proliferation of knowledge and the dissipation of barriers leading to the emergence of world literatures that would express human experiences across the globe in sync with the proliferation of capital.

⁷³ *Alam al- Din*, 186

⁷⁴ Simmel, Georg. “The Metropolis and Mental Life” in *Simmel on Culture*. David Frisby (ed.) London: Sage, 1997. PP.174-185

⁷⁵ Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958

⁷⁶ This is according to the contention of urban sociologist Georg Simmel in “The Metropolis and Mental Life.”

legitimization of polygamy, and the status of women in Islam. In response sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn expresses surprise that his companion focuses on such particular cultural practices in spite of the fact that none of them had to do with the propagation of “useful knowledge” which lies at the heart of the contract that they forged. “Neither polygamy nor Christianity” he contends, “have to do with the revival of literary sciences nor with the progress of secular arts and industries. If it were the case you [Europe] would not have resorted to Greece and the Arabs in order to reach what you have reached now.”⁷⁷ Religion, ‘Alam al-Dīn thus declares, has nothing to do with the acquisition of scientific knowledge. He clearly rejects the European ideas that his religion could be an obstacle in the way of his adaptation to the modern urban culture. In doing so Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn’s stance embodies the attitude of the *nahḍa* thinkers who rejected the localization of knowledge in the mosque of al-Azhar where the study of scientific knowledge had declined⁷⁸ as a result of the isolation that was prevalent among the scholars under Ottoman rule. In the context of such a system, the study of the world was limited to textual interpretation of through the study of the Qur’an. It was this condition that was rejected by the *nahḍa* thinkers and, as I mentioned earlier in relation to sheikh al-Tahtāwī, was declared contrary to Islamic precepts.

True to the spirit of the Arab *renaissance*, ‘Alam al-Dīn rejects this condition of learning contending that the doyens of al-Azhar follow an archaic system of knowledge “they do not pay attention to history because they consider it narratives that have no value and not a science. And they consider geography and philosophy a waste of time[...] and they excommunicate whoever leads philosophy books, and might even accuse him of apostasy. Besides, they hardly ever read the books of the Jews or the Christians, and they do not know use from mathematics anything but arithmetic.”⁷⁹ Such austerity meant isolation and intolerance, and it embodied something that was not part of true Islamic precepts. When ‘Alam al-Dīn exits the mosque and opens up to learning about the modern culture of time and space, he embraces an empirical view of the world, contending that it should be understood through rational thinking and not merely through religious interpretation. This view of the world is aptly captured in the sheikh’s contemplation of the volcano of Mount Etna:

Had not the divine will decreed that I watch the smoky blaze and hear the echoing roar, I would not have known about it and I would not have trusted its existence by merely relying on hearsay. In spite of the fact that I had read in some books about the existence of high mountains and other volcanic ones, this was not sufficient to give me the absolute certainty of the knowledge I acquired through observing and listening to your explanations. In earlier times I used to think that such matters were not important to busy my intellect with. At al-Azhar some students used to argue about such phenomena. And because al-Azhar mosque is the public school to which students come to learn from different countries such as Algeria, the Arabian Peninsula, Baghdad, Persia, Caucasia, Turkey, Berber, Sudan and Morocco, their arguments in that regard were controversial. In some instances they demanded persistence in order to convince those who unjustifiably considered the presence of such phenomena impossible and even improbable. At

⁷⁷ ‘Alam al-Dīn, 344.

⁷⁸ The *nahḍa* thinkers, who were also graduates of al-Azhar, challenged this learning philosophy by invoking the *Abbassid* era as a time when Islamic rule did not forbid the study of empirical sciences. The presence of such historical antecedent was a major factor in the development of the nineteenth century Arab *renaissance*.

⁷⁹ Cit in ‘Imara, 279

times, whoever had absolute certainty about the presence of such phenomena because he had seen it in his country had to abstain from arguing because he was alone against many others. And if he wanted to talk about it he would resort to allusions in order not to bring upon himself the fate of the one who argues against the majority. This is because in some cases, those who deny the presence of such natural phenomena are famous scholars of high esteem, and it is not unknown to you that disagreeing with the opinion of such people might incur trouble.⁸⁰

From ‘Alam al-Dīn’s reflection at seeing Mount Etna, we understand that he parts ways with the views of al-Azhar, which localized knowledge in the mosque and refused to examine whatever lay outside the boundaries of established institutional knowledge. Because prior to the introduction of print culture knowledge was localized in the institution of al-Azhar, and because the mosque followed a textual approach to knowledge that limited it to the Qur’an, individuals who held different views were often easily silenced because of peer pressure, in order to avoid, as the sheikh states, “the fate of the one who argues against the majority.” Tying knowledge to a public material culture put an end to this condition, very much in the same manner that circulation put an end to the power structure that was prevalent at al-Azhar by privileging the individual and inevitably democratizing knowledge. Surely both mobility and circulation led to the rearrangement of social relations and thus led to reshaping the position of the religious scholars.

However, ‘Alam al-Dīn still holds a mystical view of the world in his contention that it was “divine will” that ordained that he see the volcano, and thus led him to change his views of knowledge, in contrast to the prevalent views at al-Azhar where denial of “whatever lies outside God’s book” prevailed. Here, even though the sheikh sees the world as matter, he expresses a mystical view of the world which deems that “God” is the overriding power over nature and therein lay the divergence between ‘Alam al-Dīn’s position and that of the European Enlightenment thinkers.⁸¹ But apart from that ‘Alam al-Dīn embraces the same problematic objectifying view of Nature which saw the world as pure matter to be used in the process of industrialization and such a view is reflected in the vignettes that focus on matter such as tobacco, cotton, alcohol, wood, etc... But it would be entirely wrong to claim that the sheikh’s espousal of a materialist rationalist view of modernity is mainly a European import.

‘Alam al-Dīn’s adoption of rationalist views of the world is not merely following a European trend as his critics would say. Rather, the sheikh presents it as a revival of the 9th century (CE) philosophical debate between the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites in which the former school of thought advocated a rationalist view of the world and the latter, a textual religious approach that forbade thinkers to broach intellectual matters without reference to the Qur’an. The Mu‘tazilite line of thinking led to a rejection of adherence to the letter of the sacred text and it condoned the relativity of interpretation. Their line of thinking developed in the

⁸⁰ *Alam al- Din*, 306

⁸¹ The Enlightenment views of Nature and the application of pure reason to understanding the world led to the objectification of whatever lay outside the purview of reason. Nature and women were reduced to the status of the ‘other’ whose domination was part of the enlightenment ethos.

For more on the problematic aspects of the rationalist approaches of Enlightenment thinkers see Adorno, Theodor W. & Horkheimer(eds.) *The Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002. Also see Foucault “What is the Enlightenment?” in ed. Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Book, 1984.

work of the 12th century philosopher Ibn Rushd(d.1198), also known as Averroes, but did not find official support from the ruling body. Rather it was al- Ghazalī's views (d.1111) whose epithet came to be "*Hujat al- Islam*" i.e proof of Islam⁸² that were supported by the governing body because of his adherence to a philosophy of literal interpretation of the text. In Islamic history, the popularization of al- Ghazalī's ideas established him as an authoritative censor of the writing of the philosophers. As a result, for eight centuries from the beginning of the reign of Caliph al- Mutawakil(847 A.d), the ideas of al- Ghazalī curbed the use of rationality that reigned in the Islamic world. This was a condition from which Sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn breaks away, contending that it led to "withholding the minds of Muslims from thinking."⁸³ 'Alam al-Dīn parts way with that philosophy when he embraces objective rationalism, surmising that religious knowledge and the role of religious scholars should be limited to spiritual matters. In that vein, he declares that scholars of religion should "know it well, and study its disciplines without subjecting the works of others either to their denial or their confirmation."⁸⁴

With such view 'Alam al-Dīn parts ways with al-Azhar because he deems religion a separate field that should not be conflated with other fields of knowledge. Such a division was clearly in line with the Enlightenment classification of knowledge which resulted in the technocratic division of social life. In Egypt it meant that religious scholars were no longer the center of intellectual life as they had been before industrialization. But such marginalization was not accepted by the doyens of al-Azhar who continued to view Ali's modernization program as an illicit enterprise.⁸⁵ However, 'Alam al-Dīn's contention that al-Azhar should not expand its power in social life does not mean that he embraces the pure rationalist philosophy of the Enlightenment thinkers completely, and this, in turn puts him in a precarious position in regards to industrialist modernity. 'Alam al-Dīn's enthusiasm for rational knowledge occupies a middle ground between the Enlightenment views on religion and the views that were previously prevalent in the Ottoman Empire.

Indeed 'Alam al-Dīn shows an avowed enthusiasm for rationalism while holding on to his religious beliefs, which he contends are not in contradiction to rationalism. Islam, he explains to his companion, encourages its adherents to take to learning. Throughout the history of Islam no institutional power such as the church has acted as a censor to the development of the

⁸² It is possible that Muabrak's choice of the name "Burhan al-Dīn" ("the proof of religion") for the name of the sheikh's son was a deliberate challenge to al-Ghazalī's hegemony over intellectual thought in the Arab Islamic world for centuries and it was meant to express the aesthetics of a new imaginary of the world based on a culture of time and space, and not on textual interpretation of the world.

⁸³ *Alam al- Din*,261.

⁸⁴ *Alam al- Din*, 266

⁸⁵ From the outset of the modernization process the scholars of al-Azhar were self- appointed critics of the application of modern scientific knowledge to the society. Their censorship continued to play a significant role in society imposing representational authority on intellectuals. However, such censorship was limited at the outset of the modernization program since that technology was state-owned, and capitalists were largely semi-secularists. However a revolutionary overturn took place when gulf-oil capitalism appeared as a major source of funding which is used to spread Saudi Wahabi Islam in Egypt among other Arab countries. According to Sabry Hafez large sums of this money are channeled to funding the authority of *al-Azhar*, buttressing its hold on the society. For more on this see Hafez, Sabry, "Islam,politics, and the Novel" *New Left Review. September-October 2000*. According to Arab sociologists the propagation of Islamism is done through circulating fatwas of scholars of al- Azhar via media such as cassettes, videos, and most recently by streaming them via satellite channels. For a clear understanding of the role of new media, and Saudi money in the propagation of Wahabi Islam see Shalabi, 'Abdullah, *Al- Dīn wa al-sera' al- Ijtima' fi Misr (1970-1985)*. Cairo: Kitab al- Ahalī, 2000.

sciences,⁸⁶ and for this reason, he tells his employer the orientalist, European scholars should pay attention to the difference between Islam and Catholicism.⁸⁷ They should not contend that it is because of Islam that the provinces of the Ottoman Empire deteriorated, but rather because of the bad system of governance.⁸⁸ It was Islam, he explains, that united different peoples and brought the Arabs to establish an Empire to vie with that of Alexander or Augustus. And it is in the context of such Empire that the Arabs established a system of governance that led them to preserve knowledge at a time when Europe was suffering decadence because of ignorance and censorship.⁸⁹ It was at a later stage in history that Europe used the knowledge that was rescued by the Arabs and the Muslims in order to develop its systems of knowledge that led her to become the industrialized place it became. According to such historical facts, ‘Alam al-Dīn concludes, it is due to Islamic systems of knowledge that Europe developed its industrial urban modernity “*al- tamaddun al- jadīd al- mubtada*’ ”⁹⁰ (the invented urban modernity), thus calling for a re-evaluation of Europe’s views on the place of Islam and Muslims in the urban landscape of modernity.

Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn’s defense of Islam addresses the European Enlightenment ideas that religion and scientific knowledge could not coexist⁹¹ and their criticisms of Islam. His views on Islam and modernity aim to establish some sort of continuity between pre and post-industrial times.⁹² But such an attempt to rescue the self from the “creative destruction⁹³” that distinguishes industrial modernity, and which led “all that is solid [to] melt into air,”⁹⁴ according to Marx’s vision of capitalist modernity, leaves the sheikh’s vision in turmoil attempting to impose a temporal continuity between pre-and post- industrial times. For most noticeably, indeed, the novel reflects a changing geography as a result of the introduction of modern inventions, and yet

⁸⁶ ‘Alam al- Din, 310. For a historical account of the depiction of Islam in European scholarship see Albert Hourani’s *Islam in European Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁸⁷ ‘Alam al-Dīn, 315. It is important for the reader to note that at that early stage in the history of modernity there were skirmishes between the State and the Catholic Church. In the previous chapter we saw that Ṭaḥṭāwī reported the event of the revolt 1830 whereby the earliest vestiges of the clash between the church and the State appeared. And as we know from the history of Paris there were subsequent revolts against the church that led to the expansion in secularism and the limiting of the Church’s authority in the life of the individual. In the history of Islam no institution was allowed such direct mediation in the life of the individual, and for this reason Muslim thinkers of the nineteenth century did not see any contradiction between the adherence to religion as a spiritual and communal practice that has evolved throughout the centuries and the incorporation of scientific methods of governance into the society.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁹ The sheikh refers to the translation of classical Greek philosophy and the mathematical systems that were developed in the period between the 10th to the 12th centuries in the Arab Islamic world, which covered diverse areas such as Arabia, Persia, the southern shores of the Mediterranean up until Spain, and India.

⁹⁰ *Alam al- Dīn*, 314

⁹¹ Such views characterize the hard core dogma of Enlightenment thinkers, but as history shows the Reform of the church and the division between Catholicism and Protestantism were significant milestones that religion had to continue to play a role in social life one way or another.

⁹² In his 1996 study Walter Armburst contends that this is a distinctive characteristic of Egyptian modernity, which seeks to preserve some sense of temporal continuity, contrary to European modernity where “creative destruction,” to use a term from Berman, is the distinctive feature.

Armburst, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Modern Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁹³ The term is coined and used by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell, 1990.

⁹⁴ The phrase is from Karl Marx’s *Das Capital*, and it has been used by the renowned urban sociologist Marshall Berman as a title for his book on the representation of urban modernity in western literary tradition since the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

the sheikh continues to use a language that is in line with a pre-industrial world where the concepts of space and time were inherently different. Such dialectical vagueness in relation to the language of the sheikh, contends the scholar of *al-nahḍa* Ibrāhīm Badrān, continued to characterize the political language associated with modernization because it was not submitted to analyses that accounted for the historical context in which such language occurs. Thus Badran suggests that those who contend that the *nahḍa* thinkers called for a purely “Islamic system” of governance are often mistaken because they have not analyzed the language of the narratives of *al-nahḍa* in relation to its historical context.⁹⁵ And clearly ‘Alam al-Dīn’s language and views reflect the relativity of the position of the modernizing sheikh whose descriptive language relied on familiar language taken from earlier Arabic texts so that his readers could understand it.⁹⁶

The views on Islam and the nascent public sphere of the nineteenth century, as we understand from *‘Alam al-Dīn*, reflect the opinion of the *nahḍa* thinkers that the role of religion should be limited to the private realm. Such a view was expressed explicitly by Sheikh Rif’a al-Tahtawi in his book *Manahij al-Albab al-Miṣriyah fī Mabahij al- Adāb al-aṣriyah* (*Pathways for Egyptian Minds in the Delights of Modern Manners*) when he stated that religion should be used to civilize the individual while politics should be used in order to establish order in the world.⁹⁷

The privatization of religious beliefs represents one of the two views of the role of religion in public life that are depicted in the novel. The second view is that of his British counterpart, the orientalist, for whom religion appears to be a matter of no consequence, when he declares to the sheikh “as for me Christianity is not an obligation”⁹⁸ in response to sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn’s concern about the alienating impact of the views of European scholars on Islam. When he declares that religion is not a focal area of interest for himself, BO manages to develop a firm relation with the sheikh who is said to have been greatly relieved to learn that his companion is not one who wages polemics against Islam.⁹⁹ Religious beliefs, the two characters conclude at the end of their discussion on the role of religion in modern life, should be privatized and not made part of the political structures of global urban modernity. For “it is not unknown”, BO contends, that “religious people have a deep- rooted habit of bigotry; they lean towards favoring their own system of beliefs in order to reach their goals. For this reason they usually assign to their religion every virtue and ascribe to it the most beautiful epithets in order to win over the feelings of religious people and attract the hearts of those who are ignorant.”¹⁰⁰ Such politics, BO and Sheikh ‘Alam al-Dīn contend, lead to nothing but futility. Consequently, both of them agree to leave the discussion of theology out of their relationship in order to be able to pursue more fruitful discussions.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Badran, Ibrāhīm, “Ḥawla fikr al- taḥḍīth wa al- nahḍa.” In *Al- Ḥadatha wa al- ḥadatha al-‘Arabiya*. Damascus: Dar betra li ‘l Nashr wa al-tawzi’, 2005 pp. 157-175.

⁹⁶ A similar view is expressed by the Tunisian scholar Munjīyah ‘Araffah Mansiyah in her rhetorical analysis of the linguistic registers of the language of political reform in the works of Rifa‘a al- Tahtāwī, and Khayr al-Dīn al- Tunisi. For more on this, see; Mansiyah, Munjīyah. *Suṭtat al-Kalimah ‘ind Mufakkirī al- islaḥ: al- Tahtāwī wa Khayr al- Dīn*. Tunis: al-Dar al-Ttunisiyah li’l Nashr, 1993.

⁹⁷ Al- Tahtāwī, Rifa‘. *Manahij al- albbab al- miṣriyah fī mabahej al-addab al-aṣriyah*. In *Al-‘amal al- Kamilah vol. I* Muhammad ‘Imara (ed.) Beirut: al- Mu’assassa al- ‘arabiya lil nashr, 1973. P. 250

⁹⁸ *Alam al- Din*, p.315.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 329

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 342

¹⁰¹ Ibid

This discussion on the role of the religion in public life, and its significance to the relationship between the novel's main figures, the sheikh and the orientalist, takes place towards the end of the first volume of the novel. From the first volume the reader grasps the scope of the new social reality that resulted from the introduction of new technologies to the society. The circulation of print culture and the emergence of mobility as new significant material realities led to the rearrangement of social relations within Egypt. With the inception of a modern urban culture steeped in capitalist circulation the role of the scholar sheikh began to take on a new shape especially since learning started to transcend the geographical isolation of the scholars at al-Azhar mosque. 'Alam al-Dīn's exit from al-Azhar mosque and his encounter with BO appears to have taken place in the context of an expanding capitalist modernity. Circulation of capital as well as of texts appears to have been a major force that unites the sheikh and the orientalist, although their relationship remains hostage to a power structure which privileges BO as the owner of the capital and the printing press. Such material power is balanced by 'Alam al-Dīn's possession of the knowledge without which Europe's possession of the Arabic resources appears to be useless.¹⁰² In light of these circumstances, both figures negotiate a new role for themselves woven around a belief in the necessity of re-evaluating the space given to religion in the public space. 'Alam al-Dīn's rejection of the isolationist philosophy of knowledge that prevailed at al-Azhar prior to the development of urban modernity marks the development of the new *nahḍa* cultural philosophy based on the circulation of narratives which recounts the sheikh's experience of the culture of time and space. In the context of such culture Sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn fathers the future citizen of the modern nation whose relationship with the British explorer will be the focus of the next section.

Motherless at Sea: The British Explorer, the Future Citizen and the Modern Woman:

The relationship between the sheikh's son, Burhan al-Dīn and the British explorer Ya'qūb James, conceptualizes for the readers another spatial dimension of urban modernity. Whereas the relationship between the sheikh and the orientalist captures the dialectic of religion and secular space assigning a mediatory role to narrative and experience as a space for negotiating and re-thinking one's place in relation to the 'other', the relationship between Ya'qūb and Burhan al-Dīn captures the aesthetics of the space of modernity in light of colonial culture. The interactions between Burhan al-Dīn and Ya'qūb reflect the author's philosophical contention that *al-tamddun* necessitates modern citizenship as a mode of regulating one's relationship with the European 'other'; it reflects how the European encroachment on different parts of the world engendered a new kind of awareness about geography and history as two disciplines that explicate the culture of space and time. Both characters illustrate the attachment of early travel narratives to preserving identity.¹⁰³ In the context of the industrial capitalist culture of military expansion, national identity became essential- particularly in light of the new possibilities of travel that resulted from the use of steam power. Such significance appears through the author's use of Ya'qūb's character when he describes his travels as a quest to bring home knowledge of the "other." In accordance with this new philosophy of space Burhan al-Dīn's journey to Europe is justified by the sheikh as the beginning of a new future for young Burhan al-Dīn, who no longer had to follow in his father's footsteps by adopting the same profession, and staying within

¹⁰² Ibid, 1264

¹⁰³ Chard, Chloe. *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.

the same social class.¹⁰⁴ Burhan al-Dīn's trip signifies his departure from the traditional structure of Egyptian society and the opening of his future onto different possibilities related to the introduction of the secular educational system that began with Ali's project of building the nation-state. When his father and BO ask him for his opinion of whether he wants to follow in the footsteps of his father and study the religious disciplines and the Arabic language, he replies that in spite of the honor associated with the profession of the sheikh, he believes that the new economic circumstances do not reward his vocation.¹⁰⁵ The future, he contends, belongs to those who work in politics, commerce, agriculture or industry.¹⁰⁶ He thereby announces a new social reality in which the economic organization of the country would lead to the emergence of a new middle class educated in civil schools. Through Burhan al-Dīn's character, the reader grasps the aesthetics of modernity, which depends on an individualism that would lead to the development of a new social reality in Egypt.

Both Burhan al-Dīn and Ya'qūb embody a masculine aesthetic of modernity. On the one hand, Ya'qūb's relationship with nature and his sister is a fragmented relationship that is interrupted because of his constant movement in search of knowledge and experience; on the other hand, Burhan al-Dīn's relationship with his mother and his nation is severed because of his father's decision to educate him in the ways of the new urban culture. Both characters engage in a journey, the ultimate significance of which is to enable them to acquire knowledge of the world. But it is the figure of the British explorer that appears to dominate the space of modernity, and like BO, he acts as the teacher to both the sheikh and his son as he helps shape their perceptions of the space of the modern world.

Ya'qūb is introduced to the readers when Burhan al-Dīn encounters him on board of the ship on his way to Europe. He is described as a British *sā'eh*; tourist/explorer, the use of this epithet in the context of the nineteenth century is meant to associate Ya'qūb more with the Qur'anic enjoinder of believers to roam the earth in order to discover the wonders of creation. Ya'qūb's practice of *siyāḥa* (exploration, and travel) is read as a practice in acquiring knowledge, which he documents and codifies, and in turn it becomes his sole possession at the age of forty.¹⁰⁷ Ya'qūb's travel practices endow him with credibility because he survived the hardships of sea travel and even managed to escape captivity by African natives. He is associated with a developed mass culture of European travelers who "roam the earth, and every time they pass by ruins they draw it, document it, and publish it in their countries."¹⁰⁸ Such practice, BO contends, lies behind Europe's progress and its successful development of modern urbanity, (*al-tamaddun*).¹⁰⁹ His practice associates him with a modern culture of knowledge, which is acquired through mobility and then circulated through the printing press. In addition Ya'qūb's figure evokes connotations with the European practice of tourism which, by the later part of the nineteenth century acquired a cultural significance that is purely European. As studies of tourism culture have shown, the nineteenth century practice of traveling established a European order of representation in which as as, Mary Louise- Pratt contends, travel narratives emerged as

¹⁰⁴ 'Alam al-Dīn, 252.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 304

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 309

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

‘contact zones’ between European colonial hegemony and its colonized ‘other’¹¹⁰. Ya‘qūb’s figure illustrates the development of a European relationship with the modern space that originates in the travel culture that had begun in the early modern period. At its onset in the sixteenth century, British travel served as an experience that buttressed the individual’s relationship with a certain group as epitomized in the practice of The Grand Tour that was meant to instruct the British citizens in the conditions of the continent through their travel to France and Italy. The Grand Tour was mainly a politically instructive journey that lasted for five years, during the course of which gentlemen would learn foreign languages, diplomacy, political economy, and history in order to return to Britain to occupy posts in diplomacy. As such, The Grand Tour functioned not as a promotion of the “autonomous experiences” that Simmel describes in ‘The Adventure’, but aimed to inscribe the highest virtues of cultural achievement.”¹¹¹ Travel was representative of Bacon’s ideal of the activity that justified mobility as some sort of useful practice that enabled men to bring to their country the best things that existed elsewhere.¹¹² Precisely such a utilitarian view of travel motivates the sheikh’s travel to Europe when he states that it is “incumbent on every rational human being to travel around to acquire knowledge of different habits and customs (...) compare them to those prevalent in his own country in order to alert his fellow compatriots to what is useful and what is harmful.”¹¹³

Ya‘aqūb’s figure links the practice of travel itself both to the nation-state and to its later development as a kind of subjective experience through which the individual escapes the established organized relationships of industrial modernity and manages to develop new human relations that lie outside the purview of his own society.¹¹⁴ On the one hand, his relationship with Burhan al-Dīn and the sheikh represents the latter ideal, while on the other, his travels across Africa establish him as a knowledgeable European who gains credibility through his empirical knowledge and as a result, acquires status to speak of and to represent the African natives. Ya‘qūb’s encounter with the African natives endows him with legitimacy especially because it shows him as a part of an “orderly universe” according to the aesthetics of industrial modernity, established through reference to his uniformed/fashionable appearance in contrast to the semi-naked natives. Through Ya‘qūb’s narratives, Africa appears as a wild terrain that lacks civil institutions and a complex social order. By negotiating his way with the natives, Ya‘qūb gains the masculine legitimacy that qualifies him to instruct the sheikh and his son. Against the backdrop of crossing swamps, jungles and even escaping from captivity by the African natives, Ya‘qūb’s character acquires legitimacy as knowledgeable and trustworthy. His exchanges with the African natives take place in the context of an evolving colonial culture in which European merchants give the natives gifts of wine and tobacco, in exchange for gold from the natives.¹¹⁵ Ya‘qūb’s adventures weave a world of travel and adventure that portray the dynamics of economic colonialism and Europe’s obsessive emphasis on the technocratic accumulation of statistical data. Because he documents his experiences and insists that his knowledge is steeped

¹¹⁰ Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992. p.69

¹¹¹ Levin, Stephen M. *The Contemporary Anglophone Travel Novel: The Aesthetics of Self Fashioning in the Era of Globalization*. New York: Routledge, 2008. P. 21.

¹¹² Bacon 81-82, cit in Levin, 21

¹¹³ *Alam al-Dīn*, 80

¹¹⁴ Levin, Stephen M. *The Contemporary Anglophone Travel Novel: The Aesthetics of Self Fashioning in the Era of Globalization*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

¹¹⁵ *Alam al-Dīn*, 787

in a practice of empirical observation, his travels endow him with authority that leads the sheikh and his son to valorize him, and even listen to him as children listen to a master.

As soon as he meets Burhan al-Dīn on board the ship on the way to Europe, Ya'qūb gains authority over the unsuspecting youth. At the initial contact Ya'qūb's authority is established through his knowledge of the Arabic language, which he had learned during a period of captivity on the African coasts. Using his Arabic he communicates with Burhan al-Dīn to enquire about the reason behind his isolation. When Burhan al-Dīn states his bafflement at the immensity of the Mediterranean Sea, contending that it exemplifies God's magnificent creations for him, Ya'qūb shows surprise and retorts that the Mediterranean is nothing in comparison to the ocean. When Burhan al-Dīn inquires about the ocean thereby revealing his ignorance about the presence of other bodies of water on earth Ya'qūb asks him in astonishment, "but don't you know geography?!"¹¹⁶ Burhan al-Dīn then retorts that he knows nothing about the discipline only to hear Ya'qūb state that his ignorance is inexcusable since that it was the Arab travelers of the Middle Ages who had developed the discipline remarkably. "Such ignorance," he contends, "must be the reason behind the regressive condition in which the Arabs have fallen, for it is geography that enlightens humans about the presence of various creatures, and different races, their habits, and their conditions."¹¹⁷ When Ya'qūb learns of the decline in the study of geography in Egypt, he deduces that the study of history must be similarly underdeveloped among the Arabs-to which Bruhan al-Dīn replies that history is not institutionalized as a discipline, but rather is considered a personal exercise of story telling. Upon hearing this Ya'qūb explains to Burhan the reason behind the regression of the "Islamic nation": "when the teaching of history is abandoned", he contends, "men are no longer able to know of the histories of their predecessors who were behind the power of the Islamic nation, and because the nation's no power depends on its men, and since men's power cannot be complete without knowledge, the negligence of history among other disciplines must have been the reason behind the weakening of the nation and the loss of its fame. And this is how it falls captive to others who will rule, and humiliate her."¹¹⁸ Fearing the threat of colonial hegemony, both Burhan al-Dīn and his father develop an interest in knowledge of geography and history, which they learn from Ya'qūb. And it is in the spirit of creating a memory for the nation that they begin to write down meticulous details of their visits to various places; as a result, the novel turns into a verbal 'atlas' that attempts to map the dimensions of modern industrial societies while at the same time creating a reservoir of experiences for future generations.

Young Burhan al-Dīn's character serves as a futuristic projection to the imagined nation. His name, which translates into "proof of religion," appears to bear the new philosophical orientations of the nascent nation-state where materialism, and not textual interpretation, shapes the political structure and informs the views of the public. Unlike his father, Burhan al-Dīn is born and brought up in a different geographical reality. He is the first generation of urban dwellers whose ties with the communal world of the village were severed when his father migrated to the city. As a result Burhan al-Dīn grows up with no real sense of community. Furthermore, the fact that he accompanies the sheikh in the latter's quest for knowledge of industrial modernity leads Burhan al-Dīn to suffer the psychological consequences of being severed from his mother.

¹¹⁶ Ibid,357

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid,357,358

The impact of this separation is captured in Burhan al-Dīn's dream, which he relays to his mother in one of his letters to her. In the dream he sees himself at sea on board a boat caught in a storm. He sees himself amidst a tumultuous sea, falling rain, and a sinking boat, out of which Burhan al-Dīn is left hanging onto one log until he is captured by a group of people who intend to kill him. When he tells his dream to the sheikh, the latter reprimands him for giving reign to his fears and advises him in a manner evocative of Transcendentalist literature's emphasis on the individual, to "focus on the good he will get from his travels. "Feelings," the sheikh tells his son "should not come between you and your desired goals. For if upon returning to your mother you tell her that your longing for her stopped you from learning, she will not respect you."¹¹⁹

Symbolically, Burhan al-Dīn's dream expresses the impact of his separation from the mother who represents both the biological mother and the nation, whose education takes place through the letters that Burhan al-Dīn sends her over the course of his travels. Indirectly, Burhan al-Dīn's letters operate as a mediatory space between the household and the outside world, a personal narrative that creates a literary relationship between the figure of the mother and the public space. In this way, they mimic the function of the novel, which operates as a realist letter to the nation which is opening onto the world. In addition, Burhan al-Dīn's letters to his mother represent the educational mission of the founding modernizers of the Egyptian state whose calls for the education of women coincided with building the nation-state, and which was institutionalized during the time when the author served as the minister of education.

Besides the educational connection that Mubārak establishes via using Burhan al-Dīn, he serves as the youthful eye that captures the exciting novelty of the modern space. He remains consistently excitable throughout the novel, showing impatience when he arrives in Paris and requests to go out immediately to see the city.¹²⁰ Through his experiences, Mubārak describes the impact of rich urban stimuli through the lens of youth: time passes him by without him taking much notice of it "because his senses were busy with everything that he saw; the different figures, the new images"¹²¹ which inspire him to reflect. Through Burhan al-Dīn's experience of the city the reader experiences novelty as a salient aspect of modernity: "whenever he walked in some direction, he would see something he had not seen before."¹²² It is through Burhan al-Dīn's youthful curiosity about the new and the exciting that 'Ali Mubārak is able to acquire license to describe sites of entertainment such as ballrooms and theatres, without falling prey to the austerity of the censors in Egypt who had berated Ṭaḥṭāwī for frequenting such places when he described them in his account of Paris. In this manner Burhan al-Dīn's character operates in contrast to the sheikh's dedication to focus on "documenting the benefits of his experience"¹²³ in an endeavor to contribute to the nascent project of nation building, Burhan al-Dīn allows the author to incorporate some rudiments of the idea of individualistic pleasure. Furthermore, Young Burhan al-Dīn's romantic encounters with beautiful women with whom he exchanges polite conversation and develops a solid friendship on another occasion, initiate the reader into a new form of social interaction with women whose social status and role have been transformed as a result of the reshaping of the urban space. Indeed Mubārak dedicates a considerable part of

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 352

¹²⁰ *Alam al-Din*, 814.

¹²¹ Ibid, 817.

¹²² Ibid, 818.

¹²³ Ibid, 813.

his narrative to the newly-conceived role of women in modern urban life, which in real life was accomplished by the author's policies when he served as a minister of education.¹²⁴

The earliest depiction of the ideal of the modern woman appears when the sheikh chooses to marry Taqiyya whom he teaches the rudiments of reading and writing in order for her to serve as an interlocutor for the sheikh. And truly Taqiyya embodies the ideals of the New Woman, for whom Qassim Amīn's later controversial book *The New Woman*, would call. She is endowed with knowledge and wisdom and the power to negotiate with the sheikh in matters of great concern to him. Such agency, Egyptian critics have noted, appeared unrealistic given the condition of the education of women in the Ottoman era. However, it is not whether Taqiyya's character measures up to the real situation of women at that time or not that should matter, but rather it is how she represents the social ideals of the Egyptian modernizers for whom the institutional arrangement of modern life heralded new measures of social interaction. As recent scholarship has shown, the figure of the "New Woman" had a logical counterpart, that of the "New Man" whose relationship with the public space was equally new and as problematic as that of the New Woman.¹²⁵ This was well-illustrated in the experience of the sheikh in the new urban space. In that concern, Taqiyya represents the ideal for which, what Elsadda calls the "hero of [Egyptian] enlightenment" would later yearn as he sought to create a new society based on modern scientific knowledge.¹²⁶

Like the sheikh and their son, Taqiyya is socialized in a new urban reality(although her relationship with the public space is mediated through her husband and her son). When 'Alam al-Dīn declares his intention to travel she supports his decision and shows willingness to take over the responsibilities of the household. As a result of the sheikh's decision, she is given new social responsibilities to raise the children, select their teacher, and supervise the latter's pedagogical methodology. However, Taqiyya's relationship with the urban landscape remains controversial in as much as the sheikh enjoins her to keep to the house. In contrast to such conservative enjoinderment, 'Alam al-Dīn shows admiration of the European women whom he encounters as he moves through the urban landscape.

The first occasion of the sheikh's encounter with what appears to be a self-actualized European woman takes place when he resides in the company of BO at a hotel in Alexandria, as they wait for their boat to take them to Europe. When he shyly enters the dining room at night, the sheikh notices an Italian woman who is proficient in Arabic and other languages and so could readily converse with different people in their own language. The lady's eloquence and beauty earns her the sheikh's admiration, and yet it puzzles him, for she appears to be very different from the women of "the countries of the orient" whose interactions with men were limited to their husbands and their next of kin. And even on such occasions they were usually shy and timid, unlike the Italian lady whose ability to converse endows her with masculine qualities.¹²⁷ In spite of his admiration of her eloquence and her ability to keep up with the conversation, when he considers it, the sheikh decides that the seclusion of women is better than their mingling with men because it ensures the preservation of their families' honor.

¹²⁴ It was 'Alī Mubārak Pasha who decreed girls' educations mandatory. Prior to that girls' education was confined to the privacy of the household.

¹²⁵ Elsadda, Hoda. "Imagining the "New Man" Gender and Nation in Arab Literary Narratives in the early Twentieth Century." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3:2 (Spring 2007)

¹²⁶ Ibid,35

¹²⁷ *Alam al- Dīn*, 198

But the sheikh's views on the topic of women and public space appear to be rather paradoxical due to his own ambivalent relationship with the modern space that manifests itself in the various experiences he goes through. For example, when he first enters the dining room to join BO for dinner he feels estranged because the place is crowded with men and women who turn their gazes on him "especially because his appearance was different from theirs."¹²⁸ Such anxiety shows the sense of alienation that accompanied the early urban encounters where visual symbols, whether they are architectural structures such as that of the hotel where he resides in Alexandria or clothes, began to acquire social significance related to the development of industrial modernity. When the sheikh arrives at the hotel with his son and BO, the modern structure strikes him as a sign of wealth and opulence which he associates with his employer, thinking that the hotel is his house until his son corrects him that. Noticing their estrangement in the modern structure, BO turns to instruct them in the social laws that govern the place, which are regulated by the logic of money: "one should not feel any sort of shyness in requesting whatever is needed in this place, for the owners have established a contractual relation in return for the money that one pays."¹²⁹ Still with such a lesson, he shows them how to ring the bell in order to request service for their rooms. Similarly when they sit at the dinner table, the sheikh feels anxious because of the novelty of the table manners, which he manages to follow in exactly the same way the Europeans perform them. The novelty of all the urban practices, as they appear from 'Alam al-Dīn's interactions and encounters, necessitated a social education that the sheikh did not possess, but which he takes to acquiring, declaring that there is a great deal of utility and benefit from learning new social manners especially that the time heralded the frequency of interactions among different kinds of people.¹³⁰ Views on social interactions, then, were beginning to be interpreted in relation to the nascent modern space, where the introduction of new technologies created new aesthetics that led to the creation of new civil laws suitable to the novel relations that emerged as a result of industrial capitalist modernity's reshaping of the social space.

In regards to the social role of women in the modern urban space 'Alam al- Dīn reflects a transitioning into the formation of modern social aesthetics, albeit according to male standards. According to a conservative patriarchal view, the novel shows women's mingling with men as a beneficial practice because it enables them to learn new things by listening to men's conversations which, no doubt, add to their knowledge. However, it seems to be a reprehensible practice particularly because it leads them to lose their shyness, and for this reason, the eastern habit of segregation, appears to be safer.¹³¹ In addition, mingling with men, according to the sheikh was seen as a possible cause for chaos since it might provoke desires that might lead to family feuds that could end in separation and the annihilation of the family. Such a view, however, is countered by that of BO who expresses the progressive views that were beginning to circulate on the condition of women. "Segregation," he contends "is not the only means by which a man can be sure about the chastity of his spouse (...) it is good upbringing that ensures that a woman follows her duties... just as it is not sufficient to instruct while giving absolute freedom, seclusion is similarly insufficient without instruction."¹³² The contention that it is upbringing/cultivation (*al-tarbiyah*) that matters in the case of women's mingling with men was

¹²⁸ Ibid,196

¹²⁹ Ibid, 186

¹³⁰ Ibid, 196

¹³¹ *Alam al- Dīn*,200

¹³² Ibid, 202

not a novelty; it was first introduced in Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Talkhīs* when he summed up his story of the Parisian women.

The culture of *al-tamaddun* shapes the destiny of the figures of the novel. In light of the novelty of the urban space, the sheikh, his son, and his spouse encountered BO, the British explorer, and European women, all of whom served as symbolic figures that embodied a new social reality predicated on the expansion of industrial capitalism. However, the fate of the new relations that are forged as a result of the development of urban modernity remains open, according to '*Alam al- Dīn*' where the main characters remain motherless at sea never returning home with the knowledge that is needed for the building of Egypt as a modern nation.

'*Alam al- Dīn*'s depiction of the new social relations that were shaped by the new space of modern global urban culture where encounters, circulation, mobility, and novel practices became key factors in shaping culture, shows an ambivalent modernity that is polarized between appearances and reality, colonial threat, and the potential for creating a liberating humanist public sphere. All these factors are reflected in the sheikh's narrative of his urban experience where the introduction of new technologies such as the printing press, steamships, telegraphs, and trains altered the concept of space leading to the formation of a new cultural sphere that transcended the boundaries of al-Azhar mosque. '*Alam al-Dīn*'s exit from the mosque embodied the modernizers' quest for knowledge of modern culture predicated on the use of rational scientific knowledge. His adoption of the new empirical culture signaled the beginning of a new narrative of the self revolving around a culture of time and space. His departure to Europe in the company of the orientalist initiated the formation of a new humanist culture where narrative emerged as an important space for explicating the novel experiences of modern urban culture.

'*Alam al- Dīn*' was the beginning of a body of literature written by the forefathers of Egyptian enlightenment whose literary narratives sought to establish a new geographical imaginary of the self that was cosmopolitan in essence. This body of literature developed the theory of *al-tamaddun* which took trade and the cities of the Mediterranean as its reference points. Such a cultural theory was forged in the process of building Egypt as a modern nation where the sheikh's son would emerge as the future citizen whose perceptions are shaped not by confinement to the singular culture of the traditional *qur'anic* school, but by the plurality of cultures and traditions that he gets exposed to over the course of his educational journey. Burhan al-Dīn's experiences of the modern urban space result in a new relationship between the Egyptian household and the global space, for it is through his letters that his mother learns about modern culture. By proxy his letters mimicked the function of the Egyptian novel, which emerged as a metaphysical geographical space in which the aesthetics of modern culture were to be debated. Unlike the *maqamāh*, '*Alam al- Dīn*' did not revert to moralizing, indeed it attempted to avoid passing judgments on the new urban trends that emerged as a result of the development of the modern city. In its celebration of the novelty of the modern culture of the city, it stood out as a modern literary work that attempted to map out the emergence of a new geography of modernity shaped around the structuring of modern nation-states. '*Alam al- Dīn*'s importance lies in its singularity among nineteenth century Arabic literary works such as al- Muwailhī's *Ḥadīth 'Isa Ibn Hishām*, which was written after the British colonized Egypt and thus reverted to adopting the traditional narrative form of *al- maqāmah*. Such reversion reflected the conflation of the novelty of urban culture with colonial culture which put an end to what el-Enany calls a

period of “enchanted encounters” between Arab thinkers and European intellectuals.¹³³ However, it is important to question whether colonialism did indeed put an end to the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* as it was conceived by the nineteenth century modernizers, or whether this cultural theory developed in the twentieth century?! Did colonialism lead to an eclipse in the fate of the Egyptian sheikh of the nineteenth century? Did it mean that Mubarak’s protagonist lost his identity and his goal as mass urban culture developed? *‘Alam al-Dīn*’s open-end leaves the reader wondering about the fate of the sheikh’s quest to propagate the aesthetics of *al-tamaddun* in Egypt. This question will be dealt with in the following chapter which will summarize how the theory of *al-tamaddun* developed in tandem with the expansion of capitalist modernity in Egypt of the twentieth century.

¹³³ El- Enanay, Rashid. *Arab Representations of the Occident: East – West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Chapter 3

From Sheikh to Effendi: The Development of the Literary Theory of *al-tamaddun* in Colonial Urban Modernity:

The previous two chapters examined the development of the practice of *flânerie* by the figure of the progressive sheikh whose exit from the mosque of al-Azhar signaled the beginning of his intellectual occupation with global urban modernity. The gradual transformation of the society from one that depended on a feudal agrarian economy to a capitalist industrializing economy was reflected in the early narratives of the urban experience. The sheikh narrated the experience of urban modernity in the context of Paris, and relayed to his Arab readers the social transformations that resulted from a money economy that depended on the rapid circulation of commodities, populations, and information. The early Arabic narratives of urban modernity reflected a new confidence in the transformative power of technology to enable progress and social transformation. The circulation of news and images in tandem with the circulation of a money economy was central to the imagined community of the modern nation that began materializing in the sheikh's narratives of urban culture in Paris. By practicing *flânerie* in the modern city, the sheikh represented the emergence of a new culture in which museums, exhibitions, cabarets, and theatres were emerging as centers of commercialized leisure. These visual signs of an emergent culture were the facade of modern culture in which industrialization and the expansion of capitalism also created a colonial modernity. The new semiotics of capitalist modernity threatened to objectify non-Europeans and whatever did not conform to the Enlightenment rationalist ideals. This dynamic of industrial capitalist modernity had its impact on the figure of the sheikh himself as it threatened to marginalize him. Its colonizing impact appeared in '*Alam al-Dīn* when the sheikh and his son arrived in Marseilles and were surrounded by urban crowds who regarded them as a spectacle because of their clothes. When the sheikh and his son arrived in Paris, the anxiety of being objectified by the crowds led him to discourage his son from engaging in *flânerie* while continuing to wear his Egyptian attire: "son, if you go out dressed like this, people will stare at you, and all the passersby, be they men, women or children will congregate around you. And perhaps because of your politeness, [you will not tell them off] and this will impede your desire to watch the city."¹

The sheikh's warning to his son alerts the reader to the new visual culture that resulted from the expansion of capitalist modernity and that became the source of anxiety to the liberal progressive sheikh who found himself marginalized in the modern capitalist city. With the expansion of capitalist modernity, the figure of the sheikh had to face its dialectical nature where the emergence of new fashion trends, and new habits of consumption led the figure of the sheikh to be associated with the culture of al-Azhar and religious teaching. In this chapter I will trace the how the theory of *al-tamaddun* was developed by the new social figure of the *effendi*, whose emergence resulted from Muhammad Ali's modernization program and culminated in the symbolic disappearance of the figure of the sheikh as the primary narrator of the experience of urban modernity. In the twentieth century, the articulation of urban culture that appeared in the narratives of the sheikh about Paris found theoretical expression in Taha Ḥusayn's book *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-'arabiyya fī Miṣr* (*The Future of Arab Culture in Egypt*) which theorized the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* while focusing on the transformations that resulted

¹ '*Alam al- Dīn*, 810

from the expansion of capitalist modernity. His book is particularly significant because it captured the dialectical nature of capitalist urban modernity where the dichotomy between secular and religious, authentic and modern began to riddle the modernization process in Egypt with its development of mass culture where the figure of the *effendi* became representative of the new middle class culture in Cairo.

In ‘Alī Mubarak’s ‘*Alam al-Dīn*, the sheikh’s son, young Burhān al-Dīn represented the new social class of the *effendis* whose exposure to modern urban culture and their education in a semi-secular system of education were major factors in shaping their cultural perceptions. The new generation of intellectuals whose visual representation was to become the *effendi* returned to a different Egypt described by sheikh ‘Alam al- Dīn as a country transformed because of the implementation of modernization:

Whoever contemplates Egypt’s conditions before Muhammad Ali Pasha took it over would find that there is no relation to earlier times. In previous times, there were hardly any foreigners in our country, but now there are no less than one hundred thousand residents. Similarly, none of our people spoke foreign languages but now there are thousands who speak several languages. It used to be rare for an Egyptian to travel to Europe, but these days not a year goes by without Egyptians going and coming between Egypt and Europe in order to learn useful sciences and industries.[...] Furthermore, when once it was foreigners who ruled the community, now looting it, now inflicting torture on its people, it is now ruled by its own offspring. If Allah had not blessed Egypt with this dynasty none of what you see now would have transpired. To the contrary, its people would have remained like their neighboring Berbers, Levantine and Gulf Arabs holding on to their ancestors’ useless traditions and knowledge that originate in ignorance. Evidently, each nation follows its leader and its ruling men.²

Sheikh ‘Alam al- Dīn’s reflections on the changes and social transformations that resulted from the modernization program sheds light on the expansion of capitalist modernity, which is illustrated by the appearance of foreign travelers and investors in Egypt. His contention that Egyptians began to learn foreign languages and travel to Europe alludes to the formation of a pluralistic cultural philosophy in Egypt that embraces a multiplicity of traditions. For sheikh ‘Alam al- Dīn singularity of cultural tradition in the context of expansive modern urban culture appeared to be a sign of *jāhiliyai*(literally means a state of ignorance and specifically evocative of pre-Islamic times). His reflection on the conditions in Egypt of the Ali dynasty addresses the historical transformation in the country’s conditions as Muhammad Ali opened it to international trade leading foreign merchants to flock to Egypt. Ali’s policies of religious tolerance led Christians and Jews from other parts of the Ottoman Empire to settle in Egypt, particularly after the massacre that took place in Syria in the second half of the nineteenth century. Such policies created the conditions of a cosmopolitan cultural realm, that contributed to the transformed consciousness of which sheikh ‘Alam al- Dīn speaks when he contends that Egypt had parted ways with the ancestral knowledge that originates in “*jahiliya*”. His use of this particular concept to refer to his adoption of a new epistemological model that depends on empirical scientific knowledge symbolizes the sheikh’s performance of a revolutionary “creative destruction” in tandem with the capitalist modernization. It reflects the sheikh’s development of a new

² Muabarak, ‘Alī. ‘*Alam al- Dīn*. Cairo: al- Hay’ah al- miṣriyah al- ‘amah lilkitab, 1993. PP.317, 318.

philosophy that deemed Egypt a culturally specific country with its own history and geography that set her apart from neighboring parts of the Ottoman Empire. Such philosophy relied on ‘Alam al-Dīn’s development of a newly conceived identity as a citizen in a rapidly expanding urban world.

The formation of the rhetoric of citizenship allowed the sheikh to set himself apart from inhabitants of “neighboring” Muslim-majority countries where modernization was proceeding at a slower pace. The sheikh’s identity as a Muslim scholar became coupled with his national identity and this put an end to the geographical imaginary of pre-modern times where it was *bilād al-islām* (the lands of Islam) versus the lands of apostasy that was used in reference to the spatial relation between Egypt and Europe. ‘Alam al-Dīn’s use of the term *jahiliya* in this instance reflects the transitional nature of the time and the manner in which *al-nahḍa* intellectuals used the language of religious discourse in order to advance the cause of a semi-secular social structure, in which religion would be limited to the private sphere, while science and technical knowledge would help regulate the fast growing social organization.³ This language was directed at the readers of the nineteenth century who were mainly educated in the religious institution of al-Azhar. However, the religious rhetoric was likely to disappear because by the end of the nineteenth century modern non-religious institutions such as the semi-secular schools and universities began to play a key role in the shaping of modern culture in Egypt. As a result of this transformation, the figure of the progressive sheikh developed from that of a religious leader whose work was used to give legitimacy to the governing body during the days of the Ottoman rule to that of a modern day intellectual whose work was concerned with the question of culture and the individuals’ relationship to their homeland, and second to the world at large. Sheikh Rifā‘a al- Tāḥṭāwī was the first to embody this new transformation in the role of nineteenth century intellectuals. Together with other progressive sheikhs, he helped develop the urban ideals for a new social class known as the *effendis*, whose appearance reflected the social transformations that resulted from the expansion of capitalist modernity that accompanied modernization in Egypt.

The class of the *effendis* existed in Egypt prior to the advent of Napoleon’s expedition. The Turkish origins of the word indicate its administrative nature. At that time, the *effendi* was mainly someone employed by the government who used his knowledge of reading and writing to carry out administrative tasks.⁴ The social connotations of the term developed when Muhammad Ali’s government established civil schools that focused on teaching modern scientific and technical knowledge. At the early stage, students of these schools were recruited from the religious schools that dominated the villages and the cities. By studying specific disciplines, they became engineers, doctors, civil lawyers, journalists, and authors. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Khedive Ismail decreed that the *effendis* working for the government begin wearing western style clothes and the fez; hence they became known as “*al- mutarbashūn*” (those who wear a fez) in contrast to “*al- mu‘ammamūn*” (those who used to wear the turban and the traditional attire of the sheikh). This visual feature in the appearance of the educated social classes distinguished them from the former generation of intellectuals that was represented by the figure of the sheikh. Symbolically this meant that the role of the sheikh who continued to

³ This view was first conceived and presented to the public in sheikh Tāḥṭāwī’s book *Manahij al- albbab al- miṣriyah fī mabahij al- adāb al- ‘aṣriyah*.

⁴ Rizq, Yūnan Labīb, *Miṣr al- madaniya: fuṣūl fī al-nash’ah wa al- taṭwūr*. Cairo: Salība li’l- dirasāt wa’l-nashr, 1993. p123.

wear the turban was to be limited to administering religious knowledge, and eventually it came to symbolize a person who was not exposed to European culture at large. With the development of the Egyptian state in the nineteenth century the *effendis* increased in number. The economic, political, and social influence of this class depended on their service to the modern nation state, as they were the professional class and technocrats who helped develop the cadres of the modern nation-state.

Besides their reception of a semi-secular education in which science and technical knowledge were the focus, the *effendis* lived in a Cairo where circulation of news, knowledge, and images led to important transformations. Their Cairo was different Cairo from the Cairo where the early generation of progressive sheikhs lived. By the second part of the nineteenth century there developed in Cairo a vibrant press that aimed to propagate knowledge of the latest scientific discoveries and later began to debate the impact of technical knowledge on social life. In its initial stages, the press was responsible for the intellectual conditioning of the *effendis*; but it is important to note that it was administered by the older generation of the progressive graduates of al-Azhar such as sheikh al- Ṭaḥṭāwī, who worked as an author and an editor of the journal *Rawḍat al- Madāris*, where the most prominent intellectuals of nineteenth-century Egypt published their views. Such publications contributed significantly to the development of a new readership in Egypt that transcended the concern for religious affairs and the Arabic language. In addition to this, the circulation of translated works of history and continental philosophy and Greek philosophy (a large number of which were issued by sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī) also helped raise new social themes for debate. The publication of news from the Sudan and Arabia in the newspaper *al-waqāi‘ al- miṣriyah* cultivated a new form of spatial consciousness that privileged a sense of simultaneity and was significantly different from paper’s previous focus on publishing governmental edicts.⁵ In addition to this, the newspaper published news excerpts from European papers, thereby enhancing the sense of simultaneity and creating a cosmopolitan consciousness for the early readers that constituted the new social class of the *effendis*. With the increase in the number of this social class they began to play a vital role on the social scene. They represented the new citizens of the nation who would carry out the process of modernization and develop an intellectual philosophy of modernity. Their views on urban culture, however, were influenced by sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī’s philosophy of urban culture that took the development of “urbanity” (*al-tamaddun*) as its base.

Ṭaḥṭāwī’s book *Manahij al-albbāb al-miṣriyah fī Mabāhij al- Adāb al-‘aṣriyah* (1871) articulated the main themes of urban philosophy that appeared in Mubārak’s *‘Alam al-Dīn*. Central to this philosophy was the ideal of modern citizenship whereby religion would be confined to the “personal realm” and politics, as a rational science, would be the discipline for administering public affairs. The tenor of this new philosophy is reflected in Ṭaḥṭāwī’s contention that “*adab al- sharī‘a ma hadhab al- fard, wa adab al- siyasa ma ‘amara al- arḍ*” (divine law is to discipline the individual while politics is to contribute to the development of a world system). In Ṭaḥṭāwī’s contention “worldly affairs”, which were to be administered by politics, which in turn established a new rhetoric for understanding culture. His emphasis on “worldly affairs” pointed to his conviction that citizenship in the nation and the increasingly globalizing world was the new ontological condition through which to relate to the world. Social

⁵ Ibid. 128,129

⁶ Al- Ṭaḥṭāwī, Rifa‘a. *Manahij al- albbāb al- miṣriyah fī mabahej al- adab al-‘aṣriyah*. Ed. Muhammad ‘Imara. Al- a‘mal al- Kamilah vol 1. Beirut: al- mu‘asassah al- ‘arabiyah lil nishr, 1973. P.250.

relations within the nation and beyond its geographical boundaries were to be regulated according to an ethos of citizenship that replaced the older ethos of “fraternity in religion.” To popularize such a view, Ṭaḥṭāwī reinterpreted the prophetic *ḥadīth* which stated that, “the Muslim is the brother of the Muslim,” [adding] “all that is binding on a believer in regard to his fellow believers is binding also on members of the same *waṭan* in their mutual rights, for there is a national brotherhood between them, over and above the brotherhood in religion. There is a moral obligation on those who share the same *waṭan* to work together to improve it and perfect its organization in all that concerns its honour, and greatness and wealth.”⁷ Such ideas were revolutionary at the time of their conception because they implied a departure from the former state of consciousness conditioned by the political structure of the Islamic *umma*, which categorized people according to their belonging to a certain *millah* (religious sect). In the age of inventions such as the steamship, the press, and the Suez Canal, sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī wrote of a “process [of social transformation] which would continue and must in the end lead to the coming together of peoples and their living together in peace.”⁸ The ideals of a modern global citizenship that transcends the specificity of one’s culture lay at the core of the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* by the end of the nineteenth century. They played a key role in shaping the consciousness of the new social class of the *effendis*; but it was the sheikh who laid down the initial foundations of the core philosophy of *al-tamaddun* that shaped their views. However, with the development of civil education, and the transformation in the appearance of the new educated class, the figure of the sheikh who continued to wear the attire of al-Azhar began to be marginalized. In an urban culture where capitalist expansion changed the habits of consumption and where the changes in appearances were as rapid as the circulation of money, there emerged a perplexing dichotomy that continued to riddle social modernity in Egypt. It revolved around the polarization of culture between the appearance of modern order versus the real philosophy that derives it became one of the contentious points that began to be debated by intellectuals. What Timothy Mitchell has referred to as the “colonizing affects” of capitalist modernity, appeared as a controversial challenge that Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī himself was aware of and which he addressed it in his *manahij al- albbāb* contending:

And perhaps some would mistakenly believe that it is a sign of manliness and good social practice to adopt the dress codes of the foreign countries which are famous for their urbanity (*tamaddun*). To the contrary (*al-tamaddun*) being modern is not about the adoption of an unknown dress code which is supposedly better. Our country’s need the real benefits [of modernity] and not the imitation of appearances which represent an apparent utility.⁹

The dichotomy between surface and deep structure became an increasingly central dialectic in modern urban culture. This was the case because of the centrality of visual representation to the fast paced urban culture where fleeting encounters became the norm.¹⁰ And

⁷ Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Manāḥij al- albbāb al-miṣriyah fī mabāḥij al-adāb al- ‘aṣriyah*. P 99 cit in Albert Hourani *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age*. p.79

⁸ Hourani, Albert. *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press,1962. p. 81

⁹ Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, Rifā‘a, *Manāḥij al- albbāb al- Miṣriyah fī Mabāḥij al- adābb al- ‘aṣriyah*. Cit in Mahmūd Fahmī Hejāzī, *Usūl al-fikr al- ‘arabī al-Ḥadīth ‘ind al- Ṭaḥṭāwī ma‘a al- naṣ al-kamil likitābihi Talkhīs al- Ibrīz Fī waṣf barīz*. Cairo: al- hay’ah al-miṣriyah al- ‘amah li’l-kitāb. p. 81

¹⁰ Sociological studies of the topic are numerous and originate in the works of Georg Simmel which dealt with social interactions in the metropolis , and Louis Writih’s “Urbanism as a Way of Life”, and the studies of the Chicago

because the rapid circulation of money and images in the modern city enhanced the dominance of visual cognition in social interactions, the expansion of capitalist modernity in Egypt led the figure of the sheikh (the central narrator of the experience of urban modernity) to become associated with the religious learning prevalent at the mosque of al-Azhar. This was particularly the case because with modernization, some of the doyens of al-Azhar began to take a conservative stance regarding the culture of change and transformation that accompanied capitalist expansion. Even though the early philosophy of urban modernity was developed by sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and other graduates of al-Azhar, during the later stages of social modernity in Egypt the figure of the progressive sheikh was slowly replaced by that of the *effendi* whose most prominent representative was Ṭaha Ḥusayn, the author of *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-‘arabiya fī Miṣr* (*The Future of Arab Culture in Egypt*).

Like sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī and ‘Ali Mubarak, Ṭāha Ḥusayn was born in an Egyptian village along the Nile. His early education, like theirs, focused on religious knowledge and memorizing the Quran. When he was a child he contracted an eye infection which was wrongly treated by a traditional medicine man, causing Ḥusayn to lose his eye sight. As a result, his education remained limited to religion since he could not be enrolled in the newly established civil schools to which his brothers were sent. When he finished the various stages of his education in the village, Ḥusayn was sent to al-Azhar to develop his knowledge of the *Sharī‘a* and its disciplines.

Once in Cairo, however, Ḥusayn encountered an urban reality that was significantly different from the world of the village in which he had grown up, for during the early part of nineteenth century Cairo had developed new neighborhoods designed after neighborhoods in Paris. ‘Abdel-Malek described the impact of this development as leading the inhabitants of the city to experience a “transformed sense of being and the emergence of new cultural taste.”¹¹ Ḥusayn encountered a city where coffee houses designed after the European style hosted traditional practices of storytelling. The city was a terrain for experiencing the old and the new: one could sit in a European style café and listen to a story teller narrating stories from *al-turāth* (cultural heritage) that revolved around such traditional epics as Abū Zayd al- Hilālī, al- zahir Baybars, or ‘Antara Ibn shaddād. In addition, there was already a vibrant press and political debates were not uncommon in the cafes and literary saloons that had spread around the city.¹² As a student at al-Azhar, Ṭāha Ḥusayn was part of an old culture of learning, one that became increasingly marginalized in the context of urban culture mainly because the modern nation state began to rely on the graduates of the civil schools. Besides attending al-Azhar, however, Ḥusayn, was involved in the learning community at the new Egyptian university. Ḥusayn’s involvement in several intellectual communities alerted him to the manner in which capitalist modernity established a divergence between the religious institution (al-Azhar) and the global urban culture that was rapidly developing as technologies and new means of transportations helped establish a new culture predicated on citizenship. Within al-Azhar itself there was already a group of intellectuals who were attempting to continue the progressive line of thought that extended as far back as the eighteenth century when Sheikh Ḥassan al- ‘Aṭṭār was the grand sheikh of the mosque. During Ḥusayn’s time it was Sheikh Muhammad ‘Abduh who espoused a progressive

school of urban sociology which emphasized the increasing role of visual cognition in creating social meaning in modern urban culture.

¹¹ ‘Abdel-Malek, Anouar. *Nahḍat Miṣr*. Cairo: al hay’ah al miṣriyah al- ‘amah li’l-kitāb, 1983. p311

¹² Hafez, Sabry. *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A study in the Sociology of Arabic Literature*. London: al- Saqi books, 1993.

philosophy at al-Azhar which sought to harmonize the culture of the mosque with the modern urban world.

Outside the mosque, the newly established Egyptian university aimed at graduating students educated in the liberal arts. Ḥusayn's attendance at the lectures there had a great impact on his intellectual make-up. It made him realize that the traditional way of teaching Arabic literature at al-Azhar, in isolation from other world literatures that were quite popular through translation, was contrary to the spirit of the age in which technology created the opportunity for the formation of a new global humanist culture. When he traveled as one of the fellows in the humanities sent by the modern Egyptian state to Paris, he studied sociology with Emile Durkhiem and attended lectures given by intellectuals such as Paul Valéry. His education in religion first, and then in the humanities was a significant factor in his development of the theory of *al-tamaddun* in his book *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-'arabiyah fī miṣr*. Indeed, the latter can be read as a continuation of Ṭaḥṭāwī's work and that of 'Ali Mubārak, especially in its emphasis on the transformative impact of technology and industry on cultural representation.

When Ḥusayn published *Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa al-'Arabiyah fī Miṣr* in 1938, he had already established a career for himself as a man of letters whose literary writing challenged the orthodox views of the traditional doyens at al-Azhar. This work addressed urban modernity's use of technology and its impact on the social relations that led to the development of a modern cosmopolitan culture in Egypt. Like Sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's and 'Ali Mubārak's work, Ḥusayn's theorization of *al-tamaddun* attempted to address key questions about Egyptian culture in light of the expansion of capitalist modernity: Did the prevalence of Islam in Egypt prevent Egypt from being a Mediterranean culture with a pluralistic history? Was Arab culture was to be the only "authentic" strand of Egyptian culture? These questions were significant to his theory of *al-tamaddun*, which aimed at stressing the impact of material changes and technological developments to understanding Egyptian modernity and its relation to European modernity. Like Ṭaḥṭāwī and Mubārak, Ḥusayn argued for taking into account geography and history as two essential elements in addressing cultural transformations in modern Egypt. The change in the perception of time and space were to figure as two key components of Ḥusayn's theory, betraying his espousal of the idea that the modern sense of simultaneity and proximity among different nations would ultimately lead to the formation of a cosmopolitan modernity:

Modernity has brought about communication between Egypt and Europe, more truthful indeed, it has brought about better communication between all parts of the globe. This communication has grown stronger and has become the first pillar in the lives of individuals and groups. Because temporal and spatial distances between people and nations have been cancelled, it has become possible for Egyptians to know, not only on the same day, but at the same moment, world news. And similarly it has become possible for the world to get Egypt's news as soon as it happens.¹³

The passage resonates with what Mubarak's protagonist sheikh 'Alam al-Dīn's says to his companion the British Orientalist that the use of steam power in transportation has created an unprecedented proximity between regions and countries and this, in turn, led him to realize the

¹³ Ḥusayn, Tāha. *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-'arabiyah fī miṣr*. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ma'arif wa Maktabtuha bi-miṣr, 1944. P. 30

necessity of changing his philosophical beliefs in accordance with the new material culture that resulted from industrialization.¹⁴ However, Ḥusayn's work differed from earlier accounts of the nineteenth century in that it had to deal with the aftermath of the military colonialism of Egypt and different parts of the former Ottoman Empire.

The ideal of the modern nation-state figured in the early narratives of the nineteenth-century sheikh was now tainted with the impact of British colonialism and the scramble among the imperial powers. *Al-tamaddun*'s emphasis on national identity, which was inherent in the transformation of the sheikh's role from a religious scholar to a public intellectual, became part of a wider debate about whether Egypt was part of a "spiritual" East whose need for governance by the materialist West was indispensable. Cultural discourse was polarized by reference to authenticity versus Western innovations, which came to be associated with the culture of the colonizers.¹⁵ Similarly, Egypt's adoption of the urban institutional models that originated in Europe and influenced the social interactions raised questions about its authenticity. Such questions were central to the cultural discourses of the early twentieth century, and Ḥusayn and the new generation of intellectuals who were involved in developing modern urban institutions had to address them. For Ḥusayn, cultural transformation and adaptation was an ongoing historical occurrence. Hadn't Egypt already adopted the culture of the Arabs in the ninth century? Weren't the famous Arab poets Bashār and Abū Nawās equally foreign to Egyptians at one point in time as the European authors of the nineteenth century might appear to be?¹⁶ After all, the process of cultural development was bound to the geographical expansion of Islam and its openness to world civilizations at various stages in its development: "Muslims did not come up with this wonderful Islamic civilization from Arabia alone, but rather they derived some of it from these lands, and other parts from the Zoroastrians of Persia, and other parts from the Christians of Rome."¹⁷ Ḥusayn's idea of *al-tamaddun* emphasized the necessity for understanding Islam in relation to geography for the sake of both cultural specificity and cultural pluralism. He argued that Egypt could keep its Arab Islamic culture while keeping up with the culture of urban modernity that had created the conditions for the development of a global consciousness of world civilizations. By stressing the importance of observing the relationship between Islam and geography, Ḥusayn was responding to conservative views from Muslim scholars as well as from European intellectuals, for whom Islam was not compatible with modern urban culture.¹⁸

For Ḥusayn, relegating Islam to the category of the "backward/underdeveloped East" in the discourses of European orientalists was only a pretext for domination which stood in contrast to the way in which they had accepted Christianity as a constituent part of European culture. For, "if the European philosophers and the leading intellectuals there [Europe] consider Christianity to be a constituent of the European mentality, I wonder what makes it different from Islam when both religions originated in the geographic east and both have sprang out of the same noble source, and were revealed by one God in whom both Easterners and Westerners

¹⁴Mubarāk, 'Ali. 'Alam al- Dīn. Vol.1, p. 177

¹⁵ Najīb, Najī. *Riḥlat 'alam al-Dīn lilshaykh 'Ali Mubarak: qira'ah fī al- tarīkh al- Ijtima'ī al-fīkr'arabi al- ḥadīth*. Beirut: dar al- kalima lil nashr, 1981 P.70

¹⁶ *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-'arabiyah fī Misr*, p 44

¹⁷ Ibid,50

¹⁸ The debates between the French writer Hanteaux and the progressive sheikh Muḥammad 'Abdū which revolved around the compatibility of Islam as a system of belief with the modern urban world, is an example of the kind of objections that Ḥusayn would have been answering to.

believe?”¹⁹ As a Muslim believer, he viewed Islam’s relationship to Christianity as one of continuity, since Islam upheld the basic monotheistic beliefs that were part of Judaism and Christianity. Furthermore, it was Muslims who preserved Hellenic culture and it was through their translations of the Greek philosophers that Europe was revived from the Dark Ages. When Muslims turned to Europe’s modern civilization, therefore, they were only reclaiming parts of a heritage that they helped develop. Such line of thought that sought to bridge the gap between the east/west dichotomy in the discourse of the period was equally directed at Muslim conservatives for whom adoption of the organizational model of modern urban culture symbolized an inauthentic act. Ḥusayn contended that he did not see any obstacle that would stop Muslim thinkers from being public intellectuals open to cultural pluralism. And unlike Europe, where the religious establishment was once an obstacle to the development of a humanist culture because of the traditional role of the clergy, Ḥusayn reiterated that “Islam does not have a clergy or even a distinction between preachers and commoners. Islam has been elevated from establishing a mediatory role between the believer and his God.”²⁰ Such theological difference, he contended, ensured that the religious establishment would not withhold the development of a humanist public sphere in order to protect its interests as was the case in Europe.²¹ Ḥusayn’s *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-‘arabiyah* reflected the development of the philosophy of urbanity that had begun in the writing of sheikh al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s representation of urban culture. His book suggested that the figure of the *effendi*, like that of the sheikh was able to develop an urban philosophy that addressed the needs of a global urban culture predicated on cultural pluralism.²²

The cultural theory of *al-tamaddun*, which took into account the impact of circulation, mobility, encounters and the emergence of new practices, developed as the liberal theory that helped advance *al-nahḍa*. It represented the philosophy of a new society in the Arab world where the relationship between the present and the past became increasingly complicated as a result of the constant changes characteristic of capitalist modernity. In the context of this culture of change, the figure of the progressive sheikh was replaced by that of the *effendi*, who represented the normative image of the new capitalist society in Egypt where citizenship predicated on civil law replaced the religious code of the *sharī‘a* in organizing social affairs. Central to this transformation was the emergence of the nation-state, in which capitalist modernity created a new social reality that had its own problems. The rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* reflected no contradiction between Islam and urban culture as long as religion was limited to the personal sphere and secular politics was used to arbitrate the social affairs in public. The existence of functional urban institutions such as schools, universities, and other urban establishments was central to the actualization of the theory of *al-tamaddun*. Nevertheless, the

¹⁹ Ibid.,20

²⁰ Ibid,50

²¹ Ibid,50

²² Muḥamad Farīd Wajdī’s book *al-madaniya wa’l- Islam (Urbanity and Islam)*, which was published in the Middle of the twentieth century, dealt with the compatibility between Islam and modern urban culture. It was an exemplary work which, according to Hourani, argued that Islam was about “the existence of a direct connexion between Man and his Maker, free from the interposition and tyranny of priests, but it is much more than that: it is also human equality, the consultative principle in government, the rights of the intellect and science, the existence of unchanging natural laws of human life, intellectual curiosity about the order of nature, freedom of discussion and opinion, the practical unity of man kind on a basis of mutual toleration, the rights of man’s disposition and feelings, the acknowledgment of human welfare and interests as the final purpose of religion, and the principles of progress.” (in Hourani, Albert. *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. p. 162)

British colonization of Egypt was only the beginning of a series of setbacks to the development of urban modernity in Egypt.²³ Military colonialism represented the first challenge to the actualization of the idea of citizenship central to the theory of *al-tamaddun*. And as capitalist modernity developed the modern colonial city became a terrain for observing not the formation of the cosmopolitan culture envisioned by the early progressive sheikh, but rather of the inequalities that resulted from capitalist modernity. The replacement of the figure of the sheikh as a narrator of the urban experience by that of the *effendi* was symbolic of the new middle-class culture where consumption and capitalist expansion played a key role. In literary and film representations of the experience of urban modernity, Cairo and Paris continued to be the terrains where intellectuals in Egypt traced the relationship between the present and the past, the visual and the implied, the secular and the religious in the philosophy of urban modernity impacted with the development of capitalist modernity and mass culture. The conditions of the modern city in light of the increase in circulation of money, news, images, and people is a theme that was central to the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* as Egyptian modernity developed. With the increasingly visual nature of urban culture of mass consumption, and production film emerged as the new eye of the crowd, and the camera rather than any specific social figure enacted the activity of *flânerie*. In the next chapter I will use two Egyptian cinematic depictions of Paris and Cairo as commentaries on the problematic nature of urban modernity and the crisis of citizenship that resulted from the expansion of capitalism. The shift in my focus from literary material to film representations of Cairo and Paris is mainly because of the major role that Egyptian cinema has played in popularizing the urban philosophy of *al-tamaddun* since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

²³ In his study *Nahdat Misr*, Anouar 'Abdel-Malek argues that when Lord Cromer cut down the budget of the educational system, he caused a serious setback to the development of the Egyptian society. Furthermore, Islamic fundamentalism emerged as a counter-ideology, encouraged and buttressed by the British in order to suppress the development of the nationalist consciousness that resulted from the modernization process.

Chapter 4

Flânerie in Egyptian Cinema and the Crisis of Citizenship

In the previous chapter I traced how the theory of *al-tamaddun* that resulted from the practice of *flânerie* found expression in the work of the new social figures that emerged as a result of the modernization program in Egypt. By the twentieth century it was no longer the enlightened rationalist sheikh who was the main narrator of the urban space. Figures such as the *effendi* and the New Woman (whose initial depiction took place in ‘Alī Mubārāk’s novel ‘*Alam al-Dīn*) began to play important social roles in shaping the cultural discourse of *al-tamaddun* which engaged with the geographical, linguistic, and religious orientation of the nascent nation-state through representing the new urban modes of social life. *Al-tamaddun* appealed to the proliferation of new technologies in the modern city and the reshaping of the concepts of time and space that led to the emergence of national identity. The circulation of the press, the use of steamships, and later technological inventions such as the radio were central factors to the development of *al-tamaddun*. Cinema also played an important role in defining the aesthetics of the modernization discourse of *al-tamaddun* and the manner in which urban modernity was experienced, consumed, received, and lived by the Egyptians.

In this chapter I will examine two film depictions as commentaries on the aesthetic of *al-tamaddun* in the context of twentieth-century Paris and Cairo. My analysis of *al-bāḥithāt ‘an al-ḥuriyyah* (Women in Search of Freedom, Inās al- Dighidī, 2006) and *Damm al-Ghazāl* (Ghazal’s Blood, Muḥammad Yasīn, 2006) I will examine the representations of Paris and Cairo in these two films and how they explicate the *nahḍa* discourse of *al-tamaddun* by showing the impact of the expansion of global industrial capitalist modernity and the development of mass culture. Why turn to cinema as a medium of representing the idea of *al-tamaddun* is an important question that needs to be addressed before I proceed with my analysis of the two feature film narratives. Understanding the experience of urban modernity in the Egyptian context, I believe, cannot be done without examining film representations of this experience. This is the case not only because cinema emerged as part of an array of urban practices since the 19th century, but also because film operated as a new medium of cultural representation which, according to cultural critics Kracauer and Benjamin was a perfect tool to communicate the experiences of mass culture. Film was among a new array of inventions distinctive of the experience of modernity which, according to film scholar Tom Gunning, resulted from “a large number of factors, which were clearly marked by the Industrial Revolution. It was also, however, equally characterized by the transformation in daily life wrought by the growth of urban traffic, the distribution of mass produced goods and successive new technologies of transportation and communication.”¹ The centrality of film to urban culture, and its ability to explicate the aesthetics of urbanity to spectators by making use of the visual aesthetics of the city and the vernacular make Egyptian films crucial artifacts for understanding modernity in its urban context. Such technical vantage point has given Egyptian cinema an important role in popularizing *nahḍa* discourse of *al-tamaddun* particularly because of its strength as a popular medium of representation that appeals to the masses. The adaptation of major literary works about urban culture for cinematic representation in Egyptian cinema also contributed to popularizing representations of *al-tamaddun* or urbanity as a paradigm for modernity. Historically, Egyptian cinema has been

¹ Gunning, Tom. “Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives and Early Cinema” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. P.15.

central to urban culture and this has made it an integral part of *al-nahḍa* particularly as it popularized the literary representations of *al-tamaddun*.

Egyptian Cinema's Relation to *al-Nahḍa* and its Importance In Propagating the Rhetoric of *al-tamaddun*:

The literary development of the theory of *al-tamaddun* was a result of the sheikh's exit from al-Azhar mosque and his practice of the art of *flânerie*. *Flânerie* as a body of literature attempted to address the restructuring of human perception as a result of the proliferation of modern technologies such as trains, photography, electric lighting, telegraph, and telephone. These inventions had led to the rearrangement of social interactions on the streets of the metropolis and so gave rise to new forms of literary expression of urban modernity. *Flânerie* attempted to capture the state of transformed consciousness that resulted from the new modes of experiencing urban culture as a result of the development of industrial modernity where visual perceptions began to play an important role in social interactions. When cinema developed it became a potent vehicle that could narrate the experiences of the metropolis and the culture of visual consumption and so, according to film scholar Miriam Hansen, it became both a part and a means of realizing modernity. According to Hansen the cinema "epitomized a new stage in the ascendance of the visual as a social and cultural discourse (...) [and] also responded to an ongoing crisis of vision and visibility."² In the context of western culture, Hansen notes, cinema aided the structuring of the "gaze" and helped ease the traumatic upheaval of temporal and visual coordinates turning it into a pleasurable experience and also a "*flânerie* through an imaginary elsewhere and elsewhere."³

Focusing on cinema as an apparatus that helped synthesize the relationship between modernization and modernity, Hansen's work shows that it is impossible to understand the modernity of mass production and mass consumption without resorting to cinema. It was through cinema, she argues, that modern life found expression particularly in making clear the radical changes that impacted everyday experience. Cinema's importance to understanding the relationship between hegemonic modernism and modern life is very significant in the Egyptian context and particularly in relation to the discourse of *al-tamaddun* which emerged as a cultural theory that resulted from the state's nineteenth century policy to modernize Egypt by turning it into an industrial capitalist country.

Representations of the modern nation-state's policy found expression in the works of the early prominent intellectuals who were modernizers and whose work in policy and planning shaped much of their literary writing. Their treatment of the social changes in Egyptian cities that resulted from modernization were popularized through the press and with the introduction of the film industry in 1896. Moving pictures constituted a new means of social expression for the modernizing nation especially in Cairo and Alexandria. When the first projection of film took place in Egypt it took place in Alexandria at a café called *Boursse Tousson Pacha* on the 5th of November 1896. It was organized by Henri Dello Stologo, the representative of the Lumière brothers in Egypt. A year later the society of Lumière brothers began to shoot some urban scenes in Alexandria and then travelled to Cairo to shoot some monuments and ancient sites. The

² Hansen, Miriam Bartu. "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity." in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, (eds.) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. P. 363.

³ Ibid,363.

film was known as “Place des Consuls à Alexandrie” and it was the first film to be shown in Egypt. The same year in 1897, a moving picture theatre was inaugurated at Ḥalīm Pasha Square in Cairo.⁴ Early Egyptian films centralized the city as a site of modernity. The early films revolved around shooting scenes of Cairo and Alexandria, some urban activities such as horse races, and the procession of sending the cover of the holy *Ka’ba* from Egypt to Saudi Arabia. However, cinema was not an independent form of leisure at the very beginning and was made popular through a variety format in which moving pictures were shown between live performances at theatres. The industry continued to develop, and by 1906 Lumière’s films were joined by films produced by Gaumont, and Pathé Frères who helped popularize the film industry in Egypt.⁵

The early films visually depicted the space of the nascent nation-state by emphasizing the multi-layered cultural legacy of the city and the diversity of urban life. The industry itself was part of a global network of capitalism that enabled the creation of a cosmopolitan society in Egypt. The Egyptian film industry developed in tandem with the capitalist policies of the ‘Alī dynasty that encouraged foreign and non-Muslim investors to reside in Egypt. The Lumière brothers, the French Pathé Frères who began to distribute films in Egypt by 1906 were only the forerunners of a diverse group of film producers of European, Jewish, Turkish, and native Egyptian origins that aided the development of the film industry.⁶

The diversity of film makers in the early phases of Egyptian cinema reflected the cosmopolitan reality of the Egyptian culture. This historical reality was central to the discourse of *al-tamaddun* that sought to unite the diverse social groups present in Egypt by popularizing the idea of the nation-state and the rhetoric of citizenship that replaced religious identity. When sound was introduced to the film industry, the production of feature films began and, as early as 1930, the cinema began adapting literary works such as the first Egyptian novel, *Zaynab*, which was produced that year. As the industry developed, Egyptian cinema helped popularize the works of *nahḍa* thinkers and literary works by intellectuals such as Ṭaha Ḥusayn, and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, among others concerned with urban culture. This relationship between film and literature resulted in the vernacularization of literary works which were originally written in modern standard Arabic which in turn created a cultural matrix that made the discourse of *al-tamaddun* part of popular consumption. Put differently, film took the literary narratives of the early thinkers of *al-nahḍa* and rendered them into visual narratives. Commenting on this relationship between literature and Egyptian cinema French film critic Yves Thoraval contended that the relationship between literary productions and Egyptian cinema was a negative factor that endowed Egyptian cinema with “a literary mentality.”⁷ While Thoraval’s contention points to the technical limitations of the Egyptian film industry in Egypt which privileged linear realist representations as a narrative mode, such relationship was not entirely damaging. For the film industry’s focus on realist representations fulfilled other social purposes. As Viola Shafik argues “contrary to traditional or modern epic narrative forms, realist cinematic conventions allow[ed] the viewer to enter into a “panopticon,” a closed universe that suggest[ed] a completely comprehensible and

⁴ Abū shādī, ‘Alī, *Waqāi’ al- sinīmā al- Miṣriyah fī mi’at ‘am*. Cairo: al-Majlis al-‘lā li’l Thaqāfa, 1998. P.5

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Shafik, Viola, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*. Cairo: The American University Press, 2007. P. 18

⁷ Thoraval, Yves, *Regards sur le cinéma égyptien*. Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1975. P.3

explicable world. (...) Realism perform[ed] a conserving and reflective function that is immensely important for the formerly colonized, who were deprived of their own image.”⁸

Film’s ability to establish an image of the self in the context of an ever expansive urban modernity characterized by what Baudelaire dubbed as transient, fleeting and ephemeral encounters,⁹ was a major tool in the negotiating the effects of the rational discourses of modernism in Egypt and the Arab world. As such, it was a viable tool for processing the traumatic impact of the modernization policies : it was through film that “the effects of modernity were reflected, rejected or denied, transmuted or negotiated.”¹⁰ The ability of film to situate cultural representation in time and space makes it an integral cultural artifact in understanding representations of the experience of modernity amidst the culture of mass production and mass consumption. According to Kracauer, film emerged as the most suitable genre to capture a “disintegrating world without substance, it therefore fulfills a cognitive, diagnostic function *vis à vis* modern life more truthfully than most works of high art.”¹¹ Similar to Kracauer’s perception of the role of film in modern life, Egyptian modernists conceived of film as the most suitable medium that has the potential to successfully address mass culture. Early Egyptian thinkers such as Tāhā Ḥusayn, and Tawfīq al- Ḥakīm, noted that film could be used to educate and channel the experiences of the masses particularly because of its use of the vernacular as a medium of self expression.¹² Similarly, in his novel *Thartharah Fawq al-Nīl* (*Adrift on the Nile*), Nobel Laureate Naguib Maḥfūz depicted the relationship between cinema and mass culture via the figure of the actor, whom he saw, as a powerful persona that could influence the masses.¹³

Indeed film played an effective role in Egypt’s modernizing project: It acted as a “cultural vernacular,”¹⁴ to borrow an expression from Armbrust, that helped disseminate an authentic image of Egyptian modernity in which the transformation of social relations that resulted from capitalist modes of production had a great impact on traditional cultural practices. One could say that the film industry in Egypt served as a visual vehicle that facilitated the acceptance of, as it made visible, the transformation in identity that accompanied the modernization programs. For example, the gendered identity of the Egyptian woman whose earliest fictional depiction took place in ‘Alī Mubārak’s *Alam al-Dīn*, was dramatized in a series of films that attempted to elucidate the political and socio-economic conditions that led to her appearance.¹⁵ By exposing the role of material circumstances in the production of cultural

⁸ Shafik Viola. *Arab cinema: History and Cultural Identity*. Cairo: The American University Press, 1998. P.212.

⁹ Baudelaire, Charles. “The Painter of Modern Life” in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Johnathan Mayne (Ed. &Trans.) London: Phaidon Press, 1964. PP. 1-40.

¹⁰ Hansen, Miriam Bartu. “America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity.” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, (eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. P. 366

¹¹ Ibid, p.369

¹² Taha Ḥusayn expresses this idea in his book *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-‘Arabiyah Fī Miṣr* (*The Future of Arab Culture* ,1938), and Tawfīq al- Ḥakīm established his views on the relationship between film and modernity in his *Thawrat al-shabāb*, (*The Revolt of the Youth*)

¹³ Because of the Egyptian film industry’s long standing history, there is a star system in Egypt which plays a significant role in film representations.

¹⁴ Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. P. 4

¹⁵ An example of this is the series of films starring the popular Jewish Egyptian actress Layla Murad where she is once depicted as a country girl who is rejected and ridiculed by her husband for being provincial e.g., “Layla Daughter of the countryside” and another she is depicted as a savvy urbanite in “Layla Daughter of the Rich”.

identity, Egyptian cinema, very much like Western cinemas, served as an alternative public sphere.¹⁶

However, the commercial nature of the Egyptian film industry, also known as “Hollywood on the Nile”, has so far prevented scholars (particularly European scholars of the Middle East) from examining Egyptian film as a vehicle for expressions of serious cultural themes. Commenting on the dismissive attitude among Western scholars, Viola Shafik cites her experience as a film curator in Europe as an example:

I encountered strong reservations (including my own) in face of Egyptian mainstream productions (...) in contrast to a clear preference for art and festival films that emphasize the exotic, premodern or simply ‘other’ aspects of non-western culture. Some of the causes of this phenomenon I have discussed elsewhere as being partly rooted in European funding and distribution policies that helped cement the fact that international ‘art film’ audiences and distribution circuits apprehend and prefer works financed by European channels and institutions and adhere moreover to highbrow concept of art.”¹⁷

In spite of the dismissal of Western critics of Egyptian films which are deemed technically inferior to festival films, Egyptian cinema remains a cinema that is widely consumed by Egyptians and various nation-states in the Arab world. The popularity of Egyptian films amongst the masses, according to Shafik, lies in “its recurrent patterns, ritualized performances, and some almost archetypal, yet partly contradictory stereotypes. Being the product of its producers’ and consumers’ inner reality, following at times some of the most commonly performed strategies of distinction and exclusion, it offers seemingly trivial, but also blatant and dismissive representations that seem constantly to oscillate between realist referentiality and symbolical, metaphorical, and allegorical codings.”¹⁸ In addition to this, and particularly in regards to cinema’s representation of the urban experience, I would stress the invaluable power of the language of popular film in the Egyptian context which depends on the vernacular as a medium of speech and also on the visual aesthetics that are crucial to establishing social meaning. Films produced for popular consumption draw upon the viewers’ stock of knowledge about the significance of symbolic markers of identity such as the variation in dialects, and variation in appearances and dress codes; thus they involve the viewer’s knowledge of the existent social aesthetics in the process of communicating certain cultural representations.

The ability of Egyptian cinema to situate cultural experience in time and space by localizing narratives in real spaces is an important social function particularly because of the ever-expansive nature of capitalism which, according to Marx creates a world in which “all that is solid to melt into air.” As such, films are very significant cultural artifacts for examining the changes that resulted from the expansion of capitalism. They are particularly useful in examining the impact expansion of transnational capitalism in recent years and the emergence of new cultural politics that challenge the idea of the sufficiency of the nation-state and citizenship as it was conceived in the early nineteenth century. Such development of capitalist modernity has led to the formation of new migration patterns in search of money leading to the materialization of new social networks that have impacted cities worldwide. The formation of a new capitalist

¹⁶ Hansen, Miriam *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Films*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.

¹⁷ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*, p. 1

¹⁸ *Ibid*,2

geography has affected both Cairo and Paris in real life and this new reality has found expression in recent cultural representation. Egyptian cinema attempted to capture the influence of these changes on the aesthetics of the cultural theory of *al-tamaddun*. Particularly relevant to this new cultural reality are two recent Egyptian films that depict *al-tamaddun*'s crisis of citizenship in Cairo and Paris as the result of transnational cultural formation. They show that *al-tamaddun* as a discourse of rationalist modernism has been challenged due to the emergence of irrational religious fundamentalism and transnational capital. The questions that I will attempt to answer in the following analysis of the *al-baḥithāt 'an al-ḥuriyah* (Women in search of Freedom, Inās al-Dighidī, 2006) and *Damm al-ghazāl* (Ghazal's Blood, Muhammad Yasīn, 2006) are: How do these two films act as a commentary on the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* which has so far been central to understanding the experience of modernity in Egypt? And what transformations in the cultural representations of Cairo and Paris appear in these two films?

Paris-Cairo in Recent Egyptian Cinema:

Al-Baḥithat 'an al-ḥuriyah (Women in Search for Freedom Inās al-Dighidī, 2006) takes place in Paris in 1989, the year in which the fall of the Berlin wall marked the beginning of a new European geography. The film is an adaptation of a novel by the writer Hudal al-Zein, and it thus sustains the intertextual relationship between Egyptian cinema and literary representations of modernity that had begun as early as 1930 with the adaptation of the first Egyptian novel, *Zaynab*, to film. The film enacts the intellectual *flânerie* of the early modernizing sheikh by narrating the space of Paris and attempting to narrativize the visual experiences of the city. However, the camera privileges the voices of those who were left out of the early narratives of *al-tamaddun* by focusing on the experience of Arab migrant working women in Paris. The plot of the film revolves around the experience of three Arab women in the metropolis: 'Ayda, an Egyptian painter; Amal, a Christian journalist and television reporter from Lebanon, and Su'ād, a North African migrant worker.¹⁹ The act of *flânerie* is performed in the film by 'Ayda and Amal, whose concern with the urban experience of migrant Arab women of the city lead them to search for the narratives that belie the visual appearances in the city. Like Baudelaire's artist of modern times, they tour the city in order to capture the hidden meaning behind the fleeting, transient experiences of urban life.

The film opens with Amal holding a camera in her hands while walking through one of the Parisian open-air markets trying to locate migrant Arab women who she interviews about their motives in coming to Paris. A common reply from all the women establishes Paris as the ultimate mecca of personal freedom and their *terra libre* from the constraints of their own culture. Each one boasts of one aspect of freedom that she enjoys by being in Paris: one tells her that she happily enjoys being an escort in Paris without risking social persecution, and another shows off her mini-skirt, contending that she enjoys the fact that she can wear whatever she likes. In the final interview she meets Su'ād, a North African migrant who tells her that she came to Paris escaping her brother's vengeful threats for having transgressed the social norms back in her home country. When Amal shows her interviews to 'Ayda, the latter declares with the authority of a *flâneuse* that Su'ād's face embodies the "woes of exile" and asks Amal to put her in touch with Su'ād in order to produce a portrait of the latter. In the process of painting Su'ād's face 'Ayda uncovers the hidden dynamics of social relations in the transnational metropolis.

¹⁹ It is difficult for Egyptian viewers to determine whether Su'ād is from Tunisia, Morocco, or Algeria, however it is clear that she is from North Africa.

When she seeks Su‘ād out she finds out that the latter is kept dependent on her employer, a North African man who uses her as a seamstress in his shop by day time and a mistress at night. In return for her services, he offers her shelter and money to subsist on. Just like a modern day slave, Su‘ūd is unable to accept ‘Ayda’s invitation to be the subject of her art without permission from her master, Si ‘Alī . When ‘Ayda turns to the latter, he allows Su‘ād absence for an hour per day in return for 400 French francs.

‘Ayda’s *flânerie* leads her to construct as revisionist narrative of Paris, particularly in regards to its depiction as the terrain of personal freedom of the formation of a new kind of free individualism.²⁰ By focusing on painting the face of a migrant worker, ‘Ayda connects the idea of Paris as the Mecca of modern freedom to the reality of the circulation of money and labor in the metropolis. In the process of painting Su‘ād, she paints a complex image of the capitalist system that shapes her own destiny and that of other migrant workers in Paris. Indeed, it is capitalism that enables ‘Ayda herself to rebel against her ex-husband, a competitive painter whose professional jealousy of ‘Ayda’s success leads him to force her to choose between her career and her family. When she chooses her career and opts to pursue her dream to study art in Paris, he takes her son from her and prevents her from seeing or communicating with him. Consequently, ‘Ayda experiences Paris both as a terrain for individualistic accomplishments and as a space of exile where she is severed from intimate social relations. And although she enjoys a great success as an artist in Paris, she remains aware of the woes of capitalist modernity that establish uneven social and political conditions in tandem with the circulation of money. This idea, however, is challenged through Aaml’s practice of *flânerie*, which allows her to investigate the manner in which images circulate in the city.

Amal, the Lebanese journalist, goes to Paris to flee the civil war in Lebanon. Her practice of *flânerie* in Paris reflects the impact of capitalism on the circulation of images and news. When she investigates Arab women in Paris about the reasons for their escape to the metropolis, she exposes the dynamics of capitalist modernity in which the appearance of their freedom cloaks the real conditions of their labor in patriarchal capitalist networks. On the one hand, her interviewees tell her that an appealing aspect of social life in Paris is the freedom to wear anything, but when she probes further into their lives, she discovers that they are trapped in a web of capitalist exploitation such as the one in which Su‘ād is trapped. Furthermore, the rhetoric of freedom associated with the circulation of the images of these women is contrasted with the censorship that she faces when she attempts to publish the photographs of some Palestinian children shot by Israeli soldiers. When she approaches her editor-in-chief, asking him to publish the photos, he tells her that she could not publish such graphic pictures in Paris because people will be shocked funding will be cut off from the newspaper. The idea of the free circulation of news, which appeared to sheikh Taḥṭāwī as one of the most appealing aspects of life in Paris, is thus exposed as nothing but the illusory byproduct of capitalist power.

When faced by a series of hardships, the three protagonists decide that Paris, like any other city, is implicated in a web of capitalist relations that control their destinies and that

²⁰ Taḥṭāwī’s and Mubārak’s nineteenth century representations of Paris were not the only representations that depicted the city as a terrain for the formation of a new individualistic identity. In the twentieth century similar depictions of the city continued to appear in literary works by authors such as Taha Ḥusayn, Tawfiq al- Ḥakīm, Salāma Mūsa, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, Aḥmad Luṭfi al-Sayyid, to mention but a few names of those who contributed to the development of Egyptian *flânerie*.

without citizenship rights, their existence in such a metropolis becomes untenable. For this reason, ‘Ayda decides to return to Egypt in spite of her initial success as an artist, and Amal to Lebanon, while Su‘ād marries a French pied noir through whom she hopes to escape the objectifying capitalist network of male business owners in whose hands she had fallen. The outspoken statement by ‘Ayda that it is citizenship that matters most whether they are in Paris or anywhere in the world resonates with liberal discourse of *al-tamaddun* which depicted Paris as the terrain of individual freedom that, must nonetheless be accompanied by tangible citizenship rights. In the nineteenth century, Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī’s *flânerie* and that of subsequent Egyptian modernizers led them to conclude that it was essential to establish a democratic political system in Egypt that would teach people to partake in modern urban culture in accordance with a new legal discourse. However, such a call depended on the limited resources of the nascent nation-state that were not sufficient and as colonial modernity developed, *al-tamaddun*’s call for citizenship continued to appear as a problematic lack in Egyptian urban modernity. This crisis of citizenship and its relationship to capitalist modernity which riddles Dighidī’s representation of Paris appears to be central also to Muhammad Yacine’s representation of Cairo in *Damm al-Ghazal* (Ghazal’s Bloody 2006).

Yacine’s *Damm al-Ghazal* depicts the crisis of citizenship faced by key social figures such as the *effendi* and the New Woman in light of the expansion of transnational capitalism in Cairo. The film is set in Cairo in the middle of the 1990s, when terrorist attacks began to hit the city. The main action of the film takes place in a *ḥāra* (a tiny alley) in Cairo, where the main character, an orphaned girl named Ḥanān lives. The film addresses the effect that conjoined emergence of transnational capitalism of Islamists, and corrupt businessmen have had on her destiny. The choice of the *ḥāra*, as a setting for the film calls to question the uneven development of Cairo, which, in the nineteenth century, was described in ‘*Alam al-Dīn* as a city that resembled "any other European city."²¹ The novel conjured up the image of Cairo as a developing city where the roads were widened to allow for the circulation of traffic and where the *ḥāra* structure was deemed as inappropriate to the modern city where capitalism dissipated former economic and social structures. Some of the modernization policies that helped shape Cairo were executed by ‘Alī Mubarak Pasha. Mubarak’s philosophy aimed at slowly deconstructing the former ethnic and professional *ḥārat* (narrow alleys) deemed as pre-modern structures that organized social relations were organized according to a pre-capitalist logic, privileging communal, religious, and ethnic ties over legal discourse. Although the historian Yūnān Labīb Rizq has contended that the dissipation of the *ḥāra* signaled the actualization of the modernization program that sought to reorganize Cairo in tandem with capitalist expansion, the process of development was incomplete.²² The encroachment of European colonialism and the expansion of capitalism hampered this process of development and the *ḥārat* continued to be part of Cairo. Urban historians have noted that capitalism created an uneven modernization in cities worldwide; in Cairo, the persistence of the *ḥāra* structure in some neighborhoods in Cairo symbolizes this uneven development where the rationalist capitalist policies remained largely alien to the culture of these neighborhoods.

In *Damm al-Ghazal*, the presence of Ḥanān in the *ḥāra* places her in the center of a web of communal relations that privilege charity over citizenship in the social interactions with her. After her father dies, his friends Gaber and ‘Abdou look after her. Gaber, we understand, used to

²¹ ‘*Alam al-Dīn*, 915.

²² Abū ‘Ayash, ‘Abd al-Iāh. *Azmat al-madīna al-‘arabiyah. Kuwait: Wikalat al-matbū‘āt*, 1980.

be a government employee who migrated to Cairo from the countryside at an earlier point in the twentieth century. ‘Abdou works as a waiter in one of the major sports clubs in Cairo. Both of them represent a hard-working lower middle class struggling to make ends meet. The ghost of poverty hovers over everyone’s life in the *ḥāra* except for a burglar and some Islamists who are depicted as a gang of law enforcement paid by some powerful business owners. In contrast to the flow of transnational money to these new groups, the former government employee, Gaber, leads an impoverished life that forces him to become a con artist in the city. Gaber’s sole means for earning a decent living in twentieth-century Cairo is by blundering his way into the traffic lights, feigning that one of the rich people’s cars hit him, and charging them for his contrived fall. He explains that he does so because his pension from his government job is hardly enough to keep him alive through the month. His character embodies the demise in the fortunes of the figure of the *effendi* whose identity was tied to the formation of the modern state in the nineteenth century. Like the rest of the characters in the alley, however, he seems to have been left behind in the context of the modernization process that opened the country to international capitalism, leaving them to face an uncertain future. The instability of the social conditions of the inhabitants of the *ḥāra* is captured in the opening scene of the film.

The film opens with a wedding scene where Ḥanān is seen sitting sadly next to an ugly looking groom while a belly dancer and her drummer perform at center stage. From the beginning of the film, the camera visually captures the presence of all the forces at play in Ḥanān’s life. The opening shot shows two women wearing colorful headscarves walking side by side laughing and chatting when they are interrupted by a group of Islamists wearing white gowns and long beards on their way to the wedding. Both women step aside looking fearful as they make way for the Islamists. When the Islamists arrive at the wedding, they look disapprovingly at the belly dancer and her drummer, while the burglar tips the dancer and performs a dance holding a knife in his hand. In the middle of the ceremony a police car raids the wedding and they search the groom for possession of drugs. When they find hashish in his possession, they take him to the police station and the wedding is called off. Worried about the fate of his God daughter, ‘Abdou tries to interfere with the police officer, begging him not to take the groom away for the sake of “the orphan girl.” When the police officers replies that the law must be applied, ‘Abdou argues that if the wedding had been in one of the five star hotels where the rich and powerful hold their ceremonies, no one would have dared search the groom. He thus raises the question of the uneven power relations in Cairo and the application of civil law in a city in which the poor feel lie on the fringes of legal justice system. Fragmentation, decay, and oppression surround the neighborhood and its inhabitants.

Ḥanān’s destiny is unstable particularly because it depends on the kindness of those around her, and not on any legal rights that she possesses. As a result, she suffers the wrath of the groom’s mother who sends her away as an ill-omen because of her son’s arrest on. As she walks home, she is interrupted by the drummer, who promises to take care of her. However, when the burglar sees the drummer approaching her he beats him up, and declares himself to be the one able to take care of her. She becomes a pawn in a power struggle between two socially suspicious characters. As she walks home, some men at the local café comment that if she had been born in *Maṣr al-gidida* or *Zamalik*, she would not have suffered such a fate. This reference to those two modern neighborhoods that were established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries establishes a contrast between Ḥanān’s experience and that of any other Egyptian girl living in any of those neighborhoods. Such a comment denotes that Ḥanān’s poverty makes her a

non-citizen in Cairo. When she arrives to her apartment, she finds ‘Abdou and Gaber vying with one another over who will take care of her, each one declaring himself to be her guardian. However, she finally screams at them that their kindness makes her feel helpless and that as grateful as she might be for their help, she would appreciate it if they found her a job through which she could support herself. After all, none of them will live on forever. Shocked by the truthfulness of her declaration, they both relent to her wishes and Gaber gets her a job at a health club owned by Nadia, one of the members at the sports club where he works.

As Ḥanān crosses from the *ḥāra* to the modern part of Cairo where she works, she acquires a new identity and looks happier and more confident. Her employer, Nadia, takes a liking to her, and helps her reinvent herself, lending her new clothes and giving her money. In the meantime, however, both the drummer and the burglar begin their power struggle to marry her. When shamed by the burglar for being nothing but the follower of a belly dancer, the drummer decides to join the Islamists in order to gain social legitimacy and power over his adversary. He thus begins to wear the white gown of the Islamists, and grows his beard, frequents their mosque, and quits his job as a drummer, declaring it to be irreligious. Furthermore, he obliges the belly dancer to quit her work and takes to destroying the video store in the neighborhood and anything related to entertainment, declaring all to be a taboo. In the war between the burglar and the drummer, it is the latter who wins because he finds support from the Islamists whose funding seems to come from abroad. Furthermore, he declares that his job is to uphold God’s law on earth and begins to apply his idea of the law to the neighborhood. In this process he captures the burglar with the help of his Islamist gang and cuts off his hands justifying his action as an application of the *sharī‘a*, thus ridding himself of his rival. When the police attempts to capture him, they use Ḥanān as bait to trap him, and so they request that she return to the alley to help them lure him in. Ḥanān’s return to the alley puts an end to her life as she is caught in the fire between the police. She dies at the same time that Gaber is knocked dead by one of the speeding cars whose owner he was trying to scam, thus ending his fate as a random citizen whose death in the traffic becomes nothing but a statistical incident in the developing city of Cairo.

Symbolically, the film captures the disintegration of the project of *al-tamaddun* which began with Muhammad ‘Ali’s nineteenth century decision to modernize Cairo. It depicts the polarization of the city between rich and poor as a result of the expansion of transnational capitalism. It focuses on the manner in which the social figures of the city experience this expansion and shows the presence of the *ḥāra* in Cairo as a sign of the failure of the modernization program. The uneven development that results from capitalist modernity divides Cairo between poor lawless neighborhoods and wealthy ones where the law serves the powerful. The orphaned Ḥanān and the jobless Gaber are both reminiscent of the figures of the new woman and the *effendi*. And they appear as mere victims of the modernization process that opened the country to capitalism. On the one hand, the expansion of capitalism in Egypt is represented by the presence of a modern part of Cairo where symbols of wealth stand tall in the center of the city. On the other hand, in the poor areas, transnational capitalist development leads to the appearance of Islamist militia who appear to be vying to usurp the power in the city by converting lawless unprincipled characters (such as the drummer), into God’s soldiers. Both Ḥanāna and Gaber die in the war between God’s soldiers and rich capitalists for whose sake civil law seems to operate.

Like Dighidī's film *Women in Search for Freedom*, Ghazal's *Blood* shows the paradoxical nature of the circulation of capitalism which threatens to dissolve the very solid structures of the city as it encroaches on the lives of its citizens. The realist representations of the sub-cultures in Cairo and Paris in the two films present the viewers with a commentary on the very foundational narrative of *al-tamaddun* that began in the nineteenth century with the exit of the sheikh from the Azhar mosque and his development into a modern day intellectual in the modern city in the early part of the twentieth century. Unlike the early literary *flânerie* of the sheikh in Paris and Cairo, which posited the former as a model for the latter to emulate, these films show the discrepancy between the intent of modernization programs and the actual experience of modernity by Egyptians. They capture how technology led to the development of a mass culture where the experience of the individual defies linear representation. The fact that these cinematic depictions of the urban experience in Paris and Cairo transcend the limited representation of urban culture by one figure, be it that of the *flâneur*, the sheikh, or the *effendi*, relays to viewers the complexity of the modernization process and the modern urban space. In their treatment of varied social figures in the urban space they show both the benefits and disadvantages of the capitalist modernization which allowed former disadvantaged social groups such as women to enjoy mobility, and participation, in modern life, and yet they remain subjugated to the preexistent power structures. In addition, the films' ability to capture the disintegrating conditions of the city enables them to operate as "a diagnostic media" that aptly capture the impact of rapid circulation of money on social life. In this manner, the films explicate the dynamics of the culture of the mass which has transformed the *nahḍa* discourse of *al-tamaddun*.

Conclusion

Al-Tamaddun, the Experience of Urban Modernity, and al-Nahda

This dissertation traced the formation of modern rhetorical connotations of *al-tamaddun* (urbanity) in modern Egyptian texts and film. I have argued that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ibn Khaldūn's fourteenth-century concept of *al-tamaddun* acquired new connotations that tied it to an emergent industrial modernity. The new connotations of *al-tamaddun* began to circulate when sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī published a collection of essays describing his travel experience to nineteenth-century Paris. Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of Paris reflected his fascination with the new social reality that resulted from technological modernity and the impact that new technologies such as the printing press and the telegraph had on cultural representation. The annihilation of time and space that resulted from the use of new technologies of transportation and communication was a key factor in sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī's development of the modern concept of *a-tamaddun* that emerged as a new cultural philosophy for modernity in Egypt. The modern rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* emphasized the sense of proximity and simultaneity among nations characteristic of industrial modernity. Ṭaḥṭāwī developed this philosophy as a result of his practice of *flânerie*, which was a popular activity in pre-Hausmann's Paris and was closely tied to the development of the mass press. As a result of engaging in *flânerie*, Ṭaḥṭāwī tied modern literary writing to the culture of modern citizenship that became characteristic of the modern city where the bourgeoisie evolved as a new social class that influenced cultural developments. Ṭaḥṭāwī's intellectual practice influenced subsequent literary works in modern Egypt where images of urban life in Paris inspired the development of the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* well into the twentieth century as they compared living conditions in Paris to those in Cairo.

The earliest literary development of Egyptian intellectual *flânerie* appeared in 'Alī Mubārak's nineteenth-century novel *'Alam al-Dīn*, which inscribed the sheikh as the central narrator of the experience of urban modernity. By dramatizing the experiences of the graduate of al-Azhar in nineteenth century Cairo, Mubārak depicted the details of the material culture that led the sheikh to leave the mosque and develop into a modern intellectual. Muhammad Ali's modernization policy that opened Egypt to capitalist expansion led to the development of print culture and a culture of travel which led to the appearance of foreigners in nineteenth-century Cairo. Both appear as decisive factors in *'Alam al-Dīn*. The novel depicts the new social reality through the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun*. Such rhetoric reflected the modernizing intent of the author in its emphasis on the ideal of the nation-state as a new important political construct that determined the social roles of the figures of the urban figures in the novel, such as the sheikh, the orientalist, the British explorer, the *effendi* and the new woman. Each embodied the formation of a new social reality predicated on a global urban reality in which technology and capitalist expansion changed the aesthetics of the social space and altered the relationship between the public and private, the religious and the secular. The development of a new urban culture in which circulation of news, narratives, and images together with the increase in encounters between peoples were decisive factors in the development of the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* as it appeared in Mubārak's nineteenth century novel.

As the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* developed in the twentieth century, the figure of the sheikh that was no longer the central narrator of urban experience. As the modernization program developed, the new urban figures of the city such as the *effendi* and the new woman began to appear as key social figures. The philosophy of *al-tamaddun* which was first

introduced by the sheikh, developed in the work of Egyptian intellectuals that came from the class of the *effendis*. This new social class was educated in semi-secular schools, that allowed them to become the technocrats whose work helped develop the institutions of the modern Egyptian state. The most prominent intellectual who represented this class in the twentieth century was Tāhā Ḥusayn, whose *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa al-‘arabiyah* continued to develop the nineteenth century concept of *al-tamaddun*. Like the earlier *nahḍa* intellectuals, Ṭaḥṭāwī and Mubarak, Ḥusayn emphasized the role of new technologies in the development of new concepts of time and space that challenged pre-industrial cultural views. True to the philosophy of his peers, Ḥusayn embraced the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* as one that argued for a secular humanist modernity in which the nation-state emerged as the new political structure that organized social interactions. As long as the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* precisely focused on the urban culture of the modern city as the guiding principle in the formation of a new cultural aesthetic, it functioned as a liberal philosophy that embraced individualism and cosmopolitanism. It emphasized limiting the role of religion to the personal sphere while privileging rational political arbitration in the public sphere. However, military colonialism and the expansion of capitalist modernity posed a challenge to the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* because it undermined the very concept of the nation-state. With the expansion of capitalist modernity that led to the development of European colonialism the very liberal ideals of capitalist modernity that were celebrated by Sheikh Ṭaḥṭāwī as he observed early stages of its development in Paris became problematic. As a result of this the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* became polarized between proponents of liberal humanist modernism and supporters of an authentic culture that took Islamism as its guiding principle and called for a return to the pre-industrial geography when Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire. The polarization of the cultural discourse between Islamism and Egyptian nationalism continued to riddle the philosophy of *al-tamaddun* as capitalist modernity expanded.

The dialectical reality of Egyptian urban culture found expression in the Egyptian cinema, which developed as a cultural vehicle through which the works of the *nahḍa* thinkers were popularized. Recent Egyptian cinematic depictions of Cairo and Paris give expression to the problematic nature of capitalist urban modernity as a crisis of citizenship. By focusing on the urban landscape of Cairo and Paris and zooming in on the urban figures that move in the terrain of the two cities, recent Egyptian cinema has acted as a commentary on the *nahḍa* discourse of *al-tamaddun*. It shows how the development of the transnational capitalism that transformed the geography of Europe and led to the emergence of new Islamist movements affected the cultural representations of Paris and Cairo. In Egyptian cinema, the recent depiction of these two cities shows that the liberal rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* is in crisis mainly because transnational capitalism and the process of globalization has transformed the urban landscape where the idea of modern citizenship that lay central to this philosophy was never actualized. Egyptian cinema’s ability to capture the semiotic transformations of the urban landscape made it particularly relevant as a cultural artifact that played a key role in popularizing the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun*.

By analyzing the rhetoric of *al-tamaddun* in literary and cinematic representations of the urban experience in Cairo and Paris, I aimed to trace the ways that the urban experience influenced the philosophy of *al-nahḍa*. The liberal humanist revival of Arab culture that continued to develop in literary works throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries originated in the early Egyptian urban narratives that created a new geographical imaginary of the self based on the idea of the nation-state. In the nineteenth century, the proliferation of the

new technologies and means of transportation led to the formation of a humanist revival that revolved around civil urbanity *al-tamaddun*. By tracing the movement and the narrative legacy of new urban figures between the terrains of Cairo and Paris, I aimed to produce a verbal map of the new expressions of Egyptian social modernity and its relationship to European modernity with a focus on the significant role technology and material reality played in changing cultural perceptions in Egypt. In addition to this, I emphasized the necessity of taking into account the interplay between capitalist expansion, industrialization, and military and economic colonization in order to understand the polarization of modern urban culture between the rhetoric of authentic and modern, religious and secular. By focusing to the figure of the sheikh and subsequent urban figures that emerged as Egyptian modernity developed, I aimed to produce a complex and nuanced image of expressions of modernity in the urban context. My aim in doing so was to contribute to the development of the body of modern urban literature and to studies of alternative modernities. Lastly, by virtue of focusing on the nineteenth century, this study sought to examine the body of literature which is considered as the origin of *al-nahḍa* in relation to the culture of urban modernity that shaped its aesthetics.

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