



Universidad Nacional de Catamarca - Facultad de Humanidades
Instituto de Investigación en Teorías del Arte y Estética
Revista Rigel – ISSN 2525-1945.

Women's Issues Between Qasim Amin and Tahar al-Haddad: A Comparative Study in Conceptual Metaphors: A Cultural-Cognitive Approach

Boubakeur Aribi

Department of Arabic Language and Literature / Cognitive Linguistics Research Unit
bo.aribi@univ-boumerdes.dz

Received: 14/05/2026 accepted: 26/07/2026 published: 05/09/2026

Abstract

This study builds on two previous articles by the same researcher: the first examined Qasim Amin's discourse on women's liberation through a cognitive approach focusing on discursive audacity and deconstructing the authority of obscurantism; the second analyzed Tahar al-Haddad's discourse using a rhetorical-cognitive framework. Synthesizing these foundational inquiries, this comparative study presents a critical perspective grounded in a "cultural-cognitive approach" to map the intersections and divergences in women's liberation discourse across the Mashriq (Egypt) and the Maghrib (Tunisia). It demonstrates how conceptual metaphors construct differentiated epistemological architectures in both thinkers, despite their shared teleological commitment to women's emancipation. Furthermore, the study illuminates the epistemic shifts conditioned by geopolitical contexts, demonstrating that reformist discourse was never monolithic, but dynamically contoured by localized historical particularities. This reinforces the vital necessity of the cultural-cognitive paradigm in deciphering the dialectics of the modern Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*).

Keywords: Cultural-cognitive approach, comparative study, conceptual metaphors, Qasim Amin, Tahar al-Haddad, women's liberation discourse, Mashriq, Maghrib, epistemic gaps, reformist discourse.

1. Introduction

This study belongs to comparative inquiries that interrogate modern Arab intellectual discourses regarding representations of gender and women's issues [cite: 1]. It examines two seminal figures who marked a decisive watershed in modern Arab reformism: Qasim Amin in his foundational work *The Liberation of Woman* (*Tahrir al-Mar'a*, 1899) and Tahar al-Haddad in his groundbreaking

treatise *Our Woman in Sharia and Society* (*Imra'atuna fi al-Shari'a wa al-Mujtama'*, 1930) [cite: 1]. The significance of this comparative endeavor transcends merely cataloging points of convergence and divergence [cite: 1]. Rather, it interrogates and deconstructs the cognitive matrices and ideological paradigms that grounded their treatments of women's status within the Arab-Islamic sphere [cite: 1]. Here, the question of women is never examined in isolation; it functions as a critical nexus where questions of cultural identity, modernization, religious hermeneutics, and sociopolitical emancipation converge [cite: 1]. Consequently, it serves as an analytical prism that exposes the ideological contestations that swept Arab societies during their modern transitions [cite: 1].

The study addresses a central problem: To what extent did divergent intellectual frameworks and ideological premises shape modern Arab awareness regarding women's emancipation [cite: 1]? Did these discourses succumb to a monologic, hegemonic authority that sought to monopolize truth and direct the course of reform, or did epistemic diversity furnish expansive possibilities for reconstructing the Arab renaissance project [cite: 1]? Branching from this inquiry is a vital corollary: Did the conceptual variance between Amin and al-Haddad generate a transformative critical dynamic capable of guiding society toward civilizational emancipation, or did it harbor an epistemological barrier that deepened polarization and entrenched dependency [cite: 1]?

Methodological rigor necessitates establishing foundational theoretical premises to prevent sweeping generalization or historical anachronism [cite: 1]. The first premise concerns the concept of "radicalism" in Qasim Amin's oeuvre [cite: 1]. Radicalism here does not signify an abrupt revolutionary break devoid of historical context, but rather designates an evolving, internally complex intellectual trajectory [cite: 1]. In *The Liberation of Woman*, Amin operated within the parameters of enlightened Islamic reformism established by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, anchoring his arguments in scriptural authority and reformist hermeneutics [cite: 1]. However, an implicit pendulum dynamic operated beneath the surface, occasionally emerging until it became fully manifest in his subsequent work, *The New Woman* (*Al-Mar'a al-Jadida*, 1900) [cite: 1]. In this later treatise, Amin decisively pivoted toward secular rationalism and explicit engagement with European value systems [cite: 1]. Therefore, the attribution of "radicalism" must be strictly contextualized within this second developmental phase rather than projected retrospectively onto his entire output [cite: 1].

The second premise concerns the epistemological and sociopolitical authority circumscribing both thinkers' discourses [cite: 1]. Their intellectual formulations did not emerge in a historical vacuum; rather, they materialized under distinct geopolitical pressures that directly configured their discursive horizons [cite: 1]. In Egypt, Amin wrote under dual structural pressures: the decaying hegemony of the Ottoman Caliphate and British colonial occupation, which fundamentally restructured socioeconomic and political consciousness [cite: 1]. In Tunisia, al-Haddad confronted a dual authoritarian structure: an entrenched, conservative religious establishment that vehemently resisted institutional reform within personal status law, and French settler colonialism that deployed legal and cultural apparatuses to erode Tunisian civilizational identity [cite: 1].

Consequently, this study approaches the texts of Amin and al-Haddad not merely as divergent

polemics on gender, but as manifestations of two distinct epistemic frameworks conceptualizing the dialectic between tradition (*turath*) and modernity (*hadatha*), and between religious epistemology and Western paradigms [cite: 1]. This comparative lens elucidates the mechanisms of modern Arab reformist discourse and assesses its efficacy in confronting one of the most contested issues in modern Arab intellectual history [cite: 1].

Section I: Epistemological Foundations and Conceptual Shifts in Metaphorical Discourse

Deconstructing the reformist discourse on women's issues requires transcending superficial textual analysis to penetrate the underlying cognitive structures that shaped the consciousness of Qasim Amin and Tahar al-Haddad [cite: 1]. This section delineates the cognitive ground of conceptual metaphor, shifting from restrictive classical rhetoric to cognitive linguistics, where metaphor operates as an instrument of knowledge production and civilizational orientation [cite: 1]. Within this cognitive domain, we trace how spaces of freedom and progress were conceived between the linear forward thrust of the Mashriq and the cultural resistance characteristic of the Maghrib [cite: 1]. This trajectory illustrates how conceptual metaphors transformed women from silent discursive objects into ontological, cognitive agents [cite: 1].

1. Epistemological Foundations of Metaphor: Between Classical Rhetoric and Cognitive Linguistics

The classical Arabic conception of metaphor derives from the etymological root of *isti'ara* (borrowing, requesting a loan), leading traditional rhetoricians to treat metaphor primarily as semantic transference between related lexical terms [cite: 1]. As classical rhetoricians maintained, metaphor is inherently grounded in simile (*tashbih*), differing from it through hyperbole and imaginative absorption [cite: 1]. Classical theory posits that in metaphor, one claims that the tenor is identical to the vehicle, positing an ontological union in imagination rather than merely asserting resemblance [cite: 1]. Hence, metaphor relies on shared recognition; just as a loan occurs only between parties bound by prior acquaintance, metaphor functions only between concepts sharing associative affinity [cite: 1].

Transference (*naql*) remained central to the classical conception, defining metaphor as a semantic shift from an original domain to a target domain, generating novel meaning through partial conceptual correspondence [cite: 1]. Metaphor, therefore, does not merely offer decorative embellishment; it reconfigures the recipient's cognitive apparatus by activating associative and functional relations inaccessible to literal expression [cite: 1].

Contrasting with this classical view, the cognitive theory articulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) represents a paradigmatic shift [cite: 1]. Metaphor is no longer confined to stylistic ornamentation, but is understood as a fundamental cognitive mechanism structuring conceptual systems and human behavior [cite: 1]. In cognitive terms, metaphor is defined as an experiential mapping through which one conceptual domain is understood and experienced in terms of another [cite: 1].

The human conceptual architecture is inherently metaphorical [cite: 1]. Primary metaphorical

mappings—orientational, structural, and ontological—constitute foundational cognitive realities through which humans conceptualize abstract domains into tangible physical and cultural experiences [cite: 1].

2. The Topography of Freedom and Progress: "Forward Momentum" Versus "Cultural Resistance"

The reformist discourses of Amin and al-Haddad emerge from spatial orientations that reflect how abstract concepts such as freedom and progress are embodied through physical and cultural experience [cite: 1]. Language serves as an instrument of thought whose pathways vary according to linguistic and ecological environments [cite: 1]. In this context, freedom emerges as an ontological necessity [cite: 1]. As Immanuel Kant posited, unless human autonomy is affirmed, humanity is reduced to a mechanical puppet or automaton, rendering moral deliberation impossible [cite: 1]. Autonomy and its accompanying ethical dimensions represent the cornerstone of social cohesion, constituting a prerequisite for women to transcend passive subjugation and participate in civilizational progress [cite: 1].

In Qasim Amin's discourse, freedom is mapped onto an unconstrained, open physical space [cite: 1]. In the introduction to *The Liberation of Woman*, he asserts: "True freedom accommodates the expression of every opinion, the dissemination of every doctrine, and the promotion of every thought" (Amin, 1899) [cite: 1]. Here, the cognitive apparatus projects the abstract domain of freedom onto a concrete container-space permitting unhindered movement and interaction [cite: 1]. This aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) thesis that abstract concepts are comprehended through spatial metaphors within which agents navigate [cite: 1].

Conversely, progress within the Mashriqi reformist consciousness (Egypt) is structured metaphorically as a continuous, linear forward movement [cite: 1]. It charts society's transit from stagnation toward civilizational refinement through cumulative stages, as evidenced by the Egyptian feminist movement under Huda Sha'arawi and the Egyptian Feminist Union [cite: 1]. These legislative and institutional gains—raising the marriage age, expanding access to education, and regulating labor—are metaphorically framed as stations along an advancing trajectory [cite: 1]. As Paul Ricoeur observed, narrative time structures human consciousness toward the future as an horizon of expectation, rendering history a forward movement toward realization [cite: 1].

In contrast, Tahar al-Haddad, situated within the Tunisian (Maghribi) milieu, deploys metaphors of symbolic resistance rooted in Islamic teleological jurisprudence (*Maqasid al-Shari'a*) [cite: 1]. Challenging patriarchal traditions, al-Haddad cites the prophetic traditions: "Islam resisted the pre-Islamic Arabs' pessimism toward daughters and their abhorrence of them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) declared with pride: 'I am the father of daughters'" (Al-Haddad, 1930) [cite: 1]. Cognitively, the declaration "I am the father of daughters" functions as a counter-metaphor [cite: 1]. It dismantles the pre-Islamic schema that mapped female progeny onto shame and social dishonor, establishing an alternative mapping that equates daughters with religious virtue and honor [cite: 1].

Al-Haddad reinforces this theological-hermeneutical argument by noting: "As for female infanticide (*wa'd al-banat*), that abominable custom widespread during the *Jahiliyya*, Islam buried

it at the very inception of its legislation, lifting from women a profound historical injustice" (Al-Haddad, 1930) [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad does not rely on a secular liberal trajectory; rather, he excavates the Islamic episteme from within to dismantle patriarchal norms [cite: 1]. This divergence corroborates Albert Hourani's observation that the Egyptian Nahda developed through a direct confrontation with the colonial West, whereas the Tunisian reform movement was intricately bound up with revitalizing traditional religious institutions from within [cite: 1].

3. The Dynamics of Ideas: Transforming Woman from an Object of Discourse to a Discursive Agent

Comparative analysis reveals a sophisticated cognitive treatment of intellectual momentum [cite: 1]. Qasim Amin employs dense metaphorical mappings that depict the mind as an interior container and the idea as a living organism [cite: 1]:

"This truth which I publish today occupied my thoughts for a long period, during which I turned it over, tested it, and analyzed it until, stripped of all error, it seized a commanding space within my consciousness, crowding out other ideas and prevailing over them... Thus, I found no alternative but to project it from the interior realm of thought into the open arena of public advocacy." (Amin, 1899) [cite: 1]

This spatial conceptualization corresponds with Kantian philosophy, where theoretical reflection transitions into practical application [cite: 1]. Kant argued that while pure reason encounters freedom as an abstract postulate, practical reason verifies its manifestation in moral and social action [cite: 1]. For Amin, reformist truth does not remain in theoretical isolation; it presses outward into social praxis [cite: 1]. This dynamic shifts women from passive objects of external influence to active agents of change [cite: 1].

From Amin's text, three cognitive metaphors emerge [cite: 1]:

1. **The Mind Is a Container / Thought Is an Interior Space:** Exemplified in his phrasing "a commanding space within my consciousness" [cite: 1]. This maps onto Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) structural container schema and intersects with classical Islamic philosophy—such as Ibn Sina's characterization of the mind as a depository of conceptual forms, and al-Ghazali's metaphor of the mind as a fortress besieged by competing thoughts [cite: 1].
2. **Ideas Are Living Organisms:** Abstract concepts receive animate attributes (crowding, prevailing, commanding) [cite: 1]. Ricoeur identifies this as ideas asserting themselves as living forces within consciousness [cite: 1]. It resonates with al-Jahiz's classical formulation of semantic forms as natural vegetation, and Ahmad Matlub's assertion that personifying abstract thought activates cognitive conceptualization [cite: 1].
3. **Reform Is Externalization (From Interior to Exterior):** Intellectual reform is conceptualized as the migration of ideas from private reflection into public deliberation [cite: 1]. As Ricoeur observed, language constitutes the shared space where internal thought enters communal existence [cite: 1].

Tahar al-Haddad takes this cognitive dynamic to a pragmatic dimension: transforming women from an "object of discourse" (a passive referent about whom decrees are pronounced) into an "agent of discourse" (an enunciating subject) [cite: 1]. This appears in his creative metaphor "the

infanticide of infanticide" (*wa'd al-wa'd*): "As for female infanticide... Islam buried it at the very inception of its legislation" (Al-Haddad, 1930) [cite: 1]. Here, metaphor ceases to mirror reality; it constructs social reality [cite: 1]. This formulation intersects with Judith Butler's performative theory of identity, which posits that subject positions are discursively generated through reiterated linguistic acts [cite: 1].

Al-Haddad's metaphor functions as a cognitive counter-metaphor [cite: 1]. Physical infanticide—the burial of female bodies—is transformed into a trope for structural disenfranchisement, which Islam decisively terminates [cite: 1]. As Abd al-Salam al-Masaddi observed, metaphor is not mere verbal encoding, but a cognitive vehicle for articulating what cannot be rendered literally [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad's discourse thus shifts from semantic representation to sociopolitical transformation, establishing women as full moral agents and partners in communal reform [cite: 1].

Section II: The Metaphorical Architecture of Gender and Education: Dismantling Delusion and Obscurantism

Education constitutes the core pillar in both reform projects, functioning as an essential prerequisite for resolving complex social impasses [cite: 1]. Both al-Haddad and Amin worked to shift historical stagnation surrounding female education in the Arab world, challenging traditional impediments that obstructed women's emancipation and collective advancement [cite: 1]. In their treatises, education was not conceptualized merely as instructional pedagogy; rather, it operated as an ideological instrument designed to deconstruct established cognitive paradigms and reconstruct female subjectivities across conceptual binaries: light versus darkness, and moral autonomy versus physical seclusion [cite: 1].

1. Metaphorizing Women's Intellectual Architecture: Between Banishing Superstition and Prolonged Intellectual Infancy

The reformist diagnosis of women's condition begins with an evaluation of cognitive structures shaped under enduring seclusion and ignorance [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad focuses on how the female mind languished under superstitious rituals that supplanted rational thought [cite: 1]:

"...Until her intellect is cultivated through logic and empirical discernment. Once knowledge illuminates her heart and her soul concerns itself with substantive matters, she will no longer look upon trivialities or regard them with reverence. Her mind will be purged of the belief that rain descends from a fountain beneath the Divine Throne, that thunder is an insensate angel, and that sorcery, sand divination, and dervish predictions of the unseen are indisputable truths that must be accepted." (Al-Haddad, 1930) [cite: 1]

Through cognitive linguistics, al-Haddad activates a container schema: *The Mind Is a Closed Container / Ignorance Is Material Superstition Occupying the Vessel* [cite: 1]. Purging distorted physical delusions from the mind requires filling it with logic and empirical knowledge [cite: 1]. Knowledge functions here as an ontological agent possessing the capacity to illuminate and liberate, allowing the individual to transcend cognitive dependency and achieve intellectual

autonomy [cite: 1].

Dismantling this cognitive residue is essential, given its direct governance over everyday practice [cite: 1]. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) observe, conceptual frameworks governing thought also govern concrete social interactions, structuring how humans experience reality [cite: 1]. When human consciousness is saturated with superstition, behavior becomes distorted [cite: 1]. This is illustrated by sociologists such as Abdelghani Mendib, who documented how archaic pagan rites—such as the worship of *Lalla Takerkoust*—migrated into local cultural practices [cite: 1].

Al-Haddad's formulation directly parallels Kant's Enlightenment critique of self-incurred tutelage (*Unmündigkeit*) [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad maintains that religious truth demands rational inquiry and freedom from ignorance to attain intellectual maturity [cite: 1]. This resonates with Kant's famous definition of enlightenment:

"Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why such a large part of mankind gladly remain minors for life, long after nature has freed them from external guidance... The guardians who have benevolently taken upon themselves the supervision of the majority of mankind (including the entire fair sex) make sure that the step to maturity is regarded as dangerous... It is difficult for each separate individual to work his way out of the immaturity which has become almost nature to him." (Kant, 1784) [cite: 1]

For al-Haddad, as for Kant, women are not deprived of reason due to biological incapacity; rather, patriarchal guardians systematically prohibited rational inquiry, acclimating women to tutelage [cite: 1]. To overcome this state, al-Haddad embraces the Kantian requirement of unrestricted public reason, affirming that logic is an essential prerequisite for moving women into the light of intellectual autonomy [cite: 1].

In parallel fashion, Qasim Amin conceptualizes the absence of education as the perpetuation of "prolonged childhood" (*al-fikr al-tufuli*), rendering women vulnerable to sensory and imaginative caprice without analytical capacity [cite: 1]:

"You find the child governed by whims, desires, and irrational antipathies... If he desires something, he employs deception, cunning, and dishonesty to achieve his end. Why is this? Because his intellect is feeble, his knowledge minimal, and his faculties have not attained the maturity required for logical deduction and comparative judgment... An uneducated woman is entirely analogous to this child." (Amin, 1899) [cite: 1]

Amin constructs a structural conceptual projection: *The Uneducated Woman's Mind Is a Child's Mind* [cite: 1]. This mapping exposes the analytical deficit imposed by institutional deprivation [cite: 1]. Deception and cunning are not innate feminine traits; they are the inevitable outcome of disabling logical faculties [cite: 1]. Amin transforms cognitive insufficiency from an alleged "biological nature"—as promoted by traditionalists—into an institutional, developmental deficiency curable through systematic schooling [cite: 1]. Just as a child gradually acquires reasoned deduction, the female intellect awakens from stagnation through disciplined education [cite: 1].

While al-Haddad attributes this cognitive impairment to patriarchal mythologies and traditionalist guardianship (mirroring Kant's critique of tutelage), Amin frames it as a developmental arrest akin to an extended childhood requiring pedagogical elevation to attain maturity and rational judgment

[cite: 1].

2. Fortress Metaphors and Rites of Passage: Knowledge Between Moral Sanctuary and the Dismantling of Seclusion

The moral question was the primary obstacle mobilized against female education within traditional Arab societies [cite: 1]. To dismantle this resistance, both thinkers deployed counter-metaphors that exposed the structures of bodily and psychological subjugation [cite: 1]. They challenged the fortress metaphor of "rites of passage" (*rites de passage*), which reduced feminine virtue to physical imprisonment as a sacred imperative for preserving collective honor [cite: 1].

Tahar al-Haddad forcefully undermines the notion that female modesty is contingent upon spatial confinement, offering in its place the metaphor of internal, rational rectitude [cite: 1]:

"We consider women's contemporary education an endorsement of licentiousness and a violation of the modesty erected upon the domestic walls of our homes. Thus, we have perpetually remained resistant to constructive reform... Our traditional disposition refuses women's instruction, a stance anchored deep in our souls out of a profound fear of freedom." (Al-Haddad, 1930) [cite: 1]

Al-Haddad deconstructs the spatial mapping: *Chastity = Mud Walls / Material Barriers* [cite: 1]. In traditional settings, the domestic home is conceptualized as a defensive fortress protecting the female body; outward movement and education are perceived as the demolition of this sanctuary [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad cognitively reframes chastity, transforming it from an imposed spatial state into an internal, conscious ethical disposition forged through education [cite: 1]. The community's apprehension is not genuine concern for virtue, but an acute "fear of freedom" (*la peur de la liberté*) and female autonomy [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad thus challenges patriarchal taboos and totemic attitudes (*tabou et totémisme*) that reduce virtue to spatial segregation [cite: 1].

Qasim Amin addresses a similar trope pervasive in traditionalist discourse: *Knowledge Is a Weapon in the Hands of a Malicious Creature* [cite: 1]. Traditionalists argued that educating women provides them with instruments of deceit to commit moral transgressions [cite: 1]. Amin exposes this rhetoric: "It has become ingrained in men's minds that a woman's education and her chastity cannot coexist. The ancients formulated endless narratives and absurd anecdotes regarding this, deducing woman's intellectual deficiency and her inherent propensity for deceit. They asserted that if educated, she would merely gain greater dexterity in cunning and surrender to base desires. We uncritically followed their example, believing that education arms her malicious nature with new weapons to commit moral ruin." (Amin, 1899) [cite: 1]

Amin deconstructs this patriarchal formulation: *Woman + Knowledge = Domestic Ruin* [cite: 1]. He advances a counter-metaphor wherein education serves as an empowering mechanism enabling women to manage the household with rational oversight [cite: 1]:

"As for the claim that education corrupts her morality, we categorically reject and condemn it. Education—especially when accompanied by moral cultivation—elevates woman, restores her dignity, completes her intellect, and enables her to reflect, contemplate, and exercise circumspection in her actions." (Amin, 1899) [cite: 1]

Cognitive and pragmatic analysis reveals how traditional discourse mobilized the *Knowledge as Weapon* metaphor as an appeal to fear (*appel à la peur*) to justify disenfranchising women [cite: 1]. Amin reverses this logic: education is not an instrument of malice, but an ethical filter that elevates behavior [cite: 1]. He exposes the fragility of an enforced modesty easily breached by superficial intermediaries (servants, peddlers, elderly neighbors), affirming that cultivated knowledge provides internal ethical discernment [cite: 1].

Traditional societies turned female education into a terrifying scarecrow (*épouvantail*), reflecting the isolation imposed on women's lived experience [cite: 1]. As Kant noted in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, all human knowledge begins with experience; sensory impressions provide the raw material that the understanding synthesizes into coherent judgment [cite: 1]. By denying women empirical and educational experience, traditional society crippled their analytical capacity [cite: 1]. Both thinkers ultimately reconstruct knowledge from a moral threat into a protective shield [cite: 1]. However, their deconstructive emphases differ: al-Haddad dismantles the fortresses of physical confinement (walls and segregation) to establish virtue anchored in individual conscience, while Amin confronts the mechanisms of psychological intimidation and obscurantism to demonstrate women's intellectual agency through moral and rational cultivation [cite: 1].

3. Metaphors of Consumerism and Superficial Modernization: Between Bodily Sacrifices and Cultural Veneer

Reformist critiques extended beyond combating ignorance to challenging superficial modernization and consumerist habits [cite: 1]. Both thinkers deployed metaphors condemning material and cultural triviality that degraded women's intellect [cite: 1].

Tahar al-Haddad critiques the consumerist fixation on physical adornment, where fortunes are spent on jewelry, cosmetics, and perfumes while institutional education is neglected [cite: 1]:

"Instead of striving to establish schools and educational institutes for our daughters through the expenditure of effort and resources—which we withhold here with extreme stinginess—we lavish enormous fortunes on varying women's wardrobes across transient fashions, draping them in precious jewels, and procuring lavish dyes, ointments, and perfumes. This has squandered the wealth of countless families, reducing them to abject poverty." (Al-Haddad, 1930) [cite: 1]

Al-Haddad formulates a ritual metaphor: *Consumerist Adornment = Sacrificial Offerings to Idols of Vanity* [cite: 1]. Women are reduced to objects of ephemeral visual gratification [cite: 1]. Capital is lavished on external commodification through jewelry and cosmetics, while society withholds investment from educational institutions [cite: 1]. This highlights how consumerism impoverishes families materially while perpetuating intellectual subordination [cite: 1].

Similarly, Qasim Amin delivers an incisive critique of superficial Westernization and trivial cultural consumption, employing the metaphor of superficial veneer to describe women who acquire modern accomplishments only for performative display and escapist fiction [cite: 1]:

"What some young women learn today is entirely inadequate. They learn reading and writing in Arabic and a foreign language, alongside rudimentary embroidery and music, yet they acquire no substantive knowledge of practical value. Such superficial accomplishments often augment their

vanity; a woman assumes that because she can say 'Bonjour' in French, she has surpassed her peers and elevated her intellect. She then disdains domestic responsibilities, spending her life reading fanciful tales that serve only to evoke transient illusions while she stares into the drifting smoke of her cigarette." (Amin, 1899) [cite: 1]

This scene encapsulates the conceptual metaphor: *Hybrid Modernization = Linguistic Ostentation and Imaginative Isolation* [cite: 1]. In its commodified expression, modern education does not emancipate the intellect; it traps the individual in superficial social pretension [cite: 1]. Amin sketches an archetype of the woman who relies on hollow linguistic markers to claim superiority while withdrawing into escapist fiction [cite: 1]. Cultural consumerism reduces education to an ornamental veneer lacking intellectual or ethical substance [cite: 1].

Both thinkers converge in exposing distorted modernization [cite: 1]. Al-Haddad critiques the commodification and decoration of the female body as an offering to superficial vanity, whereas Amin targets intellectual shallowness and hybrid European affectations detached from ethical responsibility [cite: 1]. Both advocate substantive intellectual empowerment over superficial display [cite: 1].

Section III: Mechanisms of Deconstruction and the Epistemological Matrix

The reformist projects of Amin and al-Haddad extended beyond proposing educational alternatives; they systematically engaged in deconstructing and reconstituting the symbolic structures that sustained female exclusion for centuries [cite: 1]. This section interrogates mechanisms of symbolic domination and discursive power through contemporary critical theory, culminating in an analytical matrix that delineates the epistemic and contextual variances between the Mashriqi and Maghribi projects [cite: 1].

1. Subverting Symbolic Domination and Discursive Authority: Bourdieu and Foucault

The deconstructive critique in al-Haddad and Amin destabilizes what Pierre Bourdieu termed symbolic domination (*la domination symbolique*)—an invisible form of power exercised through custom and tradition, misrecognized by its subjects as natural and self-evident [cite: 1]. In patriarchal contexts, this hegemony was instituted through rigid jurisprudential and social metaphors that framed women as lacking full legal and moral competence, thereby naturalizing bodily and psychological subordination [cite: 1].

Al-Haddad recognized that the primary obstacle to Tunisian women's emancipation was not solely juridical, but symbolic, embedded deep within the traditional *habitus* that viewed female autonomy as a direct threat to communal honor [cite: 1]. Consequently, he directed his critique toward deconstructing conventional social norms, demonstrating that female exclusion was the product of patriarchal cultural hermeneutics rather than immutable religious texts [cite: 1].

Amin's critique intersects with Michel Foucault's analysis of the will to knowledge and discursive regimes [cite: 1]. The traditional discourse that opposed female education under the banner of preserving modesty enacted what Foucault designated as procedures of exclusion and prohibition

(*les procédures d'exclusion*) to maintain authority over women's intellect [cite: 1]. In deconstructing the metaphor of "knowledge as a dangerous weapon," Amin demonstrates how patriarchal authority appropriated linguistic signification and deployed strategies of existential fear to discourage female learning, preserving male dominance and female dependency [cite: 1].

2. Analytical Modeling and Cognitive Dimensions of the Reformist Metaphors

To avoid reducing complex historical developments to mere linguistic ornamentation, the following analytical matrix synthesizes the contextual, ideological, and epistemological differences that structured the metaphorical discourses of the Mashriqi model (Qasim Amin) and the Maghribi model (Tahar al-Haddad) [cite: 1].

Epistemic Dimension	Qasim Amin's Discourse (Mashriq / Egypt)	Tahar al-Haddad's Discourse (Maghrib / Tunisia)
Conceptualization of Freedom	Open Space and Orientational Metaphors: Expressed through aphorisms such as "Freedom is the foundation of happiness," alongside metaphors of liberation from social captivity. Freedom is conceptualized as an unconstrained physical arena for mobility, intellectual exchange, and direct civilizational agency [cite: 1].	Teleological Justice / Internal Emancipation: Anchored in the metaphor of "unshackling" (<i>fakk al-'iqal</i>) and the assertion that "Islam is a revolution against antiquity." Emancipation is aligned with the core spirit of Islamic legislation, harmonizing individual rights with the overarching objectives of Sharia (<i>Maqasid</i>) [cite: 1].
Conceptualization of Progress	Continuous Linear Forward Movement: Embodied in the metaphor of "joining the caravan of civilized Western nations," conceiving reform as a step-by-step ascent on the ladder of modern advancement to cultivate civil consciousness [cite: 1].	Symbolic Resistance and Internal Reconstruction: Manifested in metaphors of architectural renewal and organic internal growth, keeping pace with historical development through revitalizing the Islamic heritage while purging traditional accretions [cite: 1].

Epistemic Dimension	Qasim Amin's Discourse (Mashriq / Egypt)	Tahar al-Haddad's Discourse (Maghrib / Tunisia)
Stance on Knowledge & Science	Deconstructing Weaponization Metaphors: Refuting the premise that "knowledge is a weapon for malice," presenting learning as a moral and rational filter that completes human intellect against behavioral corruption; deploying metaphors of illuminating light dispelling darkness [cite: 1].	Dismantling Customary Hegemony (Fortress Chastity): Critiquing physical modesty predicated on domestic confinement, rigorously distinguishing between immutable religion and customary conventions; replacing physical walls with autonomous conscience and rational enlightenment [cite: 1].
The Status of Woman	From Wardship to Educated Subject: Deconstructing representations of women as mere possessions, perpetual children, or captives of seclusion; emphasizing educational empowerment to cultivate capable partners in modern family building [cite: 1].	From Passive Object to Enunciating Legal Agent: Revoking traditional disqualification through tropes like "the infanticide of infanticide," establishing female subjectivity as an active, equal partner in civic and religious life [cite: 1].
Ideological & Argumentative Grounding	Progressive National-Liberal Modernism: Grounded in Western rationalism, social utilitarianism, and gradual socio-cultural reform regarding veil and educational practices [cite: 1].	Reformist Zaytuni Teleological Jurisprudence: Anchored in <i>Maqasid al-Shari'a</i> , independent legal reasoning (<i>ijtihad</i>), strict demarcation between immutable principles and transient historical jurisprudence, and the egalitarian spirit of foundational Islamic sources [cite: 1].

3. Societal Context and the Ethical Matrix of Reformist Discourse

The metaphorical strategies mobilized by these reformers—most notably al-Haddad in Tunisia—were intrinsically linked to their sociopolitical contexts [cite: 1]. Comprehending metaphors of seclusion and "fortress chastity" necessitates analyzing underlying social structures [cite: 1]. In his analysis of Tunisian social psychology, Moncef Ouannes identifies acute symbolic and verbal friction within public spaces, which compelled traditional societies to adopt defensive measures [cite: 1]. In this milieu, the veil functioned within the social imaginary as something far deeper than a religious symbol; it operated as an adaptive social strategy to secure bodily integrity and avoid harassment in public spaces dominated by male self-assertion [cite: 1].

Ouannes attributes the entrenchment of these protective codes to a deficit of enlightened reformers capable of guiding society away from superstition and superficial cultural imitation [cite: 1]. He further underscores the vulnerability of traditional mindsets that favor uncritical imitation over critical inquiry, gossip over empirical verification, and rumor over rigorous reflection [cite: 1]. Ethical conduct and the conceptual metaphors that orient it remain inseparable from interactive human relations [cite: 1]. As John Dewey (1932) emphasized in his ethical philosophy, moral realities arise directly from the active interrelations of individuals within a shared community [cite: 1]. Accordingly, the cognitive enlightenment spearheaded by Amin and al-Haddad was not an abstract conceptual exercise [cite: 1]. Rather, it represented an intentional effort to restructure active relational bonds, liberating collective consciousness from uncritical conformity and advancing an operational rationality that redefines freedom, progress, and women's roles within the public sphere [cite: 1].

4. Horizons of Epistemic Complementarity and Civilizational Renaissance

This comparative study demonstrates that conceptual metaphor in the works of Qasim Amin and Tahar al-Haddad was not mere rhetorical decoration; it operated as an integrated cognitive apparatus structuring reality, directing argumentative strategies, and reshaping societal attitudes toward women's rights [cite: 1].

The cultural-cognitive paradigm reveals clear epistemic variations shaped by distinct geopolitical contexts [cite: 1]. While Qasim Amin formulated his thought within an Egyptian environment open to liberal modernism—conceptualizing freedom as open space and progress as linear advancement while dismantling obscurantist intimidation—Tahar al-Haddad operated from within the historic Zaytuna milieu, deconstructing symbolic norms through counter-metaphors of resistance rooted in Islamic teleological jurisprudence [cite: 1]. Through formulations such as "the infanticide of infanticide" and full human partnership, al-Haddad subverted patriarchal dominance from within Islamic hermeneutics [cite: 1].

This epistemic divergence did not constitute a conceptual fragmentation; rather, it established a complementary framework that enriched modern Arab reformism [cite: 1]. Qasim Amin opened educational and civic pathways toward individual emancipation, while Tahar al-Haddad grounded gender egalitarianism within Islamic jurisprudence, establishing women as co-agents in renewing

communal civilizational life [cite: 1]. Together, they confirm that modern Arab gender discourse was never subordinated to a monologic paradigm [cite: 1]. Instead, it was forged across plural, complementary cognitive mappings reflecting the rich cultural diversity of the Arab-Islamic world [cite: 1]. These insights remain vital for contemporary dialogues on social justice, civilizational renewal, and sustainable human emancipation [cite: 1].

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that conceptual metaphor in Qasim Amin's *The Liberation of Woman* and Tahar al-Haddad's *Our Woman in Sharia and Society* operated as a foundational cognitive matrix structuring representations of freedom, progress, and female subjectivity, while orienting their reformist argumentation [cite: 1].

The cultural-cognitive framework illuminates distinct regional and ideological orientations [cite: 1]. Qasim Amin deployed spatial metaphors of linear movement and open horizons, reflecting Mashriqi modernization and exposing the scarecrow of "knowledge as a dangerous weapon" [cite: 1]. Tahar al-Haddad constructed counter-metaphors of resistance rooted in enlightened Zaytuni jurisprudence, employing metaphors such as "I am the father of daughters" and "the infanticide of infanticide" to upend traditional disenfranchisement and transform women from silent discursive objects into active partners in civic and moral agency [cite: 1].

This comparative reading provides a vital framework for contemporary inquiries into civilizational emancipation [cite: 1]. The epistemic variations between Amin and al-Haddad did not represent an epistemological impasse, but an enriching complementarity [cite: 1]. Amin articulated a liberal, pedagogical trajectory toward individual empowerment, while al-Haddad anchored reform within Islamic legal philosophy [cite: 1]. Together, they embody an authentic model of Arab enlightenment that neither repudiates cultural heritage nor dismisses modernity, affirming that Arab gender discourses are inherently plural and multifaceted [cite: 1].

Ultimately, this study does not seek to establish the superiority of one project over the other, but to delineate the distinct metaphorical architectures through which each formulated its vision of gender, freedom, and progress [cite: 1]. Amin favored metaphors of spatial mobility, unhindered momentum, and civic empowerment, whereas al-Haddad mobilized metaphors of symbolic resistance and hermeneutical reinterpretation from within Islamic tradition [cite: 1]. The primary value of this comparative investigation lies in demonstrating that women's reform in modern Arab thought was navigated across diverse cognitive architectures, the comprehension of which remains essential for understanding the ongoing trajectories of Arab reformist discourse [cite: 1].

References

- Al-Haddad, T. (1930). *Imra'atuna fi al-shari'a wa al-mujtama'* [Our woman in Sharia and society]. Imprimerie Al-Nahda.
- Al-Jahiz, A. U. (1965). *Al-Bayan wa al-tabyin* [The book of eloquence and demonstration] (A. S. Harun, Ed.; 4 vols.). Dar al-Jil.

- Al-Masaddi, A. (1982). *Al-Uslubiyya wa al-uslub* [Stylistics and style]. Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid.
- Amin, Q. (1899). *Tahrir al-mar'a* [The liberation of woman]. Matba'at al-Tarraqi.
- Amin, Q. (1900). *Al-Mar'a al-jadida* [The new woman]. Matba'at al-Sha'b.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *La domination masculine* [Masculine domination]. Éditions du Seuil.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1932). *Ethics* (Rev. ed.). Henry Holt and Company.
- Foucault, M. (1971). *L'ordre du discours* [The order of discourse]. Gallimard.
- Hourani, A. (1962). *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798–1939*. Oxford University Press.
- Kant, I. (1784). Answering the question: What is enlightenment? (*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*). *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 4(12), 481–494.
- Kant, I. (1788). *Critique of practical reason (Kritik der praktischen Vernunft)*. Johann Friedrich Hartknoch.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Matlub, A. (1980). *Al-Balagha al-tatbiqiyya* [Applied rhetoric]. Dar al-Fikr.
- Mendib, A. (2006). *Al-Din wa al-mujtama': Dirasa susyulujiyya li al-tadayyun bi al-Maghrib* [Religion and society: A sociological study of religious practice in Morocco]. Afrique Orient.
- Ouannes, M. (2009). *Al-Shakhsiyya al-tunisiyya: Muhawala fi fahm al-shakhsiyya al-qaumiyya* [The Tunisian personality: An essay on understanding national identity]. Dar Ceres.
- Ricoeur, P. (1975). *La métaphore vive* [The rule of metaphor]. Éditions du Seuil.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984). *Time and narrative* (K. McLaughlin & D. Pellauer, Trans.; Vol. 1). University of Chicago Press.