

# **“The little kingdom over which God made you queen”:<sup>1</sup> The gendered reorganization of a “modern” Arab home in turn-of-the-century Beirut**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the major urban centers of Greater Syria underwent significant changes. Following the *Tanzimat* and provincial reforms of 1864 and the ensuing efforts at centralization and modernization, concerted efforts were made to rationalize the urban space and plan its expansion in advance. Historians have devoted considerable attention to these developments, to the emergence of various architectural styles (both public and private) and to the great impact these changes had on peoples' lives. However, the reorganization of the interior domestic space, which went hand in hand with these changes, has barely been touched upon. In this article we examine the spatial implementation of an emerging modern Arab discourse of domesticity in the homes of the bourgeoisie in Beirut (the leading city of the region). Using a selection of newspaper articles, advice columns, novels and texts of public lectures (1880–1914), we trace the emerging contours of the home, paying close attention to the rearrangement of rooms and their decorations, the new consumer items which entered the home and the psychological impact these changes were intended to generate among the residents. Last, but not least, we look at the person put in charge of the reorganization of the home, the wife and mother.

## **Introduction**

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the major urban centers of Greater Syria underwent significant changes. Following the *Tanzimat* (lit., re-ordering; 1839–1876) and the provincial reforms (1864) and ensuing attempts at centralization

and modernization, concerted efforts were made to rationalize the urban space and plan its expansion in advance. During this period (particularly 1864–1918), countless administrative buildings (e.g., municipal buildings, police stations and law courts), transportation hubs (tram and train stations) and grand private homes were built; new water and sewage systems were put in place; and gas and electric streetlights were installed. Old streets were enlarged, and new ones were paved to and in the newer urban and suburban areas. Shopping, leisure and entertainment areas were planned, and would soon come to include department stores, marketplaces, hotels, coffeehouses, theaters and parks (Hanssen, 1998; Masters, 2010).

In recent years, historians investigating architectural developments and changes to the major cities of Greater Syria, such as Beirut (Bodenstein, 2002), Aleppo (Watenpugh, 2010) and Damascus (Hudson, 2006; Weber, 2002, 2003), as well as the major Ottoman centers, such as Izmir and Istanbul (Exertoglou, 2003; Isenstadt and Rizvi, 2008), and those of Egypt (Fay, 2003; Russell, 2003) have found increasing material evidence of these interior and exterior changes. As elite and bourgeois families began to move out of the courtyard houses into apartment buildings and suburban villas in the latter half of the nineteenth century, they increasingly adopted and combined old and new architectural features, furniture and decorative items. However, the social and gendered meanings of this reorganization of the interior domestic space, which went hand in hand with the architectural changes, have only been touched upon recently (e.g., Abou-Hodeib, 2011).

In this article, we examine the ways an emerging modern Arab discourse of domesticity was spatially implemented in the homes of the bourgeoisie in Beirut, one of the leading cities of the region and, as of 1888, a provincial capital. We begin with a brief overview of the scholarly literature on the home and an introduction to the city of Beirut in the late nineteenth century. Then, using a selection of newspaper articles, advice columns and the texts of public lectures (1880–1914), we trace the emerging prescriptive contours of the modern Arab middle-class home at the turn of the twentieth century, paying close attention to the suggested rearrangement of rooms and their decorations, the new consumer items that entered the home, and the psychological impact these changes were intended to generate among residents. Last, but not least, we look at the person put in charge of the reorganization of the home: the wife and mother.

## **On houses and homes**

In the last three decades, scholars from numerous disciplines have turned considerable attention to the subject of houses, homes and domestic spaces. Most agree that homes are primary sites in which national, class and gender identities (to name but a few) are

produced, performed and reaffirmed (e.g., Bowlby, Gregory and McKie, 1997; Duncan and Lambert, 2004; Kumar, 1997; Mallett, 2004; Wise, 2000). Feminist historians in particular have focused on the rise of a particular set of gendered bourgeois ideals regarding the home (and its inhabitants) since the eighteenth century (e.g., Davidoff and Hall, 1987; Harvey, 2009; Hayden, 1981; Lasch, 1977; Smith, 1981), as well as on how these Euro-American gendered ideals of the “home” have been diffused, altered and contested around the globe in the course of the nineteenth century, as a result of both indirect and direct colonialism (e.g., Blunt, 1999; Fleischmann, 1998; Grewal, 1996; Zlotnick, 1996).

As the house, “within which ‘doing home’ takes place, is designed and spatially organized to both reflect and influence the actual and idealized relationships between household members” (Bowlby et al., 1997:346), major changes in its design and spatial organization are clear indicators of changes in the relationships between its members, as well as between household and non-household members and institutions (such as the state). Indeed, historical literature has revealed that “home” is both a gendered space and a space critical to the gendered constitution of society; it is a space infused, shaped by and reflective of the gender ideologies particular to a period and place (e.g., Cohen, 2006; Marcus, 1999; Spain, 1992). Given that the person entrusted (in modern Western cultures) with much of the work involved in transforming a physical “house” into a psychological “home” is the wife and mother, spatial reorganizations of the home should signal to scholars that the role of the wife and mother, or conceptions of her role, are undergoing reorganization as well. As the city of Beirut during the latter half of the nineteenth century underwent substantial political and administrative reforms concurrently with socioeconomic and cultural transformations, the changes were expressed in the most basic of human living environments, the home.

### **Turn-of-the-century Beirut**

Beirut in the latter half of the nineteenth century was the economic and cultural center of Greater Syria. By 1915, the population of Beirut was estimated at around 175,000 (compared to 250,000 in Damascus and 200,000 in Aleppo), with Christians of various denominations making up the majority, followed by Muslims and Druze (Khalidi, 1991:56; Fawwaz, 1983:1,31). The city and its burgeoning foreign trade attracted growing numbers of merchants and entrepreneurs from the periphery. It was during this period that the middle classes rose to ascendancy, accumulating wealth and marrying amongst themselves. The exigencies of trade and contact with foreigners necessitated the expansion of traditional educational systems; missionaries (particular American missionaries of various Protestant denominations) set up a network of schools (and later colleges) for boys and girls. Members of the bourgeoisie gradually

(and cautiously) adopted Western ideas, styles and tastes; the city's architecture took on a European appearance; and the wealthier classes (both Christian and Muslim) adopted a more modern lifestyle, moving to the suburbs and consuming newly imported fashions, goods and cultural products (Zachs, 2005; Zachs and Halevi, 2009).

Beirut was also a major hub of the *Nahda* (lit., awakening) movement, which began in the first half of the nineteenth century and spread through the Arabic-speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The *Nahda* had two partially overlapping facets. Its cultural facet, which included a resurgence of linguistic, literary and journalist activity, began in the first half of the nineteenth century and persisted into the early twentieth century; the political facet, which focused on issues of political identity and nationhood, evolved in the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially in its closing decades, in response to indirect and direct colonialism, and persisted well into the first half of the twentieth century. The *Nahda* movement played a crucial role in molding modern Arab worldviews and self-perceptions. A key component of this involved the encounter and reconciliation of Arab culture and values with those of the modern world.

The exposure to Western ideas, culture and technology inspired great admiration, but with it came a growing understanding of the need to preserve the Arab heritage. In their private letters, speeches and articles, many Arab writers and intellectuals of the *Nahda* period insisted on distinguishing between modernization and Westernization. They saw themselves as “the generation of light and knowledge” and believed they were on the brink of “a new era” (*al-‘asr al-jadid*); an era in which the East would regain its former prominence and hopefully even surpass the West. In order to do so, they argued, it was necessary to reshape their “traditional” society and transform it into a more “open” or “advanced” and egalitarian one (Butrus al-Bustani, 1990b[1852]:113–117). However, this transformation was not to be a mere imitation of the West, but one in which selected ideas and institutions from the West would be used as a tool to advance their society. Indeed, Beirut's middle-class residents, of all religious denominations, developed a rich cultural and social life, establishing salons and cultural societies, a theater and newspapers and periodicals. They began debating the merits of various political philosophies and economic theories; they also began reading novels, first those translated from various European languages and later original Arabic novels (Halevi and Zachs, 2007).

Part and parcel of this cultural encounter and renegotiation was the growing public debate on the role the “modern” Arab woman was to play in her family, society and nation (see Zachs and Halevi, 2009). While one cannot deny the impact that cultural mediators, such as female missionary teachers, must have had in introducing and transmitting a “Western” brand of femininity (and domesticity) to their Arab women

students, Marilyn Booth (2002), who engaged a close reading of the biographies of many of the leading women writers and intellectuals, suggests that this “Western” brand of womanhood underwent significant modification. While students were appreciative of their teachers’ educational efforts, this did not necessitate the abandonment of an Arabic education, which was often supplemented in the home or after graduation (Booth, 2002; see also Fleischmann, 2002).

Thus, the architectural redesigning of the late nineteenth-century Arab house and the reorganization of its interior should be seen as the product of a complex interweaving of complementary, and at times contradictory, Ottoman, Arab and “Western” discourses concerning modernity and the role of women and the family in the reconstitution of the nation.

### **“The realm of the mother”: Reorganizing the modern Arab home**

Our findings regarding the spatial implementation of an Arab discourse on modern domesticity are based mainly on a thematic reading of the domestic advice columns and articles appearing in three of the leading Arabic journals of the time, *al-Jinan* (Beirut, 1870–1886), *al-Muqtataf* (Beirut, 1876–1884; Cairo, 1885–1900) and *al-Janna* (Beirut, 1879–1884),<sup>2</sup> as well as two women’s journals, *al-Fatat* (Alexandria, 1892–1894) and *al-Hasna* (Beirut, 1909–1912). Occasionally, we also referred to articles and advertisements appearing in other leading journals, such as *Thamarat al-Funun* (Beirut, 1875–1900), *Lisan al-Hal* (Beirut, 1878–1900) and *al-Hilal* (Cairo, 1892–1900). This periodical literature is used as our main source, as there is a shortage of narratives of self (e.g., diaries, memoirs, letters) which have served as the basis of similar studies in other countries. Ideals, ideas and advice concerning how women should spatially implement the ideals of domesticity were embedded within a much larger discussion on the appropriate role of a modern Arab woman: her education, her contributions to her family and society, and (as we move toward the twentieth century) her role in the life of the nation. While this discussion was to be found mainly under the *tadbir al-manzil* (household management) columns, which go into the details of the domestic arts a woman needed to master and engage in in-depth discussions concerning the newly emerging standards of housekeeping and mothering, they could also be encountered on any of the journals’ and newspapers’ pages (see Zachs and Halevi, 2009).

The writers of the *tadbir al-manzil* columns reasoned that a woman’s role was not only to exert a civilizing influence on her family through her formal knowledge, but to ensure the smooth running of her household through her practical knowledge. Her main role was to keep the home and family in order and, through her good and rational care of them, to ensure the peace and harmony of the household. It

was through these activities (more than any other intellectual pursuits) that she derived her dignity and honor. These articles in the *tadbir al-manzil* columns, while providing women with a broader, even scientific (e.g., Makarius, 1880; Sarruf, 1880), understanding of the importance of their work within the home and family, had a strong practical orientation. They stressed the medical benefits of domestic cleanliness, personal hygiene and a healthy diet (e.g., Nimr, 1883) and devoted considerable attention both to children's and girls' education (e.g., Bar Wadi, 1882; Kurani, 1890a, 1890b). Such articles were supplemented by others explaining how to remove stains or wash marble floors, or comparing the qualities of various soaps (see Russell, 2010).

While the *tadbir al-manzil* columns were clearly directed at women, the discussion of women's domestic roles also appeared in other sections of the journals and newspapers, and was directed at a mixed audience. Most of these items were full-length, more contemplative, articles dealing with the home, focusing upon the domestic joys and political virtues of familial bliss, harmony and peace and waxing poetic on the importance of the woman (the wife and mother) in fostering these conditions. They advised her how to promote this harmonious atmosphere through her calm demeanor, moral example and a rational household routine (e.g., Kassab, 1894a; 1894b). Several of these articles (and a few of the *tadbir al-manzil* columns) were reprints of lectures previously presented to and by the (male or female) members of scientific or literary and cultural societies, such as *al-Jam'iyya al-Suriyya li-Iktisab al-'Ulum wal-Funun* (the Syrian Society for the Acquisition of Sciences) or the influential literary and cultural society *Bakurat Suriyya* (Dawn of Syria), one of the first Greater Syrian women's associations (founded in 1880).

In 1882, for example, *al-Jinan* reprinted "The education of women," a 1849 lecture delivered to *al-Jam'iyya al-Suriyya* by author and publisher, Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883), one of the major figures in Beirut's intellectual scene during the *Nahda* period. In the lecture, he advocated providing women with a broad and solid education to enable them to carry out their marital, maternal and domestic duties for the benefit of their family, society and nation. However, he also bemoaned their lack of knowledge concerning domestic matters: "What do women know of the education of children, the arrangement of the house, their cleanliness or attending to the sick?" Later in the lecture, al-Bustani was quite explicit as to what he included under the broad title of "care of the home": domestic and personal hygiene, needlework, cooking and nursing. Moreover, he advocated that women receive formal schooling in these subjects, "which many consider despised [topics]." Al-Bustani ended the lecture with a paraphrase of the well-known refrain that "the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world" (Bustani, 1990a[1852]:47,50).<sup>3</sup>

Two decades later, al-Bustani's son, Salim (1846–1884), who was himself a leading nineteenth-century Arab intellectual, would once again reconnect the private and public spheres through the household. Salim al-Bustani argued that an untidy, noisy and disorderly household would drive a married man away to seek the pleasures of the coffeehouse rather than spend time with his family. According to him, this masculine abandonment of the domestic space had far-reaching consequences, as it was an indicator of the deteriorating state of the home and nation; conversely, readers could understand that strengthening the familial bonds would also reinforce those of the nation (Bustani, 1877; see also Tu'ma, 1910). Thus, by preserving the tranquility and orderliness of her household, a woman could also ensure the wellbeing of her nation.

Indeed, connecting the issue of the well-ordered (and well-managed) home and family with that of the well-ordered nation would continue in the journals well into the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1910, for example, in an essay entitled "The Syrian girl and her new future," Fictoria (Victoria) Antaki argued that the role of the Arab woman in the *Nahda* requires her to invest her energies in the home in order to ensure the wellbeing of her family and the regeneration of the nation. The woman who carries out her role satisfactorily will be rightfully entitled "to ascend to the throne of this little kingdom" (*'arsh al-mamlaka al-saghira*). While writers, such as Tu'ma, acknowledge the amount of hard work women have to invest in turning a house into a home, they caution her against seeing this work as an affliction rather than a "sublime and heavenly destiny" (1910:11).

These analogies between the home and the domestic, on the one hand, and "the realm of the mother," on the other (Tu'ma, 1910:9,12), and between the domestic role of the wife and mother and "a ruling queen" (Kurani, 1890a:3), were not meant to placate women or pay lip service to their familial duties, but rather were designed to emphasize the close connection between the cultural, social and, later, political regeneration of Arab society in the modern period and the project of re-visioning the modern Arab home, the site of its moral and psychological regeneration. Interestingly, as in Arabic the same word is used for "house" and "home" (*bayt*), some writers made a clear distinction between the two by using a transliteration of the English word "home" to denote its moral and psychological aspects (e.g., Tu'ma, 1910:11).

Articles and columns discussing the changing social organization of the modern Arab household, the physical appearance of the house and the shifting styles of daily living occupy a middle ground between the grand philosophical articles extolling the moral and political role of the well-ordered household and the nitty-gritty *tadbir al-manzil* pieces advising the housewife on the intricacies of stain removal. While only a handful of articles devoted themselves to outlining the



spatial expressions of this tranquil and ordered household, these articles were extremely detailed; their authors walked the reader through the home and provided comprehensive explanations to the rationale behind the design and arrangement.

The best example of such an early article was written by Rujina Shukri, who told of visiting “a friend’s house,” which, although clean and tidy, did not live up to her standards of household décor. Thus, she proceeded to tell her readers how to better organize and decorate their homes.<sup>4</sup> Shukri emphasized to her readers that it was a woman’s responsibility to turn her home into a tranquil and welcoming place. She cautioned them that, if the woman failed, it ran the risk of becoming a place of desolation. While Shukri acknowledged the limited finances at the disposal of many middle-class families, she claimed that the ideal house she was about to describe was the suitable abode of “ordinary people of the middle class” (1885:743).

Rujina Shukri’s characterization of the Beirut middle-class home as one with “many rooms” (*ghuraf*), along with her recommendation that the woman of the house assign different rooms for different activities (each with its appropriate furniture), suggest that she was referring to a new type of house (1885:743). Jirjis Himam (1891), writing several years after Shukri, also suggested that an educated and distinguished bourgeois family should have several rooms at its disposal, including a nursery, a guest bedroom and a kitchen. The “central-hall house,” as it came to be known, appeared in Beirut during the second half of the nineteenth century and was designed for the use of one nuclear family (Ragette, 1974:113). With their red-tiled roofs and triple-arch windows, these houses, which opened up to a front garden and street, were constructed in Beirut and the towns and villages surrounding it. In contrast to earlier residential styles, especially the traditional courtyard houses (the *dar* and the *hara*), where rooms were built around a central court, rooms in the new “central-hall house” were organized along a rectangular central hall (Khater, 2003; Mollenhauer, 2003). Indeed, Shukri devoted considerable attention to the public portion of this central hall (the vestibule) and to the first public room it opened onto, the main receiving room or parlor (*ghurfat al-majlis*). Although relatively small, the vestibule should boast several multi-colored rugs, and painting and prints should be displayed on the walls; for the comfort of guests, waiting to be received, there should be several chairs and a large hall stand where they could deposit their walking sticks, parasols and hats (Shukri, 1885:743).

Next came the main receiving room, or parlor, which historian Karen Haltunnen has argued lay between “the urban street where strangers freely mingled and the back regions of the house where only family members were permitted to enter uninvited” (1982:59; see also Hepworth, 1999). As the main receiving room was both the first room guests would encounter and one which “reflects the skills of the



woman of the house,” it had to be attended to with great care and furnished with the best furniture and decorative items. Shukri once again provided precise directions for the décor and appearance of this room, as well as a detailed list of the items to be displayed: flower arrangements, candelabras, chandeliers, handsomely bound books, carpets and light, airy curtains (1885:744). Archeological and architectural case studies of “central-hall house” interiors that served as vestibules and reception rooms have found evidence of the widespread usage of light green, pink and blue wall paint, stucco ornaments, cornices, *trompe-d’œil* paintings, decorated ceilings, mosaic tile or marble floors and glass windows (Cerasi, 2003; Renda, 1998).

Shukri and other columnists also turned their attention to semi-private areas, such as the dining room and the library, and to the private family rooms, such as the bedroom and the nursery. Like the reception room, the dining room became a place in which a woman could both demonstrate and enhance her family’s wealth and cultural capital by correctly displaying the china, the silverware and other table decorations. Arguing that “the table is the mirror of the level achieved by the lady of the house (*rabbat al-bayt*),” Arab women were instructed on how to furnish their dining rooms and how to present food dishes. Columns devoted considerable attention to the laying of a formal dining table (Hubayqa, 1884; see also Nimr, 1883), the fine points of dining etiquette, and detailed instructions on how to create and decorate an epergne, and compared the older *service à la française* with the virtues of the newer *service à la russe* (*al ma’ida al-Muskubiyya*) (e.g., Anonymous, 1884; Hubayqa, 1884).<sup>5</sup>

As books were noticeably present in all the rooms discussed (except the dining room), it is clear that reading had become an important social activity cultivated by the Beirut middle classes, and one much preferred over idle card or backgammon games. It is thus unsurprising that home libraries were increasingly present in prescriptions and descriptions of modern Arab homes (see Holt, 2009). However, contrary to the other rooms, few if any details are given as how this room ought to be furnished. It is possible that in Beirut, as in Europe and North America, the library was thought of as a masculine space (Kleinberg, 1999), where a man retires after dinner to work or “read a newspaper or a novel” (Ghabril, 1910:109). While his wife may have been welcome to join him occasionally and keep him company while he worked, it was not hers to leave her imprint on.

Last, came the bedrooms (*ghurfat al-nawm*); these were supposed to cater both to the inhabitants’ physical needs (such as sleep) and the emotional ones (to withdraw from the world and let one’s guard down). Thus, they had to hold a bed for each person, a washstand and a mirror, as well as a chest of drawers and clothes closet. But no less important, the bedroom had to be restful and pleasing to the eye; thus, a few pictures should be hung on the walls and a “nice rug” placed on the floor before a comfortable armchair and a side table with books on it (Shukri, 1885:745). Other writers recommended separate rooms

for younger and older children and urged mothers to see that the nursery was clean, sunny, airy and maintained at a steady temperature (e.g., Himam, 1891).

It is important to note the four areas in the house which were not described in great detail: the kitchen, the bathroom, the laundry room and the servants' quarters. Given the great focus on bodily hygiene and clean and healthy food, on the one hand, and the proper management of servants, on the other, it is rather surprising that these spaces were overlooked in articles appearing in periodicals. The neglect of these areas may be explained by the fact that most of these activities were carried out by servants belonging to a lower social class; given the known "invisibility of housework" and especially the "invisibility" of servants performing such work, perhaps such surprise is unwarranted (Gerard, 1984; Srinivas, 1995). However, the neglect of these areas may be the result of the ongoing separation of the living and service spaces. In traditional houses, many service activities (such as cooking and laundry) took place outside the house; in the case of "central-hall houses," they were carried out both outside and on a different (housekeeping or mezzanine) floor (Ragette, 1974:114–115).<sup>6</sup> While this housekeeping floor is not mentioned in the press, it is found in houses still standing, in house plans and in photographs (Debbas, 1994; Duda, 1971).<sup>7</sup>

These detailed descriptions of the organization of different rooms, their functions and the items placed within them suggests that this spatial reorganization had a strong consumer and class aspect. In the Arabic periodical literature of the period, there was a marked increase in the number of advertisements of new consumer goods, such as ready-made clothes, furniture, household goods and appliances (particularly sewing machines), silverware, mirrors, clocks and watches, safes, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, detergents, soap and chocolates, as well as services, such as housekeepers, French and English teachers and piano instructors. With the opening of local merchandise depots (such as Kaff al-Akhmar and Mahkzan Suriyya) and the launching of European department store outlets (such as Au Bon Marché and Grand Magasin au Printemps) at the turn of the twentieth century, these consumer desires could be amply satisfied (see Abou-Hodeib, 2011; Kupferschmidt, 2004; Roberts, 1998; Shechter, 2003).

This consumer aspect of the spatial reorganization of middle-class houses in Beirut suggests that bourgeois men, and especially women, were using these newly acquired items and services to gain and broadcast their class status to the world. Historian Deborah Cohen has argued that, for middle-class Victorians, the items (e.g., furniture, paintings, carpets, curios) conferred status to such a degree that "things preceded identity; what you owned told others (and yourself) who you were" (2006:86). As domestic interiors and their personal bodies (dress) were two of the main sites where women could express their tastes, values and class identities (Gordon, 1996), perhaps it is no coincidence that the Arabic periodical press of the late nineteenth century began to devote considerable attention to these sites and to advise women on how to better do so.

## Conclusion

All the columns and articles discussed reflect the ongoing project of redrawing the interior boundaries of the modern Arab home and investing them with new social and gendered meanings. First, the columns attended to emergence of the public areas of the home often occupied by both female and male guests. They established the reception room and the dining room as spaces which a modern and educated, but respectable, woman may safely occupy and use to demonstrate her family's status.

Second, they called for shielding the home, and in particular the private rooms, from the outside world; fences, hedges, front gardens, shutters, windows and curtains created a visual and acoustic barrier between the outdoor noise, dirt and disorderliness and the indoor quiet, cleanliness and order. Taken together, both these features may be reflective of a shift from a home organized around a male–female principle to one organized around a public–private one.<sup>8</sup>

Third, similar to Europe and North America, Arab middle-class housewives in Beirut had to create suitable home conditions to enable their men folk (particularly husbands) to recuperate from the hustle and bustle of “a heartless world.” Thus, the writers put a premium on women responding to the needs (and demands) of husbands and fathers for privacy and quiet after a day's work. The assignment of different rooms for different functions was not only “rational” and maximized each room's use; it also shielded the male head of the household from the turmoil of housework and childcare, while the housewife had to resort to creative combinations of space and time in order to create a room of her own (Munro and Madigan, 1999; Spain, 1992:112–113).

Fourth, the writers in the late nineteenth-century Beirut press invested this spatial reorganization of the home with emotional and political meaning. A good wife was not just one who kept a clean house and provided hot, or even tasty, meals to a hungry husband, but rather one who was his friend and partner in life. “Don't serve him food as if he were in an inn, but sit by his side, be his friend and show interest in his affairs” (Ghabril, 1910:110). A woman's real task was to convert a house into a “pleasant and inviting” home, which would appeal to the men of the house and keep them away from the temptations of the “coffeehouses and casinos” (Tu'ma, 1910:12). Yet while women (and men) were encouraged to adopt and cultivate this “modern” conjugal ideal, as well as new appliances and housekeeping standards, they were strongly cautioned against the excessive consumption of “foreign” goods (especially “Western” fashions) lest such intemperate spending lead to the financial ruin of their husbands and families and contribute to the economic deterioration of their nation. (e.g., Fathallah, 1900). Thus, the locus of balance between the “modern” or “Western” and the “Arab” was home, and the main burden of this balancing act was placed on women.

## The little kingdom over which God made you queen

Last, this examination of the spatial implementation of an emerging modern Arab discourse of domesticity in the homes of the bourgeoisie in turn-of-the-century Beirut poses several questions for further study. All the articles we found dealt with an idealized single-family house, but the middle-class residents of Beirut were also moving into apartment buildings, as were the residents of Western and Eastern cities (e.g., Glover, 2008; Marcus, 1999; Sand, 2003). Very little is known about these residences, be it in Beirut or in other Ottoman cities. Around what principles were these homes ordered? What was the spatial organization of gender in these homes? Just as significantly, if, as Leora Auslander convincingly argues,

everyday rituals, holidays, material culture, and embodied practices not only serve to create loyalty to the state and a sense of national community but also cause us to identify with, or feel distant from, others with whom we share a national, but not a social or political, space (2009:2),

then we must to rethink the implications of and connections between these significant cultural and material changes which so typified the early phase of the *Nahda* (pre-World War I) and the national and political transformations which came to characterize the later phase (post-World War I). We must consider how these spatial transformations of the “modern Arab” home would come to affect the political and spatial reorganization of the “modern Arab” nation.

## Notes

- 1 The quotation is from Tu'ma (1910:9).
- 2 *Al-Janna* was published 1871–1884; we examined the last five years.
- 3 Al-Bustani collated eighteen such addresses in a collection printed in 1852, and a summary of the lecture was reprinted in 1882 in *al-Jinan*. The refrain is from the American poet, William Ross Wallace's (1819–1881) poem, “The hand that rocks the cradle” (1865). Given the dates, it is possible that al-Bustani added the refrain years after the lecture.
- 4 Shukri, a graduate of the American School for Girls, presented the main argument of this article several years earlier as a lecture before *Bakurat Suriyya*.
- 5 In the older *service à la française*, all the dishes were placed on the table and the guests served themselves; in the newer *service à la russe*, food was placed on the sideboard and servants served the guests course by course.

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- 6 Ragette claims that Lebanese (and especially Beirut) cuisine differed significantly from the elaborate Arab cuisines of cities such as Aleppo and Cairo. It relied mainly on fresh fruits and vegetables and baked and grilled foods, for which a small oven and simple charcoal grill would suffice (1974:114–115).
- 7 For additional photographs, see the Fouad Debbas Collection (<http://www.thefouaddebbascollection.com>) and the Arab Image Foundation (<http://www.fai.org.lb>).
- 8 A similar line of argument is hinted at by Fay (2003).

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