

Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878- 1924¹

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One wonders what went through Kamila Jubran's mind as she realized that death had come to claim her. She had traveled so far in the hopes of securing a better life for herself and for her children. Instead, she had watched her oldest and youngest succumb to the ravages of consumption while another toiled nightly to help make ends meet.² Only her precocious son, Kahlil, having already caught the eye of a Boston patron, seemed to have a hopeful future ahead of him.³ And so, Kamila's last breath on the afternoon of 28 June 1903 might have been one of resignation. She had left a life of punishing debt in Mount Lebanon, survived the long, fetid journey in steerage class, and made it past the inspectors at Ellis Island. In the end, the difficulties and obstacles in the "new world" had been ones she had always confronted in the "old": sickness, poverty, and death.

It is impossible to know for certain what Kamila's dying thoughts really were, although Kahlil (future literary innovator and celebrated author of *The Prophet*) would later portray her as a heroic figure of self-sacrifice and suggest that she embraced death with serenity.⁴ Kamila's daughter, Marianna, noted only that her mother was drugged and unconscious before she died.⁵ Amid the uncertainties over how Kamila interpreted her experience of migration in the final hours as the long journey from Bsharri⁶ to America ended in a crowded Boston tenement building, one point is clear: she does not fit the image that dominates the historiography of Syrian migration to the United States, that of the bachelor, blazing a trail for subsequent migrants to follow. Kamila had left behind her drink-prone, debt-ridden husband and traveled to Boston in the company of her children.⁷ The only thing she appears to have followed to America was a desire to improve her family's condition.

Other women made similar decisions to "cross the waters" without husbands or adult male guardians during the first wave of Syrian migration to the United

States, from the late 1870s to the closing of the immigration door in 1924.⁸ The literature, however, characterizes this phase as a classic example of chain migration in which young men were the first links and were later joined by wives or fiancées. Philip Hitti, for example, wrote that "in its early history the movement was entirely a male movement," and women arrived only after their "economic value" was discovered. The Syrian pioneer, believing "that in the United States woman was an asset rather than a liability...began to bring over his women folks [sic]."⁹ Beginning with the work of Afif Tannous and Alixa Naff, the lives of Syrian immigrant women received greater attention. Naff, in particular, reconstructed the history of female "trail-blazers" who were entrepreneurs in their own right and, based on her extensive collection of interviews, found that women had played a crucial role in developing a Syrian economic niche in peddling.¹⁰ More recent research by Evelyn Shakir and Akram Khater has developed further the history of Syrian women's participation in transatlantic migration.¹¹ Their work is a welcome addition to the field, for it depicts women as full-fledged actors in the migration process and not merely as appendages of husbands, brothers, or fathers. It also serves to correct a problem in the historiography of migration, that of beginning the analysis of women's activity only from the moment they entered the "new world," as if this was "point zero of individual subjectivity."¹² Shakir, for example, draws our attention to qualities that encouraged Syrian women to migrate in the first place, noting that they were "daring," brazen," "acting on their own initiative and for the same reasons as men"—to make money and to embark on an adventure across the ocean.¹³

Despite these contributions, however, the chain migration thesis remains intact and female migrants continue to be viewed as exceptions to the rule of male pioneer migration. Moreover, we still have a poor understanding of how patterns of female migration may have differed from those of men, and why certain

women migrated and not others. This essay aims to feminize the chain migration thesis by positioning women more centrally in the narrative on both sides of the Atlantic. It explores how women's lives were touched by modern social change prior to emigration, particularly as a result of the boom and bust of the Syrian silk industry. These changes in the homeland, or what Donna Gabaccia aptly calls "the other side" of an international economy, produced a new wage-labor force, and precipitated shifts in notions of work and honor that were carried across and modified in the *mahjar* (diaspora).¹⁴ I argue that women's exposure to the vicissitudes of the silk industry prepared them for their work as immigrants in the United States, typically in the peddling trade. However, as the community expanded and became more settled, Syrian women faced new pressures that discouraged their continued involvement in this type of labor. A closer study of female immigrants thus reveals a richer, more complex history of Syrian migration to the United States and illuminates debates around Syrian immigrant identity during the early period of its articulation.

Women of the "first wave"

By 1899, when records for Syrians first began to be compiled by U. S. immigration officers, women represented approximately one-third of the number of arrivals from Syria. In the fifteen years between 1899 and 1914—corresponding to the peak years of Syrian migration to the United States—women made up thirty-two per cent of the total, a figure that is high, especially in relation to other Mediterranean immigrant groups. Southern Italian women, for example, comprised twenty-one per cent of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migration from Italy.¹⁵ Even in the two years preceding the outbreak of World War I, when Syrian men emigrated in greater numbers than previous years to avoid conscription into the Ottoman army, women were still a significant portion (5,665 out of 18,233) of the total number of arrivals to the United States.¹⁶

During the war years, overseas migration of both men and women fell drastically as the allied blockade cut Syria off from international shipping. Travel became difficult, food and supplies did not arrive in the ports, and the country plunged into a terrible famine. The Lebanese Mountain, having already endured a fierce winter, was hit hardest. Tens of thousands starved to death after spending their last days scrounging for food, only to find a rotten lemon rind, or a dirty scrap of hay.¹⁷

Migration to the United States resumed after the war, but it was soon radically curtailed by the passage of restrictive laws on immigration. In 1921, the U. S. government introduced the Quota Act, which established

quotas based on national origins. The Act "limited the annual number of entrants of each admissible nationality to three per cent of the foreign-born of that nationality as recorded in the U. S. Census of 1910."¹⁸ It was made more restrictive in 1924 when quotas were set at two per cent of the 1890 Census, thereby drastically limiting the number of eligible immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁹ Under the new quota set in 1924, only one hundred Syrians were allowed to enter per year, and it was at this time that female arrivals (many of whom were the wives of naturalized Syrians living in the United States, and thus entered as nonquota immigrants) began to exceed the number of male arrivals. Philip Hitti estimated the total Syrian-American population in 1924 to be approximately 200,000 persons, considerably more than recorded a few years later in the 1930 census.²⁰

To be sure, even before the 1924 Act, many Syrian women arrived in the United States as the wives or fiancées of men who had left several years before them. Oral histories of immigrant men and women relate how elder female relatives orchestrated matches and sent off daughters, nieces, and cousins of marriageable age to the United States. Essa Samara, for example, was preparing to marry an American woman he had met in Manchester, New Hampshire, when his mother intervened and sent him a bride from his village. The young woman arrived in New York in the company of Essa's sister, and although the voyage had terrified her, as had the medical inspection at Ellis Island, the idea of marrying a man she had seldom, if ever, set eyes on may not have seemed like such a bad one. Essa was doing well. He had a house, knew a fair bit of English and could promise a degree of comfort that was above what the young woman had known in Syria.²¹ For Sultana Alkazin, however, the reunion with her husband was a bitter one. She arrived in Philadelphia in 1901 with her three children only to find that he had a mistress and expected them to live together. Sultana refused, left her husband, and eventually moved to Atlantic City where she sold linens on the boardwalk.²²

While marriage to a male emigrant is viewed in the literature as the most logical explanation for the arrival of Syrian women in the United States in the three decades before World War I, there is considerable evidence to support other explanations. In 1878, for example, a young woman left an unsuccessfully arranged marriage in Zagharta and headed for Alabama where others from her village had settled. Within the year, she had moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, and started in the peddling trade. She soon saved enough money to buy a wagon, and at the time of her death in 1932, she was the successful owner of a dry-goods store, affectionately known as "Queen Mary" for her willingness to assist new immigrants.²³ Like thousands of other Syrian fe-

male immigrants, there is little about her in the historical record. Instead, it is an educated patriarch of a large Christian family, Ibrahim Arbeeli, whose arrival in 1878 is celebrated in the literature on Syrian immigration to the United States as an historic “first.” This is due largely to the fact that Arbeeli’s story generated written accounts, including a *New York Times* article that used it as an opportunity to engage in anti-Muslim vitriol.²⁴ The feeling of insecurity “under the Turkish yoke,” and Arbeeli’s fear that he might be murdered “in some outbreak of fanatical Muslims,” was said to have propelled his family out of Syria. How different would the story of Syrian migration be if it began not as it so often does with the arrival of Ibrahim Arbeeli, but with that of the lesser-known, enterprising “Queen Mary?”

Mary might have been a maverick, but her story is not unique. In 1892, Martha Cammel, a widow from Beirut, immigrated to the United States. She had already sent several of her daughters ahead of her, and when she had saved enough money, she too made the journey.²⁵ On the way over, she met twenty-year-old Amen Soffa from Douma, Syria, who had left his five-acre vineyard in the care of his sister. The two travelers must have kept in touch because in 1902, Amen married Martha’s oldest daughter Nazera, and they settled on a ten-acre parcel of land bought with Amen’s earnings from ten years of peddling between LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and Greenleaf, Minnesota.²⁶

Annie Midlige (née Tabsharani), also a widow from Beirut, emigrated two years after Martha, in 1894. Annie had made her first big move at the age of eighteen when she left her village of Dhour al-Shwayr to work in Beirut’s largest silk factory. Twelve years later, a widow with four children, she sailed from Beirut and headed for New York City. Although it was home to a large Syrian “colony,” the city didn’t suit her. Annie pushed on to Ottawa, Canada, made contacts with suppliers there, and then moved northeast to establish herself as one of the most successful independent traders in the Quebec interior.²⁷ She reached beyond existing outposts to trade with Indian populations, and became a fierce competitor to the powerful Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). Alarmed at her encroachment into HBC fur-trading territory, one inspector wrote in his report that “opposition has been creeping nearer and nearer every year by way of the Gatineau [River] in the shape of a woman, Mrs. Medlege [sic].” He seemed especially bothered by Annie’s attempts to sell new kinds of merchandise to her Indian clients, and called it “cheap gaudy trash which is of no earthly value to them.”²⁸

Martha Cammel, Kamila Jubran, Annie Midlige, and “Queen Mary” are concrete names we can attach to the obscure written history of early female emigration from Syria to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Each of their stories breaks with the

model of chain migration that has at its beginning a young unmarried male. And while these women were affected by the same socio-economic forces that prompted men to migrate, they also brought with them gender-specific experiences that help explain why it was they who emigrated and not others. Kamila and Annie, for example, did not embark on their transatlantic journey as novices, but as women already familiar with dislocation and the emotional and financial costs of migration. Kamila had tended the household when her first husband immigrated to Brazil in the first trickle of migration to the Americas, but she never fully reaped the benefits of her husband’s Brazilian earnings, for he died there and she was left with his debts and their young son Boutros. Although in this instance America symbolized danger and loss, she decided to seek its shores when her second husband reneged on his duties as provider and patriarch. Annie Midlige’s history of migration began as an internal one, from the village to the city, where she found work as a “factory girl” (*amila*). She was, in other words, already a migrant, and a woman already familiar with a growing cash economy in Lebanon. Her story points to the importance of “step migration” (a move that precedes the transatlantic one), and to the centrality of the silk industry in Lebanese women’s lives. Indeed, it is the story of silk that underpins the migration of another group of women, young and unmarried.

The Threads of Silk: Work, Honor, and Identity in the Homeland

Single women migrated to the United States as the hopeful prospects of struggling families. Louise Houghton, writing on the Syrians for *The Survey (A Journal of Constructive Philanthropy)* in 1911, observed that “it is not infrequently the case that the eldest daughter will precede her parents, or a sister her brother, to this country, and earn the money needed to bring over the father or the brother.”²⁹ Margaret Malooley, for example, emigrated alone at the age of twenty to join her father in working to sponsor her mother, sister, and brother. She peddled with her sister-in-law in Spring Valley, Illinois, until she married. Unfortunately, she lost touch with her family members in Lebanon during World War I and never saw them again.³⁰

There was work for young women like Margaret in a variety of places: the Syrian-owned kimono factories of New York City, the mills of Massachusetts, and the peddling circuits of nearly every American town where Syrians were present. It is likely that many of these women had previous experience in the silk factories of Syria, and that work in the *mahjar* was considered a way out of the depressive state of affairs in the filatures, or as a more rewarding option for women who had not yet joined the ranks of the factory-girls. Gaston Ducousso,

of the French Consulate General in Beirut, noted that close to twenty per cent of the female workforce from the filatures had emigrated in one year alone, and that this was the culmination of a movement that had been escalating for several years.³¹ Thus, the long-standing argument that the decline of the silk industry pushed *men* out of Syria needs to be qualified in significant ways. Women worked in the filatures, not men, and the sexual division of labor in the silk industry is important for understanding patterns of migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³² The mechanization of silk reeling produced a female wage-earning class whose earnings were channeled first into a peasant economy and then into a transatlantic commercial one, a class whose labor also engendered debates about work, honor, and identity in migrating communities.

The women who worked in the Syrian filatures were young, overwhelmingly Christian, and poor. They were also the sisters and daughters of men who thought of themselves as guardians of the chastity of their female kin, for it was on women that male honor—and by extension social standing—precariously rested. If women went off to work in factories, they entered into relationships (between foreman and worker, for example) that were unsupervised and potentially disruptive to the peasant code of honor.³³ Men's acceptance of women's wage-work, either tacitly or explicitly, constituted what Akram Khater describes as a "crisis in patriarchy" in which male authority was daily called into question as women went off to work away from their homes and from their men folk.³⁴ While the issue of women's factory work was controversial, the problem could be resolved by reworking the honor code. Factory owners, the clergy, and workers all participated in this process.

Foreign and local entrepreneurs who had invested in the Syrian silk industry went to great lengths to quiet local anxieties over women's wage work. European women were brought in, often at great expense, to serve as a buffer between the workers and male management. When Nicholas and Georges Portalis opened their first filature in the Lebanese Mountain village of Btater in 1848, they brought along forty spinners from southern France to train local girls how to turn cocoons into silk thread.³⁵ This was a strategy used in other areas of the Ottoman Empire as well, such as Bursa (in modern-day Turkey), where factory owners hired silk-reelers from France and Switzerland to instruct workers and demonstrate by their continued presence on the shop-floor that female supervision was part of factory work.³⁶ These methods of persuasion were quite effective and helped to dispel the disapproval of religious authorities. The Pope went so far as to issue a decree permitting Armenian girls to work in the Bursa area factories, and, after years of opposition, two Syrian archbishops finally gave their sanction to the employment of Christian women in

the filatures.³⁷

The Syrian archbishops had objected to the hiring of young women on moral grounds, claiming that the proper boundaries separating men and women were not respected in the factory and that this would lead to illicit relations between them.³⁸ They issued a letter forbidding women from working in mixed-sex factories, and relented only when promised amendments to the work place. Factory owners agreed to provide separate entrances for the women and men, and implement precautions to "protect the women's behavior."³⁹ Religious orders were called upon to assist in this endeavor and throughout the Lebanese Mountain orphanages, convents, and schools were built close to the filatures. The house of Veuve Guérin, for example, established an orphanage for girls beside its model filature in the village of Qrayya. The orphanage was run by the Besançon Sisters of Charity and, at least outwardly, it appeared as though the young women were supervised, provided with spiritual guidance and a modicum of education.⁴⁰ In addition, the recruitment of women as wage-workers in the silk industry was facilitated by the patriarchal structure of the work environment. Local owners were especially adept at using pre-existing kinship solidarities to their advantage.⁴¹ Female employees were hired by managers who were often their uncles or cousins, and the deference with which they were expected to treat male relatives outside the factory was also expected of them on the inside.⁴²

On two crucial fronts, then, opposition to women's factory work was placated. Religious officials who worried that factory work was improper for young women found assurance in the promises of supervision and attention to the spiritual needs of the workers. For those who believed that the daily trip to the factory exposed women to situations that could jeopardize their honor, comfort could be found in the knowledge that male relatives were in positions of management and authority. Thus the formal, or official, components of honor could be respected. But, as Khater argues, the relative quickness with which peasant men acquiesced to the idea of wage-work for their female kin was due also to the way they reinterpreted their own position within the honor code. While women's factory work could bring shame to a family, it could paradoxically help restore the honor of men by allowing them to maintain their identities as peasants. In other words, by turning over their incomes to the household, young women enabled men to continue to participate in the peasant economy, at least for a few more years.⁴³ Women's wages (even if appallingly low) were spent on the payment of debt, agricultural provisions, and wherever possible, on the purchase of "luxury" items like rice and sugar.⁴⁴ The income was used to purchase respectability and offset the shame that women's work in the filatures might have

brought to a family. Since men could read young women's challenging of the honor code in such a way that their own authority was not disrupted, they could support female factory work. So, in a crude way, honor was sacrificed, but it was also preserved.

It was not simply the greed of shrewd factory owners that accounted for the massive recruitment of women into the Syrian silk industry, but the saliency and malleability of honor in the minds of the workers and their families as well. However, when the industry suffered a serious blow beginning in the 1870s due to disease and competition from the Far East, prices paid for silk cocoons dropped. The hardest hit by falling international prices were cultivators who had borrowed money to purchase silk worm eggs at exorbitant interest rates, only to sell the developed cocoons six months later at a loss, and still owing the original creditor.⁴⁵ Increased indebtedness coincided with a steady rise in population, which placed added pressures on the land. In this context, overseas migration became a strategy to boost earnings and renegotiate the content of honor.

Honor Across the Atlantic: Peddling and Patriarchy in the Mahjar

Pack-peddling became central to the Syrian immigrant experience throughout the Americas. Like Eastern European Jews before them and, according to some accounts, from whom they learned the trade, Syrians were drawn to peddling because it required little capital, few English skills, and promised quick returns. For a community that had left Syria with the intention of making money and returning home, peddling was a logical option.⁴⁶ In the United States, Syrians began peddling in the 1880s in the New York City area, site of their "mother colony," and then developed circuits and networks of suppliers in the Midwest, South and West Coast.⁴⁷ New arrivals would head to towns and cities where they had the name of a merchandise supplier (usually someone from their village of origin), acquire a pack or what they called a *kashshi*, and begin the arduous work of selling from house to house.⁴⁸ In this way, Syrians established peddling settlements in areas with growing markets and with good potential for industrial development: Fort Wayne, Indiana; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Spring Valley, Illinois, to name a few.⁴⁹ Peddlers initially sold curios from the "Holy Land" such as rosaries and crosses that they had brought with them from Syria, but soon they began carrying items like thread, buttons, scissors, and combs that were sought particularly by farm wives who did not have ready access to stores.⁵⁰

Alix Naff argued that peddling "must be held to be the major factor in explaining the relatively rapid assimilation of Arabic-speaking immigrants [in the United States] before World War I."⁵¹ Peddling, in her estimation, forced immigrants to learn English and enabled

them to accumulate capital, which was eventually channeled into the purchase of small businesses like grocery and dry-goods stores. Other scholars contend that the trajectory from peddling to assimilation was not as linear as Naff made it out to be, and that the success of peddlers depended on region and the economic sphere into which they entered.⁵² The issue to be addressed here is somewhat different: how did peddling figure in the Syrian community's perception of itself in the United States? More to the point, why did women peddlers become so important in discussions about Syrian immigrant identity?

To answer this question, we must first account for the large number of female peddlers in the Syrian immigrant community before World War I. Naff estimates that perhaps as many as eighty per cent of Syrian women peddled in the early years of their migration. While there was obviously demand for the products they sold—what Truzzi calls being "at the right place at the right time"—their engagement and success in this type of work had much to do with the flexibility in the honor code as more and more Syrians disengaged from the silk industry and became involved in transatlantic migration. Like work in the filatures, peddling represented a new opportunity for poor families to maintain (through the earnings of young women) their identity as people tied to the land. And, like factory labor, peddling sparked debates about women's work and its relationship to honor. Differences of opinion on the matter were aired in the Arabic-language press. In 1899, for example, the editor of the leading New York daily, *al-Hoda* (*The Guidance*) argued that peddling would not tarnish a woman's honor, nor that of a man who married her.⁵³ Other commentators were more critical of the practice. Elias Nassif Elias chastised Syrian men for allowing their women to peddle on the grounds that it exposed them to exploitation by "American" men. "Oh, you dear Syrians who claim honor," he asked, "is it honorable to send your women to meander and encounter such insults?"⁵⁴

The views expressed in the pages of *al-Hoda* and other *mahjar* papers indicate that peddling provoked controversy within the community; but, by and large, the respectability and success of women peddlers was something Syrian immigrant elites boasted about, deliberately countering American ideas about the oppressed "Eastern woman." Syrian women were not, they argued, demure adjuncts of their husbands, but active participants in the family's economic uplift. "It is sometimes argued that the Semitic lets his women work," H.A. Elkourie wrote in the *Birmingham Age Herald*. "This is so. In this connection, however, I want to say that I have never seen a Syrian woman as a prostitute in a public place and for my part I would God that our women will remain as they are now: ignorant, but virtuous and be-

fore they will condescend to sell their virtues to the highest bidder they will labor daily and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.”⁵⁵

As had been the case in Syria, women’s work outside the home was legitimated within the framework of the family, where female members were the helpmates of their men-folk and virtue was preserved. The process of resolving breaches in the honor code that peddling entailed was similar to the negotiations over female factory work in Syria. Workers, most of whom had come from peasant backgrounds, viewed peddling as a viable way to improve household income and augment a family’s status.⁵⁶ Elites could, at least initially, argue that women’s migration and labor served a broader purpose of modernizing the Syrian family. In one of the few articles on Druze migration, for example, the author criticized men for emigrating without their womenfolk. “Where is the shame of a mother accompanying her son, a daughter her brother, a wife her husband?” he asks. Not only is it “not right that a Druze man should travel to strange lands and stay there for ten years and his wife and children endure difficulties [at home],” but denying her the right to emigrate—presumably out of adherence to Muslim tradition—means “she will remain in a status that is inconsistent with the age.”⁵⁷

This rhetoric of family uplift expressed principally in newspapers echoed a wider journalistic trend in the Arabic press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: attention to the “woman question.” *Al-Hoda*, like many newspapers and journals in Cairo and Alexandria, promoted new roles for women as long as they conformed to a modern project of family reform or national renewal. In this regard, it is significant that the masthead of the paper featured the goddess Athena, holding her shield with the word *al-Hoda* emblazoned on it, and that the first issue announced it would provide advice to female readers on medical ailments, child-rearing, marital relations, proper form and comportment for greetings and farewells, conversation, and writing, as well as social graces of the house.⁵⁸ Women’s paid work could be supported, and in some cases even applauded, because it could be imagined as part of a trajectory that would lead ultimately back to an increasingly rationalized house.

Besides this tentative elite approval, women’s transition into peddling was undoubtedly eased by the fact that the formal components of the honor code—the violation of which in the silk industry had initially provoked anxieties in Syria—were maintained in the *mahjar*, or at least the image thereof. Women worked in pairs or groups and in daily rounds, selling primarily to other women. They did not stay overnight away from their place of residence and if they did, they were accompanied by a male guardian who was either a relative or close family friend.⁵⁹ Moreover, suppliers often assumed

the role of patriarch within peddling networks, acting in a variety of capacities as providers of goods, bankers, protectors, and godfathers.⁶⁰ Thus, peddling fit into a pre-existing model of sex segregation and male guardianship that was particularly stringent for unmarried women. Widowed or “post-sexual” women like Annie Midlige may have faced fewer constraints from the honor code and could therefore pursue more independent paths.

Opposition to Syrian women peddlers was strongest among American charity workers and immigration officials, not Syrian community leaders. In Boston, for example, Syrian women faced the endeavors of the Boston Associated Charities to, as Houghton put it, “induce them to give it [peddling] up for some more self-respecting occupation.”⁶¹ In this regard, Syrians were only one of many immigrant groups targeted for “improvement” and “moral uplift.” Boston charity workers focused on the way Syrian women cared for their children while they peddled, sometimes carrying them, or, more often, leaving them at home in the care of their “idle husbands.” The assumption that a Syrian woman working outside the home was paired with an indigent man inside was frequently, and none too subtly made.⁶² Those who better understood Syrian communities appreciated the fact that the earnings of women were crucial to family survival. As Houghton noted, “the dependence of men upon their wives and even upon their children for support is becoming too common a circumstance of the industrial situation in the country for such a condition to be deemed peculiar to Syrians.”⁶³

Immigration officials were less forgiving and mounted scathing attacks against Syrian women peddlers. The criticism ranged from the absurd claim that peddling was another example of licentious Eastern behavior in which lazy Syrian men were served by their women, to the more perceptive, but exaggerated, charge that wealthy Syrians overworked and underpaid their female employees. The Industrial Commission Report on Immigration, for example, condemned Syrian merchants and accused them of taking advantage of impoverished women sent out on rounds to peddle. “The real offenders” the report asserted, “are merchants (so called) whose cupidity and indolence, reinforced by an exaggerated patriarchal authority, enable them to make this use of the pleasing appearance, glib tongues, and insinuating manner of their women.”⁶⁴ The report praised the “Syrians [who] are honest enough to express themselves as ashamed of and opposed to this system,”⁶⁵ and noted that they were few and far between.

The early acceptance of women peddlers within the Syrian immigrant community has been explained in the historiography in a number of ways. As mentioned above, Hitti credited Syrian men with the idea of encouraging “their women folk” to peddle, implying,

thereby, that women had the requisite permission to engage in this new activity. He added that peddling was suited to women since they could gain access to American homes more readily than men. This was especially true in rural communities where Syrian women catered to farm wives, supplying them with household needs. In urban areas, female peddlers could tap into bourgeois sensibilities by selling hand-made lace and embroidery to the well-to-do.⁶⁶ Peddling, in Hitti's opinion, was permitted because it was profitable and because peddlers maintained the boundaries of propriety.

Subsequent interpretations of the peddling experience, particularly those written by women historians, have emphasized the emancipatory possibilities of migration and of peddling. Naff, for example, argued that "the breakdown of the patriarchal, extended family into nuclear units and the reduction in the father's authority were the first effects of immigration on Arab family life." Women's work as peddlers was a manifestation of this "breakdown in patriarchy" and their ongoing participation in the economic goals of the family "gradually freed them from some Old World customs."⁶⁷ Safia Haddad, writing on the Syrians of Chicago, argued similarly that migration and settlement involved a change in the patriarchal family structure in which "the Syrian male had to accept a more cooperative position vis-à-vis his wife."⁶⁸ Other scholars have likewise emphasized a link between Syrian women's work in the United States and their liberation from "old world customs."⁶⁹

This argument is both encouraging and troubling. It is encouraging because it conceives of women as agents, not dependents, in the migration and settlement process. In addition, it rightly questions the idea that women were bulwarks against assimilation because they were the repositories of tradition, and "old world" culture. However, the emphasis on the "breakdown in patriarchy," as a consequence of migration minimizes the transformations that were already underway before women and men left Syria.⁷⁰ Female migrants often came from households where issues of work, honor, and patriarchy had already been renegotiated in the encounter with the silk industry. Just as the honor code was malleable in Syria, it was again reworked in the *mahjar*, under a different set of historical conditions. However, whereas the literature tends to view migration and assimilation as a process that undermined patriarchy and "old world" customs, the debates around peddling in the Syrian community suggest that the honor code, which had been characterized by a certain flexibility in the homeland, could actually become more confining for women in the United States, rather than less so.

In particular, the significance of peddling changed as the Syrian immigrant population grew and became more settled. By the second decade of the twentieth century,

the issue of whether Syrian women should continue to work as peddlers in the United States had become a familiar one in the Arabic-language press.⁷¹ Basil Kherbawi, Priest of the St. Nicolas Syrian-Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Brooklyn, argued that it was disgraceful the way "Syrian women overstepped their boundaries on the pretext that they are living under free skies."⁷² Their actions had led to the break-up of marriages, he continued, and the leading cause of this inappropriate behavior was "allowing the woman to peddle."⁷³

Syrian religious officials had always been ambivalent about an activity that exposed women to strangers, but the issue was soon taken up by other segments of the community, including journalists, educators, and merchants. Between 1910 and 1912, the Arabic papers published editorials describing peddling as demeaning and dishonorable; they encouraged women to pursue more "virtuous" work, such as domestic service. Leyya Barakat, for example, advised Syrian women to leave the business of peddling, and work instead as maids in Christian households where they could learn "virtue and housekeeping."⁷⁴ This disparaging attitude towards female peddlers was by no means universal, but it was markedly more evident than in the preceding decades.

Anxieties about women's work were linked to issues internal to the Syrian diaspora. Despite claims that Syrians were "birds of passage," and not bona fide immigrants,⁷⁵ most did not return permanently to their homeland. Immigrants did travel back to Syria, but it was the more prosperous ones among them, intent on investing their new wealth by buying land and building homes. The majority struggled to make good on the promise that they would send money back to their families. This involved years of saving, sacrifice, and dislocation that led more often than not to continued absence from Syria, even as emigrants retained the dream of someday returning "home." There were, of course, other explanations for not going back. Men who had left hopeful that they would quickly return to build a red-tiled house realized that a longer absence was inevitable, especially if they were to avoid conscription into the Ottoman army (extended to Christians in 1908). Many chose to invest their earnings and those of their daughters and wives in wholesale supply stores, which was thought to be a more secure activity than the back-breaking work of peddling. In a sense, the remunerated work of Syrian women freed men to pursue an "honorable" path of commercial property-ownership in the United States. Once attained, women's labor was needed in the running of stores and in the upkeep of more elaborate households. Peddling did not conform to this newly redefined male honor, nor to American ideals of female domesticity to which Syrians were increasingly drawn.

As the community developed more stable economic

roots in the United States and a solidly middle-class orientation, it also expanded its institutions in the form of churches, newspapers, and voluntary associations. This process involved the construction of new hierarchies, new forms of status and, ultimately, new conceptions of honor. Syrians preferred to boast of women's domestic virtues and promote assimilation, rather than defend the actions of the itinerant peddler. Peddling continued to exist in the Syrian-American community and many women ignored the censure even of their husbands to ply their trade, but it no longer carried the same purchase in terms of honor.

Significantly, this interest in confining women to "virtuous work" arose as American nativists challenged Syrian fitness for integration into the folds of American citizenry. The scrutiny of Syrians reached a high point in a series of naturalization cases heard between 1909 and 1913, which revolved around the issue of whether or not these immigrants were "white" and, therefore, eligible to become U. S. citizens. Syrian concerns over the propriety of their women must be considered in the context of this increased awareness of the saliency of racial categories, and specifically of the privileges of whiteness.⁷⁶ Respectability and honor took on new resonance as Syrians fought to claim a racial identity as whites, often by using civilizational arguments that emphasized their Christian pedigree and lack of intermixture with other "races."⁷⁷ Among the champions of Syrian "whiteness" was Naoum Mokarzel, editor and owner of *al-Hoda*, and president of the Syrian American Association.

Conclusion

Syrian migration to the United States in the pre-1924 period was a migration of women and men, both single and married. Marital status, while typically used to explain the large number of bachelors in the first wave migration, should be a factor in our analysis of female migrants also. Widowed women were well represented among the pioneers of transatlantic migration, which, at the very least, poses a problem for the bachelor/trailblazer theory. Moreover, the migration of single women cannot be explained simply by pointing to the desire of young men to settle down and marry in the diaspora, but also by understanding their employability within an expanding American economy. I have suggested that unmarried women's pre-migration history of labor in mechanized silk reeling facilitated their movement across the Atlantic, both practically, in terms of skill, and discursively, in terms of the honor code.

In certain cases, the migration of Syrian women, both married and unmarried, was an attempt to resolve a second crisis in patriarchy, initiated by the emigration and prolonged absence of men from their households of origin. This left women with added work responsibilities

and "the burden of upholding the 'honor' of the family by themselves."⁷⁸ Wives of absent men often regarded the years of separation and these new burdens as a default on the patriarchal bargain, "which assumed the active presence of the man in return for his position of power."⁷⁹ Some chose to emigrate, effectively ending their marriages and the bargains from which they no longer benefited.

The absence of men created another problem in terms of marriage: a rise in the number of unmarried women. Damascene writer and early Arab nationalist, Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, criticized emigration precisely for this reason. The massive loss of manpower, he argued, was devastating the economy, but it was also wreaking havoc by dotting the landscape with villages of "spinsters." While later historiography resolved this problem by arguing that men returned to marry or sent for wives, Kurd 'Ali believed that this would not be the case. He feared that men had departed for good and that no amount of cajoling would bring them back.⁸⁰ He even accused them of falling prey to the seductive power of Western materialism and ridiculed their desire to be "civilized" at the feet of American women.⁸¹ Apparently, he did not account for the initiative of single women who, rather than wait for men to return, migrated and pursued both work and marriage opportunities in the *mahjar*.

In short, using gender as a category of analysis challenges us to think differently about the chain migration thesis and the narrative of Syrian migration as a whole—from the reasons for migration to debates around assimilation. Many women were the first links in the chain that led to family reunification while some used migration to break away from family burdens. More detailed case studies will better demonstrate the intricate connections between gender, region of origin, and time of migration. Afif Tannous's close study of the northern Lebanese village of Bishmizzeen, for example, found that half the women who emigrated did so independently.⁸²

In terms of identity, migration eventually posed challenges to notions of work and honor, causing them to be reworked in new ways. The controversial figure became the female peddler who inhabited an ambiguous place in the growing Syrian diaspora. On the one hand, she was a valued economic asset, on the other, her movement outside family and household boundaries exposed Syrians to potential shame and danger. Anxieties over female peddlers were expressed at a time when Syrian migration was becoming more permanent and when nativists began disputing that very permanency. The attempt to assert control over women's lives, to (in effect) establish altered forms of a patriarchal system in the diaspora, was thus tied to the shift from sojourner to settler in a specific context of American immigration

restriction.

The reconfiguration of patriarchy in the diaspora did not go unchallenged. Afifa Karam, for example, the daughter of a doctor in the Ottoman army who immigrated to the United States as a young bride of thirteen, became a champion of social reform and of the Arab feminist press. In 1912, she bought the license of one of Salloum Mokarzel's journals, *al-'Alam al-jadid* (*The New World*), and changed the name to *al-'Alam al-nisa'i al-jadid* (*The New Women's World*), making it a magazine that catered to female readers throughout the *mahjar*.⁸³ Karam continued to contribute to *al-Hoda*, however, and in one particularly scathing critique of marriage, she criticized immigrant men for rushing off "to the home country to fetch a bride as if she were a piece of cloth sold by the yard." She described how under these conditions, husband and wife-to-be are thrown together in hastily-arranged marriages, and with only the slimmest knowledge of each other. "What results may be expected of this?" asked Karam. "Endless misery and regret."⁸⁴ Karam's critique of marriage, and her more general call for women's rights sat squarely within a discourse of reform that posited a dividing line between the "old" world and the "new." Her division was not a superficial one between an "old" (homeland) and a "new" (America), but a distinction between ignorance and intelligence, oppression and opportunity, debasement and fulfillment. She represented these worlds as two opposing parties: "the party of reform" (*hizb al-islam*) and the "party of retreat" (*hizb al-taqabqur*)⁸⁵ and insisted that Syrian men and women, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, should join the party of reform. Hence, her repeated criticism of those who fell back on practices that evinced nostalgia for the past, even a past that was more a product of the imagination than a reflection of reality. Other female critics like Sara Abi al-'Ala' exposed contradictions within the so-called "party of reform." She wrote a piece in *as-Sayeh* (*The Traveler*) that criticized men for publicly proclaiming the "reform of woman" (*islam al-mara'*), while privately they sought to contain and control her.⁸⁶

The contributions of Afifa Karam and Sara Abi al-'Ala' reveal that, as in the homeland, debates about reform in the *mahjar* often came to revolve around the "woman question." And just as male elites in Syria and Lebanon repeatedly jettisoned women's rights in the march towards national independence, the quickly-assimilating Syrian-American community did not always honor the dynamism and female independence that had carried Annie Midlige and Kamila Jubran to their "new worlds."

NOTES

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¹"Syrian" refers to persons originating from the late-Ottoman provinces of *bilad al-Sham*, or geographical Syria. This area included the present states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine and Jordan. While the majority of emigrants from *bilad al-Sham* to the United States were from what became the Republic of Lebanon, they described themselves as "Syrian," and were referred to as such in the sources used for this article. Arabic words are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system; aside from 'ayn and hamza, all diacritical marks have been omitted. Arabic names and journal titles are transliterated as family members and editors chose to do so.

²Jean Gibran and Kahlil Gibran (nephew of the poet) *Kahlil Gibran: His Life and World* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1974).

³His Arabic name was Jubran Khalil Jubran, but he anglicized it as Kahlil Gibran and published his English-language work under this name.

⁴Kahlil Gibran to Mary Haskell, June 23 1909, *The Letters of Kahlil Gibran and Mary Haskell*, ed. Annie Salem Otto (Houston: Smith and Co., 1970), 28.

⁵Jean and Kahlil Gibran, *Kahlil Gibran*, 116.

⁶Situated in northern Lebanon.

⁷The details of Khalil Jubran's (father of Kahlil Gibran) fall into debt, and subsequent encounter with the law are murky. Jean and Kahlil Gibran claim he was brought up on embezzlement charges. See *Kahlil Gibran*, 12. Kahlil Gibran's friend and biographer, Mikha'il Nu'ayma, did not mention legal problems, but did refer to Khalil's predilection for drinking and carousing as the source of the family's problems. See Nu'ayma, *Jubran Khalil Jubran* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Nawfal, 1974), 24.

⁸Syrian immigrants of the first wave were overwhelmingly Christian of the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholic rites. For histories of specific communities see Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds., *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992); and Eric J. Hooglund, ed., *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States before 1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987).

⁹Philip Hitti, *The Syrians in America* (New York: George Doran, 1924), 58; Philip and Joseph Kayal repeat this argument in *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: A study in Religion and Assimilation* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 71.

¹⁰Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985).

¹¹Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹²Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, *Memories of Migration: Gender, Ethnicity, and Work in the Lives of Jewish and Italian Women in New York, 1870-1924* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 19.

¹³Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 28.

¹⁴Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U. S. 1820-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii.

¹⁵While the percentage of Syrian women was much higher, it was still nowhere near that of the earlier Irish migration, in which women represented 52.9 per cent of the total. See Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 31. For the period between 1900 and 1909, women made up 30.4 per cent of the total immigration to the United States. See Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*, 28.

¹⁶U. S. Senate, Industrial Commission on Immigration, 1907-1910, *Abstracts of Reports*, vol. 1 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 95; Philip and Joseph Kayal, *The Syrian-Lebanese in America*, 70; George Haddad, *al-Mughtaribun al-suriyyun wa makanatubum fi al-tarikh* [*Syrian Emigrants and Their Place in History*] (Damascus: al-Jami'a al-Suriyya, 1953), 38.

¹⁷By the end of the war, close to half a million lives had been lost. See Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, "The Famine of 1915-1918 in Greater Syria," in *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective*, ed. John Spagnolo (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1992), 129; and Gregory Orfalea's harrowing account of the famine, as related to him by his grandmother, in *Before the Flames, A Quest for the History of Arab-Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 66-67.

¹⁸William S. Bernard, "Immigration: History of U. S. Policy," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1980), 492.

¹⁹Bernard, "Immigration," 492.

²⁰Hitti, *The Syrians in America*, 62. The 1930 Census figure of 56, 870 included only the foreign-born. Naff notes that when combined with the population of Syrian and Palestinian children born in the United States of mixed parentage (89,349 and 4,311 respectively), the figure comes close to 150,000. United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Abstracts of 15th Census: 1930* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 295; Naff, *Becoming American*, 117.

²¹Essa Samara. Transcript of interview by Alixa Naff, Manchester, NH, 1962, Naff Arab-American Collection (NAAC), Series 4/C, National Museum of American History (NMAH), Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. On marriage arrangements, see also Charles Teebagy, transcript of interview with Alixa Naff, Dorchester, MA, 1962, NAAC, Series 4/C.

²²Dottie Andrade file, NAAC, Series 12, photo 90-4344.

²³Dina Dahbany-Miraglia, "Random Thoughts on the Position of Women Among Early Arab Immigrants," n.d., unpublished manuscript in Center for Migration Studies, Syrian-American Archival Collection, Group II, Box 5, Folder 149.

²⁴"Emigrants from Syria," *New York Times*, 23 Aug. 1878. Arbeeli's own account of his emigration appeared in "Rihla al-'ailat al-'Arbiliyya ila al-bilad al-amirikiyya" [The Arbeeli family's journey to America] *al-Kalima* 9 (1913): 542-46 and *al-Kalima* 9 (1913): 488-89.

²⁵"The Soffas of Douma, Syria: a Geneological Record, 1979," Near Eastern Misc. Mss., Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

²⁶"The Soffas of Douma."

²⁷Peter Leney, "Annie Midlige, Fur Trader: A Lebanese widow defies the HBC," *Beaver* June/July (1996): 37-41.

²⁸Leney, "Annie Midlige," 40.

²⁹Louise Houghton, "Syrians in the United States," *The Sur-*

vey 26:19 (1911): 660.

³⁰Margaret (Maggie) Malooley. Transcript of interview by Alixa Naff, Spring Valley, IL, 1962, NAAC, Series 4/C.

³¹Gaston Ducouso, *L'Industrie de la Soie en Syrie et au Liban* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1913), 160; and Kais Firro, "Silk and Socio-Economic Changes in Lebanon, 1860-1919," in *Essays on the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. Sylvia Haim et. al. (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 39.

³²In 1911, Ducouso described an industry in which 85.71 per cent of the workers were female, mostly girls and young women between the ages of seven and fifteen. In *L'Industrie de la Soie*, 156. See also Boutros Labaki, *L'Histoire économique du Liban: soie et commerce extérieur en fin de période ottomane, 1840-1914* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1984), 122.

³³My understanding of honor, and the "honor code" follows Lila Abu-Lughod who argues that honor encompasses a set of values, which serve to legitimate greater social standing. Honor is thus "the moral basis of hierarchy." See her *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 85-87. Unni Wikan makes the important point that honor is constantly negotiated and operates differently across the Middle East. See her *Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 141-67 and Asma Afsaruddin's introduction in *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female Public Space in Islamic/ate Societies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). I have also benefited from Paula Hajar's insights in her unpublished paper, "Changes and Continuities in the Code of Honor Among Syrian Lebanese Immigrants to the United States," unpublished manuscript (New York, 1989). My thanks to Paula Hajar for sharing her manuscript with me.

³⁴Akram Khater, "'House' to 'Goddess of the House': Gender, Class and Silk in 19th c. Mount Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996): 325.

³⁵Labaki, *L'Histoire économique du Liban*, 84; Ismail Haqqi Bak, *Lubnan, mabahith 'ilmiyya wa-ijtima'iyya* [Lebanon: Scientific and Social Studies] (Beirut: Manshurat al-jami'a al-lubnaniyya, 1969 [1918]), 439.

³⁶Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Women, Households, and Textile Manufacturing, 1800-1914" in *The Modern Middle East*, ed. Albert Hourani, et. al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 258.

³⁷Quataert, "Ottoman Women," 258.

³⁸Maurice Chéhab, *Dawr Lubnan fi tarikh al-barir* [The Role of Lebanon in the History of Silk] (Beirut: Manshurat al-Jami'a al-Lubnaniyya, 1968), 50-51.

³⁹Chéhab, *Dawr Lubnan*, 51.

⁴⁰See Dominique Chevallier, "Lyon et la Syrie en 1919: les bases d'une intervention," in *Villes et Travail en Syrie du XIX^e au XX^e siècle* (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1982), 64.

⁴¹Khater, "'House' to 'Goddess of the House,'" 330.

⁴²According to Tannous, the recruitment of workers based on kinship alliances may have actually led to a rudimentary form of labor organization. This was especially the case in areas where there was stiff competition for workers, and women gravitated towards a "crew-boss" who endeavored to negotiate better wages for himself, and for his workers. See, "Social Change in an Arab Village," *American Sociological Review* 6:5 (1941): 650-62.

⁴³Khater makes this argument in “‘House’ to ‘Goddess of the House;” that is, that men were aware of the cash advantages of women’s wage-work and were therefore willing to bend the rules of honor.

⁴⁴Khater, “‘House’ to ‘Goddess of the House,’” 334.

⁴⁵Labaki, *Introduction à l’histoire économique du Liban*, 39-40.

⁴⁶Naff, *Becoming American*, 128-29; Oswaldo Truzzi, “The Right Place at the Right Time: Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil and the United States, A Comparative Approach,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16:2 (1997): 1-34.

⁴⁷Alix Naff, “New York: *The Mother Colony*,” in *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, ed. Kathleen Benson and Philip M. Kayal (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 3-10.

⁴⁸Syrians used the word “kashshi,” Arabized from the Portuguese “caixa” (meaning box) to refer to the case peddlers carried on their backs. The peddler was thus a “kashshash.” For this usage, see for example, Mikha’il As’ad Rustum, *al-Gharib fil gharb [The Stranger in the West]*, ed. Yusuf Qazma Khuri (Beirut: Dar al-Hamra’, 1992 [1905]), 22.

⁴⁹Naff, *Becoming American*, 136-37.

⁵⁰See the list of items sold in Rustum, *al-Gharib fil gharb [The Stranger in the West]*, 47. They included, among other things, yardsticks, hairpins, safety pins, necklaces, spectacles, and bracelets.

⁵¹Naff, *Becoming American*, 1.

⁵²Oswaldo Truzzi, for example, has convincingly argued that the peddling experience varied according to location. His comparative work on Syrians in the United States and Brazil underscores the importance of analyzing the different economic niches into which Syrians could, and could not, operate. He argues that Syrians in Brazil were able to move rapidly from peddling into a retailing and manufacturing niche, but that in the United States Jews already occupied this position, prompting Syrians to try other niches like grocery and dry-goods. Oswaldo Truzzi, “The Right Place at the Right Time: Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil and the United States, A Comparative Approach,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16:2 (1997): 1-34; see also Najib Saliba, *Emigration from Syria and the Syrian-Lebanese Community of Worcester, MA* (Ligonier, Pennsylvania: Antakya Press: 1992), 35-37.

⁵³Cited in Naff, *Becoming American*, 235.

⁵⁴Khater, *Inventing Home*, 97.

⁵⁵“Elkourie Takes Burnett to Task,” *Birmingham Age-Herald*, (20 October 1907). This was the second of two letters written by Elkourie. The first appeared under the title “Dr. El-Kourie Defends Syrian Immigrants” in the *Birmingham Ledger*, (20 Sept. 1907).

⁵⁶On this point see Paula Hajar, “Changes and Continuities in the Code of Honor Among Syrian Lebanese Immigrants to the United States,” 53.

⁵⁷*Al-Hoda*, (6 Feb. 1909), 4, italics added.

⁵⁸*Al-Hoda*, (22 Feb. 1898), 8.

⁵⁹Naff, *Becoming American*, 168.

⁶⁰Khater, *Inventing Home*, 74.

⁶¹Louise Houghton, “Syrians in the United States, Part II,” 651.

⁶²See excerpts from a Boston Associated Charities Report in Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 40.

⁶³Houghton, “Syrians in the United States, Part II,” 661.

⁶⁴U. S. Industrial Commission on Immigration, *Reports*, vol. XV, 443.

⁶⁵U. S. Industrial Commission on Immigration, *Reports*, vol. XV, 443.

⁶⁶Particularly prized was the Damascus-style lace, which had been part of the official “Turkish Ladies” entry at the enormously popular World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893. “Record of Exhibits Accepted,” Board of Lady Managers v. 3, World’s Columbian Exhibition, 1893, Chicago Historical Society.

⁶⁷Alix Naff, “Arabs,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, 133.

⁶⁸Safia Fahmy Haddad, “Socialization and Cultural Change Among Syrian-Americans in Chicago,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago (1964), 3.

⁶⁹Maxine S. Seller, “Beyond the Stereotype: A New Look at the Immigrant Woman, 1880-1924,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 3 (Spring 1975): 65.

⁷⁰I am drawing here on the insights of Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*.

⁷¹For earlier examples see the discussion in Khater, *Inventing Home*, 97-99.

⁷²Kherbawi, *Tarikh al-wilayat al-muttahida*, [History of the United States], (New York: Matba’ jarida al-Dalil, 1913), 788.

⁷³Kherbawi, *Tarikh al-wilayat al-muttahida*, 788.

⁷⁴Leyya Barakat, *A Message From Mount Lebanon* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1912); and excerpts from Barakat’s editorial in *al-Hoda* published in Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 41. See also Najib Yazigi’s article in *al-Sayeb (The Traveler)*, (22 August 1912), 5.

⁷⁵Yusuf Jirjis Zakham, “al-Suriyun fi amirka” [The Syrians in America] *Majallat al-Muqtabas* 5, no.12 (1910): 765-770.

⁷⁶Sarah Gualtieri, “Becoming ‘White’: Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20:4 (Summer 2001): 29-58.

⁷⁷Khalil Bishara, *Origin of the Modern Syrian*, (New York: al-Hoda Publishing, 1914).

⁷⁸Khater, “‘House’ to ‘Goddess of the House,’” 336.

⁷⁹Khater, “‘House’ to ‘Goddess of the House,’” 336.

⁸⁰“Rihla ila Qalamun al-asfal” [A trip to lower Qalamun], *Majallat al-Muqtabas* 5:6 (1910): 412.

⁸¹Kurd ‘Ali, *Ghara’ib al-gharb [Strange things of the West]* (Cairo: Maktabat al-ahaliyya, 1923), 31.

⁸²Afif I. Tannous, “Emigration, A Force of Social Change in An Arab Village,” *Rural Sociology* 7:1 (1942): 72

⁸³Karam was born in the village of ‘Amshit, just north of the coastal town of Jubayl, Lebanon in 1883. She emigrated to Louisiana then moved to New York where she worked as an editor at *al-Hoda*, and later as the editor of her own journal, *al-‘Alam al-nisa’i al-jadid (The New Women’s World)*. She died in 1924, at the age of forty-one. See *al-Mansu’at al-subufiyya al-‘arabiyya* [Encyclopedia of the Arab Press], v. 3, “al-Sihafa al-‘arabiyya fi buldan al-mahjar” [The Arab Press in the countries of the mahjar] (Tunis: al-munazama al-‘arabiyya lil-tarbiyya wal-thaqafa wal-‘ulum, 1991) 81; and Alixa Naff, “The Arabic-Language Press,” in *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, ed. Sally Miller (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 11.

⁸⁴Quoted in Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 68.

⁸⁵“Bayn al-rajulayn” [Between Two Men], *al-Hoda*, (4 Dec. 1908), 4.

⁸⁶*al-Sayeh*, (12 Sept. 1912), 4. See also Afifa Karam's "Radd 'ala i'tirad" [Reply to a Rebuttal], in which she writes "We hear words, but see no action." In *al-Hoda* (9 Jan. 1909), 4.