

Please do not cite or circulate without the author's permission

Mapping the Archive for Arab American Women's Labor in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1880-1930

By Jess Bier

In November, 1902,ⁱ a letter to the editor appeared in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, one of New York's most prominent newspapers.ⁱⁱ It began:

I have read an article in the Daily Eagle about the Asiatic quarter in Brooklyn. As I am one of the young Syrian women of whom you have spoken as "the bread winners," I would like to explain a matter which has been misunderstood somehow. (Milkie 1902)

The author, Jamilie Milkie,ⁱⁱⁱ goes on to defend Syrian men as being "ambitious, industrious, and noble," and to argue that women's labor is a "perfectly proper" activity undertaken when it is financially necessary, just as "their American sisters would do if they were situated the same." Milkie was writing in response to an article in that same paper that accused Syrian men of allowing women to provide for them (*Syrians Settling Here Make Asiatic Quarter* 1902). Ironically, female labor, today often considered one benchmark of women's emancipation (Kessler-Harris 2007), was in this case being used as a sign of discrimination against women. The original article, one piece in a broader context of xenophobia in the U.S., represented a partisan attempt to change widespread interaction with and positive perceptions of peddling, which was a ubiquitous and successful economic practice in the U.S. at the time.^{iv} In response to this effort, Milkie

characterizes her labor as a measure undertaken by Syrian women not least as an educational experience.^v She points out that she and the “Syrian sisters whom I represent” travel selling their “attractive foreign goods” for two reasons. First, they peddle in order to adopt the “American way” so that they might better trade among Americans. Second, they peddle in order to learn to speak fluent English—but not simply to read and write it because, as she notes, “most of us knew that before coming over.”

In this paper, I expand upon a discussion of power as it relates to Milkie’s letter by mapping the archival material for Arab American women’s labor in the early 20th-century, with a focus upon the New York City metropolitan area. By doing so, I am building upon the work of Foucault, who sees power as a set of relations that are inherent in people and institutions, relations that affect the ways that people act and the choices they make—a “mode of actions upon actions” (Foucault 1983). Thus, I employ Foucault’s notion that power is not a monolithic entity imposed from above, but instead serves as a kind of conglomeration, or in some cases a network, of practices that occur in different forms and concentrations across space and time (Stoler 1995; Foucault 1990)—practices, therefore, that can be mapped.

By using the term *map*, I am indicating not only a visual map as maps are often conceived, but also written, conceptual maps of how relations and definitions of Arab American women’s labor have changed across space and time, ones that nonetheless make explicit the relationships they describe. To this end, I will present three examples of maps and discuss their analytical potential. I will do so first for the pragmatic reason of raising public awareness of the locations and available types of material that enable the study of early American women’s lives. Second, I will map the archives as a way of drawing attention to the diverse ways, including mapping, in which writers, organizers, and scholars can make the most extensive use of existing

sources, while also developing previously unrecognized or underutilized ones (Pavlovskaya 2006). Throughout, I advocate for a greater awareness of how three key aspects of the records—namely, their form, content, and context—are produced through changing relations of power. Thus materiality, as it is constituted through power, plays a role in determining not only the form—including the number, location, organization, and state of preservation of sources—as is traditionally assumed, but that it also influences both their context—the circumstances of writing—and content, including the style, terminology, and subjects of the sources themselves.

Now, by saying that I am going to map this archive, it is important to point out that there is no centralized archive for Arab American women in New York despite the existence of several significant collections that focus upon Arab Americans in the United States. Although Detroit and New York City, as the largest and the oldest Arab American communities respectively, have been the subject of much historical study (Naff 2002; Friedlander 2002; Di Napoli 2002; Suleiman 1999a; Kayal and Kayal 1975; Aswad 1974), nonetheless the sources for these studies come from archival collections that can be found in any number of cities. In addition to the often-cited Naff Collection housed in the Smithsonian Institution's Archives Center and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, collections concerning Arab Americans can be found at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, the extensive collection of the local Arabic press at the main branch of the New York Public Library, as well as the Balch Institute at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies in Los Angeles, to name a few.^{vi} Moreover, smaller collections held by civic and religious groups, such as the Antiochian Heritage Museum in western Pennsylvania, have only begun to be used extensively

in research. By describing the archive, then, this project is less of an attempt to form a final picture of a single entity, than it is to lay out the practical knowledge of the sources that exist as well as the relationships between those sources and their broader contexts—and so, to map them. Likewise, by using the terms *Arab American women* and *Syrian American women* (given that the majority of Arabic-speaking people in the Americas before World War I came from the vast Ottoman province of Syria), I am not attempting to assume a single heritage among Arab American women, but instead to reconsider the relationships that exist among the available sources conceived (if only temporarily) as a group. I do so with the ultimate goal of better understanding the complex ways that, through their labor, women have posited, negotiated, and transformed identities, including Syrian and Arab American ones.^{vii}

At first glance, given that Arab Americans have been under-represented in the written history of the Americas (Suleiman 1999a), the available sources may seem somewhat restricted. Yet, on the contrary, despite their limitations, numerous sources do exist, and many of them are drastically understudied (Suleiman 2006). Moreover, by considering the material conditions that gave rise to these particular sources and encouraged their preservation, researchers can take full advantage of the opportunity that existing sources provide for the varied and in-depth study of gender and early Arab American lives, which can be considered one small, yet key, element in the diverse and broad histories and geographies of the Arab Diaspora in the Americas (Suleiman 1999b; Karam 2007; Zabel 2006; Haddad 2004; Benson and Kayal 2002; Abu-Laban 1992; Hourani and Shehadi 1992; Hooglund 1987). Given that mapping has often been used to constrain and contain diverse populations, this project, then, represents an effort to use cartography in a way that demonstrates an awareness, and a qualitative transformation, of the

power of maps (Harley 1989; Crampton and Krygier 2006; Pavlovskaya 2002, 2006; Kwan 2004, 2002; St. Martin 2001).

In the following section, I will place my work within the theoretical context of the archive as a theme within postcolonial scholarship, particularly through the work of Gayatri Spivak. I do so in order to demonstrate the ways that the form, content, and context of the archive influences and is influenced by diverse types of power relations. Next, I will give three examples of the archive for early Arab American women's labor, with particular attention to how perceptions of the legitimacy of particular types of labor affected the ways they were performed and recorded in the archival sources.

The first example, peddling, will explore the *form* of this archive and will include an overview of the archive as a whole, including its structures, sources, and locations. The second, businesses, will focus upon the *content* of the archive, and will consist of an analysis of the ways that the privileging of the formal owners of a business, in the primary sources generally in the U.S. and advertisements in the press in particular, serves to erase women's labor and thus their contributions to business success. The third example, performance, will look at the incorporation of Middle Eastern dance into the restaurant scene in New York as a mean of studying how the production of history is influenced by *context*, including both the contexts of the archive as well as those of the original recording of the material. As I discuss, each of these three examples entails its own map, and together they comprise the map of the archive that I will sketch here. By drawing such a map, however, my aim is not to promote a definitive definition of Syrian and Arab American women's labor during 1880-1930 period, but to map the relationships between the existing configuration of sources as an expression of power, both historical and

contemporary, as well as the specificities of changing definitions of identity, gender, and labor across space and time.

Subaltern Histories

Now let us turn to the scholarly literature that informs my analysis. The theoretical inspiration for this paper comes from the body of postcolonial literature that has been issued since the publication of the 1988 version of Gayatri Spivak's seminal article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In her article, Spivak discusses a host of issues, but I will focus upon the most famous of these, her critique of Subaltern Studies theorists' early attempts to give a 'voice' to subaltern people.^{viii} In the 1988 version of her article, Spivak asserts unequivocally that subaltern people *cannot* speak through the means of traditional history. In addition, she notes that subaltern studies theorists' idea of a commanding and free individual who stands on high announcing his or her innermost thoughts and feelings to the world by means of a voice is itself symptomatic of the very kinds of dominant historical scholarship that they were trying to circumvent, and furthermore the concept of *voicing* is itself problematic. By doing so, Spivak says, in effect, that subaltern people do not have a voice in the way that voices have traditionally been conceived. She is not asserting, however, that regular people, including those who may experience extreme forms of discrimination, do not have opinions or minds or thoughts or feelings. In fact, she is asserting quite the opposite: that the lives and consciousnesses of subaltern people are collectively so vast and varied that they cannot adequately be compiled using only the current methods of inquiry.

For the purposes of this chapter, Spivak's question could be stated alternately as "Is it possible for ordinary people to have a role in the production of scholarship in history and

geography when the historical records that exist by-and-large were not written by, for, or about them?” With that in mind, we could ask: How are speech and action, historical and contemporary, influenced or even constituted by regionally and temporally specific systems of power? How do power relations privilege the concept of *voicing* itself? Contrary to early criticism of her work, I would like to suggest that Spivak’s *no* answer—an answer that she does later revise to a certain extent (Spivak 1999)—actually opens up more possibilities than it forecloses (Anderson 1991; Mitchell 1991). For, even as Spivak contends that subaltern people do not always have voices, at least in the narrow sense of the term, in her analysis she simultaneously demonstrates that scholarly work might be better served if researchers discarded the search for unified, individual voices and instead explored the possibilities offered up by analyzing the resulting ambiguities (Pandey 2000).^{ix} With that in mind, I now turn to the three examples of peddling, entrepreneurship, and performance, for each of which, respectively, I will explore the influence of power upon form, content, and context.^x

Peddling and Archival Form

In this section, I consider how power informs the study of female peddlers’ labor in the early 1900s. Peddling, or the act of selling goods by traveling around to various consumers, is often cited as the single most common occupation for Syrians upon their arrival in the Americas, and it is the focus of particular sources, even as it is systematically omitted from others. Given the importance of peddling (or its absence) in the record, in this section I will assert that the power relations that informed peddling—both the original practice of it and its extensive treatment in secondary literature—have played a major role in determining the *form* of the relevant archival material and the organization of the archive for Arab American women’s work

more broadly. As such, this section is not specifically focused upon peddling as an economic practice *per se*—partly because extensive sources already exist on the subject (Di Napoli 2002; Kayal and Kayal 1975; Naff 2002), although much more needs to be written. Instead, it is specifically concerned with mapping the *absence* of peddling from specific portions of the archive—and thus it will entail a discussion of the creation of specific types of archival records through the multiple forms of labor that were practiced by early Arab American women; these include not only peddling, but also employment as store clerks, dentists, housewives, writers, doctors, mothers, factory laborers, seamstresses, rooming house directors, midwives, performers, and labor organizers, to name a few (Cameron 1995; Shakir 1997; Suleiman 1999a; Benson and Kayal 2002; Gualtieri 2004).

Given that peddling was one profession among many, then what does it mean to say that power in relation to peddling has influenced the *form* of the archive for Arab American women? I will discuss two influences in particular. First, I will look at the form of both the primary and historic secondary source material in order to lay out the type and organization of existing records, thereby exploring in greater detail the ways that different records influence scholarly perceptions of the quantity and quality of the kinds of work that women performed in these communities. For the primary and secondary sources, I will argue that peddlers are markedly absent from the early Arabic press, even as they are perhaps often represented in a negative light in the mainstream newspapers, magazines, and English-language studies conducted before 1970. Thus, in the Arabic press, literature or articles that deal with the everyday life of peddlers are markedly absent as a type of record, while in the latter, records that emphasize peddlers, and female peddlers in particular, dominate much of the sources that discuss Syrians from the 1880-1930 period, or the ensuing decades. Following this analysis, I will next investigate the ways

that the original recording of sources influenced archival form, and I will focus upon the effects of perceptions of peddling as an illegitimate type of labor. In particular, I will consider how these perceptions might influence the likelihood of peddlers, and female peddlers in particular, to keep and preserve paper records, as well as their relationships to additional, including oral, forms of discourse.

First, then, I will analyze the impact that peddling, in relation to power, had upon the form of individual archival sources, both primary and secondary. I will do so particularly in light of the fact that it is quite rare to find a reference or a depiction of a female Syrian peddler in the Arabic press in the Americas. Thus, the primary way that peddling appears to influence the archive for Arab American women's labor, at least in terms of sources in Arabic, is through its absence. To map these absences, I will now delineate the ways that women are represented in both the form and content of the relevant archival material, including the historic press as well as secondary literature.^{xi} In the historic press, there is a division between the 'mainstream' press—namely, papers and magazines written in the dominant language of the country in which they were printed (including English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese), and which are often completed from an informational point of view—and those that are bilingual or printed solely in Arabic, which often attempt to address the needs of the Arab American communities in question. I will now consider each in turn. The press relates to women in several major ways that will be taken into account throughout this discussion, including the number of female authors, the extent to which the status of women as a group was debated in the press, and the degree to which the press incidentally represented women, women's perspectives, and women's lives.

The most prevalent genre of primary source material, the historic press in Arabic includes newspapers, magazines, and books—as well as numerous translations of works from the Western

canon into Arabic. In terms of authorship, when compared to other groups at the time, Arab American women did have an important foothold among the early Arabic press. This occurred under the editorship of Afifa Karam in the form of a magazine entitled *The New Women's World* (*Majallat al-'Alam al-Jadid al-Nisa'iyya*) published exclusively in Arabic in New York City. The basic content and organization of the journal, which combined a women's magazine format—including exposés upon the lives and families of illustrious women, royalty and actresses among them—with editorials that contributed to the suffragette movement's drive for political equality among women in the U.S. In other journals and papers in the New York Arabic press, *The New Women's World* aside, it is difficult to determine the specific representation of women because articles were often not signed. However, given the small size of the staff on even the most widely circulated Arabic newspapers, it is generally recognized that the editors and owners of the papers wrote a significant portion of the pieces therein—and these tended to be men, except for a short period when Rose Mokarzel, Naoum Mokarzel's widow, took over the ownership of *Al-Hoda* (*Al-Hoda: 1898-1968* 1968). But several other female authors did take part in journalism among New York's Syrian communities, sometimes under the direct encouragement of the papers' editors, and at least two—Victoria Tannous and Mary Aziz—are mentioned directly. In addition, women like Jamilie Milkie also wrote independently and informally as part of civic, social, and religious communities (Arida 1916, 1918; Najla 1922; Karam 1903; Karam 1904, 1906, 1920; Tannous 1920a, 1920b, 1923; Ya'qub 1907).

Among authors of any gender, the status of women was hotly debated in the press. As in the early twentieth century more broadly, in concert with the international Women's Awakening in the Middle East and movements for women's equality, including that in the U.S., the role of women was a central topic of modernization debates, and the Arabic press in New York was no

exception. The Arabic papers in the Americas as a whole took a politically liberal and modern view, seeking integration within U.S. society and greater representation of women in societal affairs. Many discussions, then, revolved around exactly *how* this should be accomplished. Women represented a significant segment of the workforce among early Arab American communities. Indeed, women may have even had an easier time finding work than Syrian men due to several factors, including the fact that many women would work for less wages than men at the same level of training and experience, plus the expertise they brought as embroiderers and the mechanical training they gained previously in the silk factories in Mount Lebanon—as well as the recognition that, as peddlers of undergarments and fabrics, a women in a customer's home was seen less of a threat than a man (Khater 2001). So, the debate was not framed in terms of a need for women to enter the workforce, but instead dealt with whether it was proper for women to continue to work, to become educated, and/or to enter the professions (Mokarzel 1904; The Female Syrian Peddler 1908; Salibi 1902, 1903; Yaziji 1912; Yuwakim 1908; Zakhm 1908; Zawi 1904; Batruni 1903; Dammous 1898; Elias 1903; Farkouh 1913; Hajj 1893).

In contrast, the English press of the early 1900s focuses specifically upon peddlers, and thus presents a radically different picture of Syrian women. In comparison with the Arabic press, which includes articles on current events in the Ottoman Empire, social activities in the community, and the international economy, as well as work on gender, the English press from this period often portrays a stereotyped and negative picture of Syrians in the U.S.—one in which the peddler, and especially the female peddler appears frequently as a stock character. The depiction of Syrians *vis à vis* other immigrant groups at the time varies widely (Joseph 2009), however, with some benevolent reformers presenting them as the model immigrant—clean, organized, and hardworking—and others depicting the perceived craftiness and dishonesty of

Syrian merchants, in keeping with negative stereotypes, with at least one reporter from the *New York Times* accusing peddlers of “coming in the garb of mendicants” to exploit the Christian generosity of Americans (“Sanctified” Arab Tramps 1890). Indeed, the English press in general focuses upon the Christianity of the Syrian immigrants in the early 1900s, often to draw a contrast with the alleged despotism of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, there are numerous articles that give sensationalized pictures of incidents that took place within the community (e.g. Syrian Garroted, Not Shot, Autopsies Show 1906) as well as upon the relationship with Christian aid organizations in the U.S.—and this is in contrast to the extensive documentation of Syrian aid organizations in the Arabic press (Samhan 1999; Di Napoli 2002; Orfalea 2006; Gualtieri 2001).

In addition to the primary source material, another group of available archival material includes secondary literature written about Arab Americans in the early twentieth century, much of it from the period itself, or conducted with members of the early communities (Miller 1969 (1911); Kherbawi 1913b; Bishara 1914; Hitti 1924; Katibah 1946; Tannous 1942; Houghton 1911). In the latter category we find Alixa Naff’s extensive interviews with early twentieth century Syrian immigrants, conducted in the 1960s, which focus upon assimilation, although these interviews are only available on tape at the Smithsonian Institution, and no transcripts have yet been made. In addition to Naff’s interviews, this group also includes a subsection of material that straddles the line between primary and secondary sources: scholarly research completed about Syrian Americans in the early 20th century. While no study was conducted expressly upon the subject of Arab American women, much of the extant work does deal specifically with the status of women. Among these are Philip Hitti’s *The Syrians in America* (Hitti 1924), Lucius Hopkins Miller’s “Our Syrian Population” (1969 (1911)), and Louise Houghton’s series of

articles for *The Survey* (1911). Many of the early studies were completed by notable members of the Syrian community as well as non-Syrian Christian missionaries who were familiar with the region, and/or public relief workers in New York City itself. As such, they partake of the discourse of self-uplift and moral uprightness that was common among aid workers during the period, often arguing for the dignity of Syrians despite their sometimes difficult economic and political circumstances. However, they differ in whether they view peddling as part of this uplift (Houghton 1911) or as a stepping stone that should be discarded because it leads to ‘irregular’ forms of living (Miller 1969 (1911)).

Yet if the basic mobility of peddlers led to the formation of communities throughout the U.S., as Naff argues (Naff 1993), then the work of peddlers and perceptions of them have also played a role in the initial development of the archive itself.^{xii} We continue, then, by looking at the third and final way that peddling has influenced the form of the archive: the perceived legitimacy or illegitimacy of peddling influenced the ways that records were kept and preserved. Peddling was an ideal occupation for new immigrants because it required little capital to begin, as most goods could be bought on credit or obtained through family members. In addition, it was less affected by widespread forms of racism and job discrimination based upon ethnicity that often operated (and continue to do so) through hiring practices or requirements for official licenses (Orfalea 2006). That said, as we saw earlier through Milkie’s letter, in mainstream society in the U.S., peddling was outlawed and strictly regulated in certain states and counties— or less vehemently, it was viewed as a form of employment that was worthy of little respect. This was especially true for women, a significant percentage of early peddlers (Naff 1993), at a time when a woman traveling extensively was still seen as unusual in the U.S., even though it appears to have been a common occurrence. Moreover, economically, suspicion of peddling contravened

basic capitalist definitions of responsible labor, which favored production rather than trade, settlement rather than mobility, and formal rather than informal sales (Gibson-Graham 1996; Kessler-Harris 2007; Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2000). Some of the suspicion, moreover, may have resulted from the fact that it was often an incredibly successful trade, as compared to occasional allegations that peddling was similar to begging (Finds New York a Beggars' Mecca 1922; Aryain and J'Nell 2006).

How did perceptions of peddling as illegitimate labor influence the form of the archives? It did so in at least two ways. First, to the extent that peddling was successful, with a number of peddlers moving from the long-distance selling of goods to store ownership over their lifetime, peddling may have encouraged the economic wealth that enables members of a community to finance the kinds of civic and historical organizations that make archives possible. In contrast, the perceived illegitimacy of peddling may actually affect the practices of record-keeping among peddlers themselves. Despite the fact that peddling has achieved retrospective appreciation (e.g. Johnson 2008), the fact remains that very few, if any, records of the day to day operations of peddlers, or even the initial sale of goods to peddlers before a trip, have been preserved in official collections.^{xiii} Part of this may stem from practical considerations: it would not have been easy to carry an enormous ledger book around when, whatever the mode of travel, most of the available space would have been taken up by goods for sale. But, even those records that were kept were often recorded informally on paper, for example, and/or were not preserved.^{xiv}

If the occasional perception of peddling as a form of labor that was not especially important did indeed help to prevent peddlers from preserving the records they did keep, then this would likely have been especially pronounced among female peddlers who, as Milkie does, would have had to defend their honor as women who were employed and who traveled

extensively. This would be especially true among those who, in keeping with the general climate regarding women's labor in the U.S. at the time, may have seen peddling as a temporary measure undertaken until they could afford to marry and have children (Khater 2001; Gualtieri 2004; Shakir 1997; Boosahda 2003; Kessler-Harris 2007). Likewise, the archive is rife with pictures of families, community outings, and established businesses, but it is much rarer to find a picture of a peddler (Friedlander 2002). Thus, peddling was symptomatic of a broader tendency whereby, early in the community's formation—at least until 1900—Arab Americans, and Arab American women in particular, were most likely to be concentrated in those forms of employment, like peddling, that were least likely to be preserved in official records—another expression of power that was in this case also explicitly related to class.

Given that the available records for peddling are fewer than they might be, and in form tend not to be the kinds of records that would depict the daily working lives of Syrian women at length, in the next section, I will look at other, more formal, types of women's employment, with a focus upon the role of business ownership in relation to the content of the archives as they are determined through power. In particular, I will continue my earlier examination of perceptions of legitimate employment, this time in relation to definitions of "women's work", including unpaid household labor, piecework, and childcare. Many more records exist for businesses, including Syrian-owned factories, than they do for peddlers or groups of peddlers, but as we will see, unlike peddling—in which women are neglected or stereotyped in the *form* of records that exist—in the business and factory records, women are often actively excluded from the *content* of the available records themselves.

Businesses and the Content of History

Several key sources on Arab American women's labor have provided an extended description of the significant role that women played in early Arab American businesses. On the whole, women were incredibly active from the beginning of Syrian and Arab communities in the Americas. For example, they directed the organization and daily operation of many stores and factories, often working alongside their friends and relatives (Shakir 1997; Boosahda 2003). This followed from a legacy of women's labor that had recently been transformed in Mount Lebanon under French influence, when the economy was transformed to support cash-crop silk production in the years when a disease devastated mulberry trees, silkworms' primary diet, in both France and Japan. Women, who would work for less pay, were preferred for labor in silk processing factories which opened in the wake of this transformation. However, when the Ottoman Syrian silk industry collapsed after the opening of the Suez Canal, and as the disease spread to Mount Lebanon as well, these new laborers, the majority of them female, who had often been pulled from agricultural labor and who were now jobless, but possessing of advanced marketable skills, looked abroad to find new employment (Khater 2001). Thus, not only were women active in early Arab American communities, which were predominantly Syrian, they were part of the original economic inspiration for migration in the first place (Gualtieri 2004).

However, despite the significance of women's work in Syrian American communities prior to World War I, women are largely absent from the advertisements on the whole that infuse the records of the Arabic press in the United States, including the newspapers and (artistic, scholarly, and/or religious) journals.^{xv} In addition, the press also published numerous classics from the western canon in translation, historical and scholarly works (e.g. Abdou 1907; Abdou 1922; Kherbawi 1913a; Mokarzel 1920) as well as essays, newspaper article collections, and literature by Arab American authors, both women and men, but whose advertisements, which

were often included in the front leaf and initial pages of printed works, likewise rarely list women as the primary contact for business matters (Al-Ashkar 1928; Al-Ra'i 1925; Maleky 1917; Maloof 1899; Rustum N.D.; Zraick 1912).

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

With this in mind, this section on businesses seeks to better understand women's representation, or lack thereof, in the *content* of the archival record for early Arab American women's labor. In particular, I will discuss a literal map of information present in the sources in order to consider the ways that power can obscure gender relations by excluding women even when considerable source material is available. Figure 1 depicts a preliminary map of a selection of Syrian businesses in lower Manhattan in 1908, based upon advertisements in the local Arabic press, and particularly the *1908-09 Syrian Business Directory* published in New York (*Mokarzel and Otash 1909*). This map is part of a broader database that I am producing for Arab American labor in the 1880-1930 periods which comprises the bulk of the 'first wave' of Syrian immigration. We might assume that such a record, which seeks to improve the visibility of early Syrian communities, would automatically contain ample evidence of women's labor. However, women's contributions are far from evident in the available sources that were used to make this particular representation of the community. Given that businesses were listed primarily by owner—and the fact that, in keeping with the privileging of men that predominated in the U.S. on the whole at the time, a trend that was far from specific to the Syrian communities—remarkably few business advertisements in the New York press, whether in English or Arabic, explicitly mention female entrepreneurs. As a result, the very act of putting the Syrian

neighborhood of Manhattan on the visual map, in the same stroke, serves to erase the contributions of women.

This fact is all the more notable given that, unlike many contemporary advertisements, these early twentieth-century ones include vast amounts of information about early businesses such as the dates of founding; specific lists of materials manufactured, exchanged, and sold; alternate locations; price lists; and even pictures of the machinery used in production. Indeed, if ads were the only sources available to contemporary scholars and writers, it would be nearly impossible to know that women were active economically in these communities. It is important to note again, however, that the omission of women from these advertisements is not only the result of gender relations in the Syrian community; instead it is part of the way that beliefs about gender lead to patterns of formal male ownership of businesses in the U.S. overall. This helped to ensure that businesses were registered in the names of male heads of household regardless of the fact that they were often run by families and close personal associates, both men and women (Shakir 1997; Kessler-Harris 2007; Oberhauser 2000). In order to understand how this occurred, I will now consider the impact of gender relations in the U.S. writ large upon the content of the archive for the working lives of Syrian and Arab American women.

As was discussed in the section on peddling, if the status of women was consistently debated in the Arabic press, and the status of women was often acknowledged in the content of these debates, then why do the advertisements themselves contain little mention of women? As noted, the exclusion of women was due partly to prevailing patterns of business ownership in the U.S. and Europe. However, as historians of gender and labor have shown, it also related to the very definition of *work* under capitalism. Much of the contributions that women of all backgrounds performed were simply not seen as labor, partly because they took place in the

home and were largely unpaid. This included household chores, shopping, cooking, household repair, laundry, and child care (Gibson-Graham 1996; Kessler-Harris 2007, 149; Pavlovskaya 2004; Oberhauser 2000; Fraad, Resnick, and Wolff 1994; Foner 2000). Yet, as we have seen, many Syrian women in New York also worked, but did so in situations that blurred distinctions between home and factory—with many women sewing in the home for pay on a per-piece basis—as well as those between family labor such as cleaning and employment in a shop or formal business, where the salary may not have been immediately presented to the laborer in the form of cash, but instead accrued over time to the family or establishment on the whole (A Syrian Woman Manages a Big Business in New York 1926).

When analyzing the *Syrian Business Directory* in relation to early Syrian women's labor in New York, we see that the division between home and business evidently played an instrumental role in helping to determine the content of the manual, and this was true even for those stores whose owners would have often lived in the upper floor of the same building where the shop was located as was common practice. Using the evidence from oral history, and if the history of immigration in New York is any indication, despite contributing more generally, women would also have been at the sole head of numerous businesses in New York's early Syrian communities, including such establishments as restaurants, inns, and boarding houses, for example. However, many of the female-owned businesses were piecework firms that operated out of apartments and homes, and as such were in fact not often considered to be formal businesses at all, despite the fact that they operated for long periods as unique establishments, employed extensive waged laborers, and played an essential role in the production process. *Piecework*, or the practice of finishing a specific section of an object of clothing for pay by the piece completed, is still common in the garment industry, but in New York its heyday was in the

early 1900s. Earning a living through piecework allowed women to care for children in their apartments and houses, yet required crushing hours of labor, with women often sewing hundreds of the same piece per day. Some of this work was done by hand, putting the finishing touches on garments with embroidery and crochet, using traditional styles that the workers had learned as young girls, styles they then reconfigured for sale in a capitalist system. Several factors contributed to the fact that these operations were not seen as businesses. First, they took place in the home; second, they were headed by women; third, they did not make a finished product, but only a piece of the final garment; fourth, the work done was traditional (in the U.S.) women's labor—sewing, even though men also worked in piecework and directed many of the establishments (Kessler-Harris 2007; Cameron 1995).

As a result, none of the piecework outfits appear among the advertisements in the *Syrian Business Directory*—and they are rarely mentioned in the English or Arabic press on the whole—which, as noted, tend to favor established businesses that sell final garments. In addition, just as piecework firms were not defined as businesses, in later years the products of piecework firms and other economic organizations where Syrian American women predominated were not traditionally considered fitting archival material. Much of the products women completed—namely, clothes, table cloths, and other fabric products—are not preserved in archives, which focus largely on textual material, but privately, in homes, as family heirlooms. In contrast, Silk factories and wholesalers do appear among the advertisements, and many of these incorporated piecework firms—or included rooms full of women doing essentially the same work that they would have done in the home, and being paid by the piece, with the exception that they were working in a factory building; indeed, from oral sources it appears that there was a tenuous division between piecework firms and clothing factories in practice, although on paper a

distinction was made between the two, with the result that Syrian and Arab women's daily business leadership tends to become erased from the content of the advertisements in the textual records.^{xvi}

So far, I have considered peddling, specifically in terms of the ways that the *form* of the (largely absent) archive diminishes evidence of women's labor, as well as businesses, where many records remain, predominantly as advertisements, but one in which women's labor was left out of the *content* of the official sources despite the fact that women's strong roles in early Syrian businesses are widely attested (Khater 2001; Gualtieri 2004; Shakir 1997; Boosahda 2003; Naff 2002). I will next turn to my third and final example, one that emphasizes or even exaggerates the predominance of women: performance. Performance, and dance in particular, was a type of labor that, like peddling, was sometimes perceived as morally illegitimate. As a result it tends to be underemphasized in historical work on Arab American women's labor, and this despite the fact that women, if in a stereotyped way as sexual objects, were often the central focus of the related records. With this in mind, I will next discuss dance and other forms of performance and their relationship to the *context* in which the archival material was originally recorded and preserved.

Performers in Context

"I do what is proper for art" (Carlton 1994, 76). In 1897, this statement could have resulted in a prison term for Ashea Wabe, who spoke with a reporter about her professional career performing the *hoochie coochie* or the *dance du ventre*, known in English as *belly dance*. On the night of December 19, Wabe had been dancing in an upscale restaurant in New York City's notorious tenderloin district when the local police captain George Chapman, acting on a

tip-off from a rival theater promoter, burst into the club in plain clothes—first taking time to raid the women’s dressing room, where he exchanged pictures with one of the dancers. He and his group of policeman then stormed into the private dining room where Wabe, who had just finished the first of two dances, had been due to begin her second number. Disappointed that no performance was ongoing, they refused offers of free dinner and drinks and, after asking sharp questions of the wealthy young men seated around the room, they left the club empty-handed although several members of the party were later called in for questioning. Wabe, also known by her stage name of “Little Egypt”, spent the entire debacle seated on a stool in a pantry, sipping champagne (Carlton 1994, 65).

In this third and final example for my paper, I will map the ambiguities that result when the contexts of morality, ancestry, gender, and criminality are considered in relation to Wabe’s statement as given in the opening to this section: “I do what is proper for art.” I will do so as a means of discussing the ways that contexts of power influenced the original recording of archival material for Arab American performers during this period, with a focus upon performers whose labor, as was in evidence for peddlers and women more generally, was caught up in contentious debates over its legitimacy and legality.^{xvii}

In Wabe’s case, Spivak would likely contend that there cannot be, nor should there be, any final determination of Wabe’s intentions as revealed in her assertion, which was given in constrained circumstances by someone who was by no means expounding freely upon a personal philosophy of art. However, I would like argue that it is still useful to map Wabe’s statement within the overlapping contexts in which it was made.^{xviii} If, under the circumstances, it would not be productive to try to determine one answer for what Wabe really *meant*, it nonetheless can be fruitful to discuss the relationships between the multiple but discrete possibilities of what her

statements might have *done* (Austin 2000 (1975)) when they are considered in relation to their contexts. To this end, I will first consider how Wabe's statements might be considered in particular contexts of morality and ancestry, whose implications are aligned in this analysis. Second, I will turn to a consideration of how Wabe's words might be viewed in relation to an equally specific rendering of the contexts of both gender and criminality, whose influences also can be seen to parallel one another.

The first two contexts I will discuss, then, are those of morality and perceived ancestry. Although the raid was the most famous scandal that Wabe was involved with, it is not unlikely that she would have experienced similar encounters with the police in the past; multiple large-scale arrests of performers were regularly reported in the *New York Times* during this period (e.g. *Seventy-Five Under Arrest* 1899). In addition, this was not the last time she was detained for dancing professionally; after the raid she continued to give performances in New York ("*Little Egypt*" *Arrested* 1900). Even before any indictments were made as a result of the December 19 party, Wabe began earning as much as \$1,000 per week, a fortune at the time, at Oscar Hammerstein's Olympia theater on Broadway, starring as herself in a parody of the raid (*Carlton* 1994, 76; *He Wants Seeley Punished* 1897)—a show that, as I will discuss, also became the subject of a trial for indecency.

As such, "The Awful Seeley Dinner" as the raid and its ensuing media frenzy came to be known (after the name of the club where it took place) highlights one central issue in the context of Arab American women's labor at the turn of the twentieth century. In New York and the U.S. on the whole, traditionalists decried the loosening of codes of public behavior, often combining a puritan platform of social reform with nativism which, in true Orientalist fashion, decried the supposed licentiousness of the East (Salem 2001, 1999; Said 1979; Jarmakani 2008; Shay and

Sellers-Young 2005). As the head of the politically influential New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, Anthony Comstock destroyed piles of books and printing plates (The Second Annual Report of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice 1876), and simultaneously engaged in an all-out public relations war against the *dance du ventre*—a dance whose details he was oddly familiar with, given his strong opposition to it; he even demonstrated it at length to reporters (Carlton 1994, 50). In the wake of the Seeley Dinner, Comstock spearheaded a bill, expressly aimed at the dancers, to prevent the wearing of tights or see-through clothing in a public theater or resort in the presence of the opposite sex (Stage Regulation Bill 1897).

Thus, the accusations of licentious dancing that were levied against people, and especially women, of many nationalities and backgrounds themselves bore a specific, if complex and not entirely predictable, relationship to misplaced Orientalist assumptions that the Arab World was a region of lax morals. As a result, as Lori Anne Salem has argued, dances such as Wabe's may likely have been viewed differently by members of New York's Arab and Middle Eastern communities than it would have been understood by a general audience, even in cases where their overtly positive reception may have been similar (Salem 1999; Massad 2007). Indeed, while there are suggestions that dancers regularly appeared for Syrian audiences in Syrian-owned coffee houses and restaurants with little surprise or perception of inappropriate activities on either the part of men or women (at least, among those who attended), many of these venues were also monitored to prevent the invasion of authorities (Bercovici 1924; "Sanctified" Arab Tramps 1890). Morality *and* ancestry, then, are among the background contexts for Wabe's statement, "I do what is proper for art." By giving this statement, which contrasts with mistaken perceptions of the supposedly permissive East, then, her words can be

seen to draw attention to a context within Western traditions in which female nudity was at least provisionally acceptable. She thereby deflected concerns that her own morality was compromised, either by the men who hired her (who are reframed as artists) or according to the stereotyped assumption that her reputation was already suspect simply as a performer of ‘Algerian’ dance—a dance that, through her words, is implicitly compared with Western art. Next I would like to explore one intersection between the contexts of criminality and gender. In the early months of 1898, the Seeley raid would be the subject of three trials. First, police Captain Chapman went on trial for allegedly conducting an unlawful raid (Capt. Chapman on Trial 1897; The Chapman Trial 1897; Chapman on the Stand 1897; Chapman May Be Tried 1896; Chapman Hearing Begins 1897). Second, the organizers of the party went on trial for conspiring to convince Wabe and another dancer, Minnie Redwood, to commit a crime (of exposing themselves, it is assumed) (A Result of Seeley Dinner 1897). Third, Oscar Hammerstein appeared before a grand jury for having Wabe recreate the dances planned at the party as the finale for his spoof of the original raid (He Wants Seeley Punished 1897). In the end, all three trials explicitly hinged upon descriptions of the type of costume Wabe wore—clothes that, although possibly scandalous at the time, would have seemed far from revealing to many in the U.S. today.

The potential danger that Wabe might incriminate herself through her testimony was not as great as that in other trials (where defendants face execution, for example), given that the charges were minor and everyone involved was ultimately let go without punishment. Moreover, as a woman in masculinist U.S. society, where women were stereotyped as gullible and irresponsible, Wabe was not even held to be directly culpable. Thus the trials focused upon whether she had been *induced* to compromise herself rather than any assertion that she herself

had committed a crime (A Result of Seeley Dinner 1897). Nonetheless, the fact that powerful forces were amassing to enforce moral codes that would have threatened her popularity, and thus her income, as well as the uncertainty that faced her as an accused party at a time when women did regularly go to prison for similar crimes such as disorderly conduct, likely influenced her actions to a great extent. So, through her testimony, Wabe was embedded in contexts of gender and criminality wherein her words may have an adverse effect, either directly or indirectly, upon her livelihood and personal freedom, but also one in which her own agency, as a woman, was little-valued. As is evident in the charges against her, she was expected to report not upon her own actions, but instead to relate what others (mostly men) had allegedly persuaded or coerced her to do.

The contexts of criminality and gender provide an alternative conceptualization for Wabe's words, "I do what is proper for art," because they place her within a web of individuals, primarily men, who were implicated in a crime, and who were likely to attempt to influence, either explicitly or implicitly, Wabe's testimony in their favor. In fact, although Wabe is reported to have employed the exact phrasing above several times, the words may not originally have been her own but rather the promoter's, who initially used them to convince her to dance at the dinner in the first place (The Chapman Trial 1897). Nonetheless, as one reporter recalled Wabe's testimony, "no amount of questioning...could make the witness say she had done anything wrong." As I have argued in above in relation to morality and ancestry, this refusal of illegality potentially be seen as a reframing of popular debates upon morality and their links to 'Eastern' styles of performance such that Wabe was potentially asserting her respectability and artistic rights. However, it is also one that, in a criminal trial that hinged upon female performers, could also equally be due to pressure from the outside—and intended to prevent her from

incriminating herself (Chapman on the Stand 1897). In this case, then, “I do what is proper for art,” can be seen as an attempt to avoid alienating either those who hired her for the dinner—by claiming that what she did was proper, which implies that those who supposedly induced her perform did not cause her to compromise herself—as well as the arresting officers, by not denying that she did indeed dance in a costume that the court would consider indecent. The pressing state of immediate practical considerations is revealed in an additional statement that Wabe gave to reporters after she revealed that an unnamed source had offered to pay her to leave the city: “I will not run away. I am here to tell all I know. But I do not know why everybody [is making such a] fuss” (Carlton 1994, 76; ‘Little Egypt’ at Sherry’s 1897).

So, it is interesting to point out that, considered in both the contexts of morality and ancestry—which in this case appear to be aligned—Wabe’s testimony emerges as a symbol of defiance. In contrast, for those of criminality and gender—which appear likewise aligned—her testimony would appear to be contrived under outside influences. This contradiction does not mean that all of these potential motivations were mutually incompatible. Nor does it indicate that Wabe did not believe what she said, or that she necessarily did it ingenuously. There is simply no way to know. Nonetheless, by mapping the ambiguous openings created through an analysis of the four contexts of morality, ancestry, gender, and criminality, in relation to power in this particular instance—both the power of the court in eliciting her testimony twice, and her power as a highly visible and popular member of groups such as women, dancers, and Arab Americans that were rarely quoted directly in the mainstream press—it is possible to better understand the ways that power would have had a significant impact upon what she said in complex and unanticipated ways.

Wabe and performers like her are often mentioned in relation to the histories and geographies of the Arab American Diaspora, but their labor is rarely considered in sources of the period that deal with the economic aspects of early Arab American communities, and this despite the fact that both the communities and dancers originated with recruitment for work in the World's Fairs and Expositions of the mid- to late-1800s (Salem 1999). In light of such complexities, an investigation of the contexts for speech such as Wabe's, and a map of the ambiguities of its contexts, is one way to research the complex relationships between the diverse forms of labor of women during this period, as well as the multiple definitions of community and identity.

Conclusion

Systems of power, while locally and temporally specific, have played a significant role in determining the form, content, and context of the archive for Arab American women's labor. Power relations, which are mediated through systems of race, class, gender, and ancestry, among others, help to determine the very definitions of who is Arab American, who is a woman, and who is a worker, and to invest these definitions with both discursive and material significance. Gayatri Spivak demonstrated that power influences discourse in diverse ways that I have linked to the form, content, and context of the three examples of peddling, business, and performance. Throughout these examples, I have argued that the voices of early Arab American women were not just shaped through their over-arching absence from the archives, but were also conditioned down to the very content of their words, the genres and material forms in which those words were recorded, and the contexts that limited the options of what to say. However, I do not see an awareness of power as a wholly negative or pessimistic attitude towards scholarship, precisely

because such an approach also allows authors, scholars, and activists to concentrate upon the many ways that Arab American women have also embodied different types of power across space and time to multiple ends. By paying attention to these ways in all their differences, including the ways that they productively challenge definitions of the incredibly heterogeneous group called *Arab American women*, it is possible to broaden our conceptions of the archive and increase the number of fruitful ways to study early Arab American women's working lives. It also presents an opportunity to attenuate somewhat the forced divides presented to Arab American women over time, as well as Arab American studies scholars—namely, the false requirement to hold to definitions that require individuals to be *either* American *or* Arab, either 'Eastern' or 'Western', either a model citizen or a supposed threat—by studying the lives and labor of early Arab American women in all their uniqueness and specificity. The three mappings I have considered here—the conceptual map of absences in the archive with regards to peddling, the literal map of Syrian businesses and the effacement it produces, and the discursive map of the multiple possible interpretations and practical consequences of Wabe's testimony—together provide a fuller picture of early twentieth century Arab American women's labor. In this vein, the map, when conceived and produced with the troubling legacies of power in mind, also offers one way of exploring the changes in, and diversity of, the working lives of women in the Arab American Diaspora in both space and time.



Figure 1: A sample of approximately thirty-five Syrian-owned businesses in Lower Manhattan from the 1908-09 *Syrian Business Directory* (Mokarzel and Otash 1909). Also indicated on this map is the future site of the World Trade Center, which was then a market and residential area. The transliteration of business names is taken from the original.

Works Cited^{xix}

- Abdou, D. N. T. 1922. *Medicine and Commerce*. New York: Al-Hoda Press.
- Abdou, N. 1907. *Dr. Abdou's Travels in America*. New York: Meraat Al-Gharb Press.
- Abu-Laban, B. 1992. The Lebanese in Montreal. In *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. A. Hourani and N. Shehadi, 227-42. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Abu-Laban, B., and M. W. Suleiman eds. 1989. *Arab Americans: Continuity and Change*. Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc.
- Al-Ashkar, B. 1928. *Jamal Basha in Lebanon (Jamal Basha Fi Lubnan)*. New York: Al-Hoda Press.
- Al-Hoda: 1898-1968*. 1968. New York: Al-Hoda Press.
- Al-Ra'i, R. 1925. *Drops of Dew (Qatarat Nada)*. New York: Al-Hoda Press.
- Anderson, B. 1991. Census, Map, Museum. In *Imagined Communities*, 163-186. New York: Verso.
- Arida, M. 1916. The Syrian Woman. *Al-Sa'ih*, January 6:2.
- . 1918. The Immigrant Syrian Woman. *Al-Sa'ih*, January 17:2.
- Aryain, E., and L. P. J'Nell. 2006. *From Syria to Seminole: Memoir of a High Plains Merchant*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press.
- Aswad, B. C. c. 1974. *Arabic speaking communities in American cities. Edited by Barbara C. Aswad*. 1st ed. Staten Island.
- Austin, J. L. 2000 (1975). *How to Do Things with Words*. Third ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Batruni, Y. 1903. The Syrian Woman and the Kashshi. *Al-Hoda*, July 7; July 28; August 15:2; 2; 2;.
- Benson, K., and P. M. Kayal eds. 2002. *A Community of Many Worlds : Arab Americans in New York City*. 1st ed. New York: The Museum of the City of New York/Syracuse University Press.
- Bercovici, K. 1924. *Around the World in New York*. New York: Century Co.
- Bishara, K. A. 1914. *The Origins of the Modern Syrian*. New York: Al Hoda Publishing House.
- Boosahda, E. 2003. *Arab-American faces and voices : the origins of an immigrant community*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Cameron, A. 1995. *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Capt. Chapman on Trial. 1897. *New York Times*, January 9:1.
- Carlton, D. 1994. *Looking for Little Egypt*. Bloomington, IN: IDDD Books.
- Chapman Hearing Begins. 1897. *New York Times*, January 8.
- Chapman May Be Tried. 1896. *New York Times*, December 29.

- Chapman on the Stand. 1897. *The New York Times*, January 13.
- The Chapman Trial. 1897. *Utica Semi-Weekly Herald*, January 15, 1897.
- Civantos, C. 2006. *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab immigrants, and the writing of identity*: Albany State University of New York Press.
- Crampton, J. W., and J. Krygier. 2006. An Introduction to Critical Cartography. *Acme: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4 (1):11-33.
- Dammous, S. N. 1898. Our Needs in Our Land of Immigration. *Al-Ayyam*, April 8:2.
- Darraj, S. M. 2004. *Scheherazade's legacy: Arab and Arab American women on writing*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers.
- Di Napoli, M. A. H. 2002. The Syrian-Lebanese Community of South Ferry from Its Origins to 1977. In *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, ed. K. Benson, Philip M. Kayal, 11-27. New York: Museum of the City of New York/Syracuse University Press.
- Elias, E. N. 1903. The Syrian Woman and the Kashshi. *Al-Hoda*, May 26:1.
- Farkouh, B. 1913. The Syrian Female Emigrant. *Al-Sa'ih*, January 16:1.
- The Female Syrian Peddler. 1908. *Al-Wafa*, May 2.
- Finds New York a Beggars' Mecca. 1922. *New York Times*, April 23, 1922:1.
- Foner, N. 2000. *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1983. The Subject and Power. In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, eds. H. L. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow and M. Foucault. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- . 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. New York: Random House.
- Fraad, H., S. Resnick, and R. Wolff. 1994. *Bringing It All Back Home: Class, Gender and Power in the Modern Household*. London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press.
- Friedlander, J. 2002. Rare Sights: Images of Early Arab Immigration to New York City. In *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, eds. K. Benson and P. M. Kayal. New York: The Museum of the City of New York/Syracuse University Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1996. *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K., S. A. Resnick, and R. D. Wolff. 2000. *Class and Its Others*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Golley, N. A.-H. 2003. *Reading Arab Women's Autobiographies: Shahrazad Tells Her Story*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Golley, N. A.-H., and M. Cooke. 2007. *Arab Women's Lives Retold*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Gualtieri, S. 2001. Becoming "White": Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States. *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20 (4):29-58.

- . 2004. Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878-1924. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (1):67-78.
- Haddad, Y. Y. 2004. Not Quite American? The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Hajj, Y. 1893. An Article about Syrian Women Peddlers in the U.S. *Kawkab America*, September 1:1.
- Harley, J. B. 1989. Deconstructing the Map. *Cartographica* 26:1-20.
- He Wants Seeley Punished. 1897. *New York Times*, January 26, 1897:1.
- Hitti, P. 1924. *The Syrians in America*. New York: George H. Doran.
- Hooglund, E. J. ed. 1987. *Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States Before 1940*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press.
- Houghton, L. S. 1911. Syrians in the United States. *The Survey* 26:480-95, 647-65, 786-803, 957-68.
- Hourani, A., and N. Shehadi eds. 1992. *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Jarmakani, A. 2008. *Imagining Arab Womanhood: The Cultural Mythology of Veils, Harems, and Belly Dancers in the U.S.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnson, R. 2008. A Family's Fortunes: A "Pre-History" of Bashas', <http://www.bashas.com/history.php#highlights>.
- Joseph, S. 2009. Arab American Women in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. Paper read at the Conference on Arab American Women, at Manhattan, KS.
- Judy, R. A. T. 1993. *(Dis)forming the American canon : African-Arabic slave narratives and the vernacular*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kadi, J. ed. 1994. *Food for our grandmothers : writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian feminists*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Kaldas, P., and K. Mattawa eds. 2004. *Dinarzad's children : an anthology of contemporary Arab American fiction*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.
- Karam, A. H. 1903. An Article about Women Peddlers and the Kashshi. *Al-Hoda*, July 14:1.
- . 1904. An Article about Syrian Women and Their Rights. *Al-Hoda*, April 8:1.
- . 1906. Do Not Send Your Women to War without Any Armor. *Al-Hoda*, October 17:1.
- . 1920. The Immigrant Woman as a Merchant. *Al-Akhlaq* 2 (2):2.
- Karam, J. T. 2007. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Katibah, H. I. 1946. *Arabic-speaking Americans. [Compiled by Habib Ibrahīm Katibah, in collaboration with Ferhat Ziadeh]*. New York: N.Y.
- Kayal, P., and J. Kayal. 1975. *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

- Kayyali, R. A. 2006. *The Arab Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Kessler-Harris, A. 2007. *Gendering Labor History*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Khater, A. F. 2001. *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kherbawi, B. M. 1913a. History of Syrian Emigration. In *History of the United States (Tarikh al-Wilayat al-Muttahida)*, ed. B. M. Kherbawi, 726-96. New York: Al Dalil Press.
- . 1913b. History of the Syrian Emigration. In *Tarikh al-Wilayat al-Muttahida (History of the United States)*, ed. B. M. Kherbawi, 726-96. New York: Al Dalil Press.
- Kwan, M.-P. 2002. Feminist Visualization: Re-envisioning GIS As a Method in Feminist Geographic Research. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92 (4):645-661.
- . 2004. Beyond Difference: From Canonical Geography to Hybrid Geographies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94 (4):756-763.
- 'Little Egypt' at Sherry's. 1897. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 2:2.
- 'Little Egypt' Worth \$30,000 at Death. 1908. *New York Times*, January 21, 1908.
- "Little Egypt" Arrested. 1900. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 14:1.
- Mahmood, S. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Majaj, L. S., and A. Amireh. 2002. *Etel Adnan: critical essays on the Arab-American writer and artist*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co.
- Maleky, A. 1917. *The Joker (Al-Lata'if)*. New York: Al-Hoda Press.
- Maloof, J. N. 1899. *Treasury of Al-Ayyam [Newspaper] (Khizanat Al-Ayyam)*. New York: Al-Ayam.
- Massad, J. 2007. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McCarus, E. ed. 1994. *The Development of Arab-American Identity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Melhem, D. H., and L. Diab eds. 2000. *A Different path: an anthology of the Radius of Arab American Writers*. Detroit: The Ridgeway Press.
- Milkie, J. 1902. Syrian Men Not Shirkers. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 23, 1902:1.
- Miller, L. H. 1969 (1911). *Our Syrian Population: A Study of the Syrian Communities of Greater New York*. Saratoga, CA: R & E Research Assoc.
- Mitchell, T. 1991. *Colonising Egypt*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mokarzel, N. A. 1904. Do Not Do Them Injustice. *Al-Hoda*, August 2.
- Mokarzel, S. 1920. *The History of the Trade of Syrian Immigrants in the Americas (Tarikh al-Tijara al-Suriyya fi al-Mahajir al-Amrikiyya)*. New York: Syrian-American Press.
- Mokarzel, S. A., and H. F. Otash. 1909. *The Syrian Business Directory*. New York.

- Naber, N. 2000. Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab American Invisibility. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23:37-61.
- Naff, A. 1993. *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. 2nd ed. Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press.
- . 2002. New York: The Mother Colony. In *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, ed. K. Benson, Philip M. Kayal, 3-10. New York: Museum of the City of New York/Syracuse University Press.
- Najla, B. 1922. I Saw Her, Then I Saw Her. *Al-Sa'ih*, Special Issue:2.
- Nash, G. 1998. *The Arab writer in English : Arab themes in a metropolitan language, 1908-1958*. Portland, Ore.: Sussex Academic Press.
- Oberhauser, A. M. 2000. Feminism and Economic Geography: Gendering Work and Working Gender. In *A Companion to Economic Geography*, eds. E. S. Sheppard and T. J. Barnes, 60-76. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Orfalea, G. 2006. *The Arab Americans: A History*. Northampton, Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press (Interlink Publishing Group).
- Pandey, G. 2000. Voices from the Edge: The Struggle to Write Subaltern Histories. In *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. V. Chaturvedi. London: Verso.
- Pavlovskaya, M. E. 2002. Mapping Urban Change and Changing GIS: other views of economic restructuring. *Gender, Place and Culture* 9 (3):281-289.
- . 2004. Other Transitions: Multiple Economies of Moscow Households in the 1990s. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94 (2):329-351.
- . 2006. Theorizing with GIS: A Tool for Critical Geographies? *Environment and Planning A* 38 (11):2003-2020.
- A Result of Seeley Dinner. 1897. *New York Times*, January 27, 1897:1.
- Rustum, A. N.D. *Al-Rustumiyat (Collection of pieces by Asad Rustum, editor of The Emigrant)*. New York: The Eagle Press.
- Said, E. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Salem, L. A. 1999. Far-Off and Fascinating Things: Wadeha Atiyeh and Images of Arabs in the American Popular Theater, 1930-1950. In *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. M. Suleiman, 272-303. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . 2001. Race, Sexuality, and Arabs in American Entertainment, 1850-1900. In *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, Dance, Music, and the Visual Arts of the Middle East*, ed. S. Zuhur, 211-227. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Salibi, A. 1902. Syrian Women. *Al-Hoda*, May 3:1.
- . 1903. A Letter about Women Peddlers and the Kashshi. *Al-Hoda*, July 18:2.
- Samhan, H. H. 1999. Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab American Experience. In *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. M. Suleiman, 209-226. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- "Sanctified" Arab Tramps. 1890. *New York Times*, May 25, 1890.
- The Second Annual Report of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. 1876. New York.
- Seventy-Five Under Arrest. 1899. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 2:2.
- Shaheen, J. G. 2002. Hollywood's Muslim Arabs. In *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, eds. K. Benson and P. M. Kayal, 191-212. New York: Museum of the City of New York/Syracuse University Press.
- Shakir, E. 1997. *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American women in the United States*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers.
- Shay, A., and B. Sellers-Young. 2005. *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism, and Harem Fantasy*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers.
- Spivak, G. C. 1984. The Rani of Simur. In *Europe and Its Others*, ed. F. Barker, 128-151. Essex: University of Essex.
- . 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, 271-313. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- . 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- St. Martin, K. 2001. Making Space for Community Resource Management in Fisheries. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91 (1):122-42.
- Stage Regulation Bill. 1897. *New York Times*, February 25, 1897.
- Stoler, A. L. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Suleiman, M. 1988. *The Arabs in the Mind of America*. Romford, UK: Amana Books.
- Suleiman, M. W. 1993. American Views of Arabs and the Impact of These Views on Arab Americans. *Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi* 16:93-107.
- . 1999a. Introduction: The Arab Immigrant Experience. In *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. M. W. Suleiman. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . 2002. Impressions of New York City by Early Arab Immigrants. In *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, eds. K. Benson and P. M. Kayal. New York: The Museum of the City of New York/Syracuse University Press.
- . 2006. *The Arab-American Experience in the United States and Canada: A Classified, Annotated Bibliography*. Ann Arbor, MI: The Pierian Press.
- ed. 1999b. *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Syrian Garroted, Not Shot, Autopsies Show. 1906. *New York Times*, February 2.
- A Syrian Woman Manages a Big Business in New York. 1926. *Al-Sayyidat wa al-Rijal*, June 30, 2.
- Syrians Settling Here Make Asiatic Quarter. 1902. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*:1.

- Tannous, A. 1942. Acculturation of an Arab-Syrian Community in the Deep South. *American Sociological Review* 8:264-71.
- Tannous, V. 1920a. Which is Better? *Al-Akhlaq* 1 (4):2.
- . 1920b. The Working Girl. *Al-Akhlaq* 1 (6):2.
- . 1923. Do You Despise the Working Girl? *Al-Akhlaq* 4 (2):6.
- Ya'qub, A. 1907. The Emigrant Syrian Woman. *Al-Hoda*, March 7:2.
- Yaziji, N., [pseud.]. 1912. Syrian Commerce. *Al-Sa'ih*, May 9; August 22:2; 2.
- Yuwakim, Y. E. 1908. Immigration and Women. *Al-Hoda*, July 3:2.
- Zabel, D. A. ed. 2006. *Arabs in the Americas: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Arab Diaspora*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Zakham, Y. J. 1908. A Proposal: There Should Be a Law to Prevent Emigration of Syrian Women to America. *Al-Hoda*, January 13:1.
- Zawi, Y. I. 1904. Educating Women. *Al-Hoda*, March 16:1.
- Zraick, A. A. 1912. *The Maiden and the Soldier: A Love Story in Arabic (Al-Fatah wa Al-Shurtah)*. New York: Jurab Al-Kurdy Publishing House.

Endnotes

ⁱ I am greatly indebted to the questions and comments I received on this chapter at the 2009 Conference on Arab American Women and the 2009 meeting of the Association of American Geographers, especially those of Michael Suleiman, Sarah Gualtieri, Suad Joseph, and Patricia Noxolo.

ⁱⁱ The connection between Syrians in the U.S. and the Arab Diaspora more broadly is only one way to construct these geographies. It is common in Arab American studies to point to people from the vast Ottoman province of Greater Syria—which included most of contemporary Lebanon, Syria, Israel/Palestine, and Jordan—as the first group of Arabic-speaking people to immigrate to the Americas in large numbers. However, although many of the leaders in New York later took up the call to Arab nationalism when it became prominent towards the middle part of the twentieth century, it is essential to note that not all of the Syrians would have self-identified as Arabs. Town or city of birth, family lineage, and religious denomination were other common methods of identification that may at times have superseded a relationship to Arab identity. Moreover, in the broader press prior to the end of World War I, Syrians were often associated with Turkish, Greek, Italian, and other Southern European immigrants. Thus, Ottoman Syrians, and those from Mount Lebanon in particular, were a very specific group associated with the

diverse, evolving, and heterogeneous term *Arab*, one whose relationship to broader historical trends is complex and should by no means be taken for granted (Naber 2000; Karam 2007; Kayyali 2006; Orfalea 2006; Abu-Laban and Suleiman 1989; Hooglund 1987; McCarus 1994; Gualtieri 2001). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the early Arabic-speaking immigrants from Greater Syria, who were known in the United States as “Syrians,” shared language and cultural characteristics with the later arrivals from all parts of the Arab world. Some of these people and their descendants continued to identify as “Syrian” or “Lebanese” while others began to identify and/or be identified generally as “Arab”.

ⁱⁱⁱ To the extent that can be determined, I use individuals’ preferred spelling of their own names rather than changing them to reflect contemporary standards of transliteration; likewise, for bibliographic sources that include a translated or transliterated title, I provide the title as given in the source except if there appeared to be a typographical error.

^{iv} For more recent studies of perceptions of Arabs in the U.S., see: (Suleiman 1993; Suleiman 1988; Shaheen 2002)

^v Female peddlers were engaged in ongoing debates about their own morality. As Michael Suleiman (1999a, 8) notes, “Among Christians, women peddlers were a big concern. The complaints and areas targeted for reform included the act of peddling itself, the personal appearance and dress of the woman peddler, the distance she covered and whether she had to stay away from home overnight, and her demeanor or behavior.”

^{vi} I would like to thank Michael Suleiman and Randa Kayyali for discussing these collections with me.

^{vii} In addition, I also use the term *American* in the sense of including North, Central, and South America—all of which had significant Syrian communities in this period.

^{viii} I use *subaltern* in its broadest sense—in reference to everyone who is not a traditional subject of professional history as it has been practiced in western culture. I have found the term *subaltern* useful for acknowledging imbalances of power based upon the co-presence of race, gender, class, ancestry, sexuality, and so on, while also acknowledging their complexity.

^{ix} I should reiterate that I am not suggesting that Arab American women were universally oppressed throughout history, but that it can be productive to view the histories of subaltern people as those in which individuals and groups formed creative methods of acting and speech in the face of diverse constraints. As such, as a corollary to the theories of Saba Mahmood on gender and power, the historical study of Arab American women’s labor in light of subaltern studies allows for an analysis of power systems in light of diverse modes of agency (Mahmood 2005). Scholarship envisioned in this way therefore has the potential to provide a significant counter to the stereotype that

women who trace their lineage to nations in the Arab World do not exercise initiative and control over their circumstances—without, however, idealizing the complex pressures that they have faced across space and time.

^xAlthough Spivak points to factors that affect each of the three modes of form, content, and context, such theoretical divisions are not present explicitly in her article.

^{xi} Another source for the study of early Arab American communities, the diverse body of Arab American literature, has been collected and treated at length in several scholarly works, such as Golley (2007; 2003), Darraj (2004), Melhem and Diab (2000), Nash (1998), Civantos (2006), Kaldas and Mattawa (2004), Judy (1993), Kadi (1994), Majaj and Amireh (2002), and Suleiman (2002). See Gualtieri, this volume, for an analysis of the work of Afifa Karam, an early author whose Arabic novels, written in New Orleans, predate Hussayn Haykal's *Zainab*, which is generally accepted as the first novel written in Arabic.

^{xii} The legacy of their mobility is reflected in the diverse locations of the archival collections for Arab Americans noted earlier in the chapter.

^{xiii} One notable exception is the Naff Collection, which includes material objects, such as at least one peddler's pack.

^{xiv} However, some of these sources were preserved in family collections, in addition to extensive oral histories that were passed down over generations—sources that are very much in need of further research.

^{xv} Titles of these journals include *al-Hoda*, *Mirat al-Gharb*, *al-Ayyam*, *Jurab al-Kurdi*, *al-Dalil*, *Kawkab Amrika*, *al-Fanoun*, *al-Akhlaq*, *Al-Sa'ih*, *al-Kalimat*, *al-Khalidat*, and *Al-Kanoun*. For further titles, see Michael Suleiman's extensive annotated bibliography (Suleiman 2006).

^{xvi} Women were present in Arabic press advertisements in one notable role: as models.

^{xvii} It should not be taken for granted that Wabe, who in the sources is often called 'Algerian' without further explanation ('Little Egypt' Worth \$30,000 at Death 1908), would have considered herself to be part of New York's Arab American or Syrian American communities. Nonetheless, the raid and the trial itself was often cited—at least in the English-language press—in relation to broader forms of *hoochie coochie* and other 'Eastern' dances in the U.S. in ways that caused it to be identified with Syrian and other Arabic-speaking Americans.

^{xviii} Indeed, this directly follows Spivak's discussion of the Rani of Simur, albeit with different goals and in a different context (1988, 1999, 1984). Likewise, professional Westernized historians regularly make determinations about the significance of a particular act or saying, but until recently it was less common to openly present the

possible options in writing, or of considering the relationships and contradictions among them, since value was placed on coming up with a single right answer.

^{xix} Transliterated titles are given where available. All sources listed as being printed by Arabic presses (e.g. Al-Hoda Press), or that appear in Arabic newspapers and journals, should be assumed to be in Arabic unless noted otherwise.