Translation is not merely an act of transferring information, but a process of knowledge production. Thus, the idea of translating the *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC)* is an extension of *EWIC* itself, being a project conscious of the importance of knowledge production in the field of gender and women’s studies and Islamic cultures. Suad Joseph, the general editor of *EWIC*, expresses in her introduction the editorial board’s awareness of the significance and consequences of producing encyclopedic knowledge about women and Islamic cultures. *EWIC* was originally published in English with the aim of presenting state-of-the-art research in gender and women’s studies and Islamic cultures to an English-speaking readership. Moreover, the authors taking part in the production of *EWIC* are a group of specialized researchers in this area, who, though coming from various cultural backgrounds and disciplines, share an interest in women’s studies and specialize in different parts of the world dominated by Islamic cultures. The project attempts to define and present examples of specialized and crucial studies in this field, with the prospect of producing knowledge and encouraging novel and continuous research.

The *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC)* is an ongoing seven-volume interdisciplinary and cross-cultural project. Joseph, professor of anthropology at the University of California, Davis, worked with an advisory board of scholars and academics specialized in women’s studies and Islamic societies, as well as a group of associate editors, in addition to the contributors. The associate editors were each responsible for a specific region: Afsaneh Najmabadi (Turkey, Iran, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia as far as the borders of Mongolia, and the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union), Julie Peteet and Seteney Shami (the Arab countries in the Gulf, Eastern Mediterranean, and North
Africa, as well as Israel, Andalusian Spain, and Europe under the Ottoman Empire), Jacqueline Siapno (China, Mongolia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Asian Pacific and Australia), and Jane I. Smith (Western Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas). Volume 1 alone includes forty-six thematic entries and twenty-two disciplinary entries, created by specialists—who, with very few exceptions, are women academics affiliated with American and British universities (Joseph 2003, xxi–xlix).

THE TRANSLATION OF EWIC INTO ARABIC

The idea of translating this encyclopedia into other languages, starting with Arabic, highlights several points. First, it reveals the interest held by the editorial board and the publishing house in the wide dissemination of this work, beyond the boundaries of an English-speaking readership, to the extent of providing a free online Arabic edition. Even given the worldwide lack of equality in access to the Internet, the initiative of providing *EWIC* for free to Arabic-speaking researchers and scholars is in itself a step that can only be appreciated and valued by those living in the Arab world who experience or recognize the inability of most academic institutions to provide such a resource via their institutions. The requirements of annual subscription fees and Internet connection costs exceed the capacities of many (if not most) researchers and academics in the Arab world. We hope that the online edition is a step preceding a low-cost print edition of *EWIC* in Arabic.

Second, beginning with Arabic in the project of translating the encyclopedia grows out of an awareness of Arab researchers’ need for access to this work, in view of the fact that English, in the Arab world, is a language known by only a small number of researchers, and perfected by an even smaller minority, as the majority’s educational backgrounds are Arabic based. Therefore, an Arabic version of *EWIC* is, for many (if not most) readers, their only means of access to state-of-the-art studies and research in the fields of women’s and Islamic cultures. This gains more value as we consider the great importance of getting acquainted with the research methodologies and paradigms as well as the sources introduced and listed in this encyclopedia.

Third, the choice by the *EWIC* editorial board of the Women and Memory Forum (WMF) as the group to supervise the translation is a
continuation of the *EWIC* vision regarding the production of knowledge about women and Islamic cultures. For us at WMF, the project of translating *EWIC* (to create the volume I call *EWIC Arabic*) coincides with our efforts to produce and disseminate knowledge in Arabic to both specialized researchers and the general public, concerning women, history, and culture, in terms of personal experiences, empirical expertise, and theoretical knowledge. This translation thus extends the aims of *EWIC* itself, as it expands its accessibility to a larger number of specialized researchers and scholars living in the Arab world, possibly leading to an activation of research in cultural and women’s studies in Arabic, through introducing the methodologies, paradigms, and sources presented in *EWIC*, and hence spurring further epistemological interaction, through processes of continuity or contestation as well as other forms of intellectual and academic interaction.

In what follows, I begin by presenting some theoretical concerns related to translation, then discuss the problematics of translating an encyclopedic work of the size and with the content of *EWIC*. I then give examples of the main issues that surfaced during translation process. In the context of encyclopedic knowledge production, I will look at the translation process and outcome theoretically, in the light of translation studies, in an attempt to tackle some of the problematics of translating *EWIC*, in terms of transferring and hence producing encyclopedic knowledge about women and Islamic cultures in Arabic.

**THEORETICAL CONCERNS AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES**

Accurate translation of a specialized text requires the translator to have extensive specialized knowledge. This can prove difficult when translation in general continues to be governed more by professionalism than by specialization. Lawrence Venuti discusses the idea of “simpatico translation,” by which he refers to an affinity between author and translator: “The translator should not merely get along with the author, not merely find him [or her] likeable; there should also be an identity between them” (1995, 275, 273). Immanuel Wallerstein, in his article on the problems of translating concepts in the social sciences, moves beyond “affinity” and requires specialization:

The translator must be someone not merely skilled in translation as a generalized technique but familiar with the literature of the
subfield over a long period of time, and preferably someone with a direct interest in the material under discussion in the text. This ideal will never be realized until we move towards the creation of a body of translators specialized in the social sciences and trained in both translation techniques and social science. (1981, 89)

Wallerstein further explains the “appalling” results of translation in the social sciences caused by the lack of specialization. The same applies to the translation into Arabic of texts in gender and women’s studies.

It was a challenge to identify translators with knowledge and interest in cultural and women’s studies. Instead of preparing a list of well-known professional translators, a twofold procedure was carried out: we compiled one list of specialized researchers in cultural studies and women’s studies who are proficient in both English and Arabic and another list of professional translators with experience and an interest in translating texts on women, history, and culture. Then the matching process between articles and translators began.

Translation theory points out the general misconception of translation is, as Susan Bassnett describes, “as a secondary activity, as a ‘mechanical’ rather than a ‘creative’ process” (1998, 2). Bassnett further explains the “hegemonic distinctions between writing and translating” that lead to a general condition in which the translators become “invisible beings whose literary skills are obliterated” (2006, 173). At the same time, in a conversation between Andrew Chesterman (a theorist) and Emma Wagner (a professional), they point out that the result of a translation project is supposed to not reveal the translator: “If readers suspect at any point that they are reading a translation, then there must be something wrong with it”; it is either a bad translation or a translation of a translated text (2002, 29). In this sense, translation theory refers to the translator’s implied “invisibility,” as traditional translation valorizes the transparency of the translated text, in which the translator remains invisible, while the author retains prominence. According to this trend, the more the text seems to be original, and the less it betrays the translator’s presence, the higher it is ranked. Again Venuti explains “the illusion of transparency”:

The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator’s effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning.
What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator’s crucial intervention in the foreign text. The more fluent the translation, the invisible the translator, and presumably the more visible the writer or the meaning of the foreign text. (1995, 1–2)

Looking at the translator’s invisibility through a feminist lens, invisibility becomes unacceptable, since feminism, in theory and practice, is concerned with restoring women from a history of marginalization, silencing, and obscurity. It is therefore self-evident that in the translation of *EWIC*, and any translation carried out by a feminist, there would be a consciousness of the dynamics leading to the subordination of the translator; and to accommodate agency, there would even be a strategic acknowledgment of the role of the translator, as well as his or her being given space for overt self-expression.

In addition to the critique of invisibility, there are other factors to consider: the past few decades have witnessed further serious revision and critique, as deconstruction and postmodernism gave rise to the idea of translation as rewriting, translation as representation, and translation as interpretation. Stephen Davis Ross, for instance, underscores the role of the translator in his or her involvement in selection and judgment during the translation process, and results that reflect representation rather than synonymity and equivalence (1981, 14–18). Moreover, selection and representation suggest the prevalence of interpretation, which is by definition subjective and ideological (Tymoczko 1999, 24), and it is in this sense both a skill and an art (Straight 1991, 48). Being the translation editor of *EWIC Arabic*, I therefore consciously and intentionally included a “Note on Translation” to offer an explanation of the process that governed the selection of equivalents in the translation of gender-related terminology.

Taking into consideration the nature of the translated text, it becomes clear that the translation of *EWIC* is not merely an effort to transfer the text of this encyclopedia from the English language into the Arabic, but also an attempt to highlight dimensions related to the linguistic and cultural contexts in the transference of knowledge and the concomitant process of the production of knowledge in Arabic. In her introduction to *EWIC*, Suad Joseph refers to the characteristic of encyclopedias, seeing these compilations as representing “a particular and peculiar form of
knowledge” and noting their tendency “to stabilize concepts.” She adds that such “presumptions of encyclopedic knowledge production were problematic” to the editors of \textit{EWIC}, who “wanted to destabilize concepts, complicate ideas, document the ‘fuzziness’ of reality” (2003, xxiv). The translation itself follows a similar position, reflected in the strategies emerging from \textit{EWIC Arabic}.

Given these theoretical concerns, and in an attempt to foreground the translation process as well as to avoid the stabilization of concepts in Arabic, and because there has been a team of translators working on \textit{EWIC Arabic}, two major translation strategies were adopted in the resulting translation. First, \textit{EWIC Arabic} intentionally seeks to destabilize concepts through maintaining a sense of variety in the translation of certain terms and concepts—a feature that was consciously kept present throughout the revision and editing processes as long as it provided a degree of flexibility that would prevent stabilizing concepts, while at the same time producing a translation that reflects the philosophy governing the original text. Yet sometimes terms and words had to be unified on the basis of the role of \textit{EWIC Arabic} in knowledge production and the formulation of Arabic terms of expression for this knowledge.

The other general strategy underlying the translation has to do with shattering the “illusion of transparency” by means of relying on several translators (to create a stylistic variety mirroring the differences created in \textit{EWIC} by virtue of its large body of contributors). Moreover, as mentioned above, the translation process was further highlighted through the inclusion of the note on translation at the beginning of \textit{EWIC Arabic}, so as to give due credit to the translation process and involve the readers in the translation decisions. And finally, a glossary was added at the end, not with the intention of stabilizing terms, but as a means of presenting the outcome of the translators’ efforts in finding and coining “equivalent” terms to those in the original text. It is, to my knowledge, the first such English-Arabic glossary of gender-related terms prepared in the epistemological framework of cultural studies and women’s studies.

\textbf{Problematics of Translating \textit{EWIC}}

As writing is in itself a “translation” of thought and culture, and involves its transference from the realm of intellectual awareness and cultural experience to the world of letters and words, so too the process of translation is in itself a “rewriting” that involves transferring written thought and
culture into another culture-bound language. Therefore, translation theories refer to several modes of translation, including free, literal, and explanatory translations. There are, furthermore, two main methods of translation, which Tymoczko applies to the postcolonial context:

In translation studies a distinction is often made between “bringing the text to the audience” and “bringing the audience to the text.” The same type of distinction can be projected with respect to postcolonial writing: some texts make more severe demands on the audience, requiring the audience to conform to the beliefs, customs, language and literary formalism of the source culture, while other works conform more to the dominant audience’s cultural, linguistic and literary expectations. (1999, 29–30)

In both cases, translation theory goes hand in hand with reception theory, in terms of sensitivity to the readers’ cultural, social, political, and other backgrounds. Thus, the translator’s starting point is the “source text,” which is subjected to linguistic analysis hand in hand with sensitivity to its cultural nuances, followed by its transference to another language—a process requiring a re-creation of a linguistic and cultural text, necessitating a great extent of linguistic competence together with knowledge and creativity, while at the same time restricted by limitations that guarantee production of a translation that is as close as possible to the original text in style, form, and content. Translation is founded on both guidelines and vision, combining knowledge, craft and art.

*EWIC Arabic* is not merely a project that can be studied from the perspective of translation studies alone, but involves gender and women’s studies as well as cultural studies. It is a translation project insofar as it expresses linguistic sensitivity and reveals an awareness of the major trends in translation theory that generate its translation strategies. However, the choices made in this process are closely linked to a deep feminist consciousness of the gender power relations governing women’s lives and Islamic cultures, as expressed in life and through language. And finally, the translation of *EWIC* emerges as a cultural project—a work inflected by and reflecting the powers of representation, interpretation, and knowledge production. I will now give examples of the problematics of translating *EWIC* into Arabic, manifesting the intersection of language, feminism, and power politics in producing knowledge about women.
The Title

I consider first the translation of the title, *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, and particularly the word “women.” “Women” appears in the English title in the plural form, yet the fact that it is translated into the plural form in Arabic is not a matter of literal translation. When applying the common translation of “women” from English into Arabic, the use of the singular form in Arabic might be required, as a standard feature of the language, in which the singular is often used in reference to a general group. For example, “International Women’s Day,” “Women’s Rights” and “Arab Women” would be translated into the Arabic equivalents of “Yawm al-Mar’a al-lam,” “Huq q al-Mar’a,” and “Al-Mar’a al-‘Arabiyya,” respectively. The same applies to other concepts and formulas taken from the English, and consequently the title of the encyclopedia should logically be translated using the singular form in Arabic. Yet an understanding of the distinction between the concepts of “woman” and “women” in feminist theory, taking into account the emphasis on cultural diversity and plurality among women instead of dealing with “women” as a monolithic term and a singular entity, implies an understanding of cultural nuances and theoretical backgrounds, which cross the boundaries of word and text, almost forcing the translator into using the plural form in Arabic, with all the epistemological meanings and implications connecting the text to feminist discourse and feminist theory. This example reveals the importance of recognizing the significance of specific words during translation and shows that the translation of many words is not a mechanical process but requires a good deal of reflection, consideration, and selection.

Thus, the use of the word “women” in the title of *EWIC Arabic* is not a matter of literal translation of the English word, but is a linguistic and cultural translation and is in itself a contribution to the production of knowledge in Arabic through a stress on the significance of differentiating between “woman” and “women” in reference to a plural concept. Similarly, “women’s studies” as the name of a discipline dealing with the theories and praxis of studies about women based on feminist theory, is translated here as the plural “al-Dir s t al-Nis ’iyya,” instead of the phrase more commonly used in Arabic, in the singular form, “Dir s t al-Mar’a.” This choice, again, derives from the singular form’s implications that perpetuate an understanding of women within a monolithic formula instead
of suggesting the variety of women’s experiences and the multiplicity of women’s identities.

Translating “Gender”
Standard English-Arabic dictionaries (such as Al-Mughni al-Kabir [1998] and Al-Awuwal [n.d.b.]) limit the translation of “gender” to al-jins, which is the equivalent of “sex” in reference to the biological categories of male/female, or “gender” in the linguistic sense of masculine/feminine forms. The Academy of the Arabic Language (n.d.a.), regarded as the highest authority in translation and coinage of new terminology in Arabic, translates “gender” as al-jins and al-naw’. “Gender” translated as al-jins is further explained as referring to the state of an individual in terms of male and female; whereas al-naw’ is defined as “a term which has become common recently instead of sex in cultural anthropology. It is used to distinguish between males and females, and it combines both biological and cultural characteristics as being the foundations or factors determining the social status of the male and female, as well as the role each of them plays in the society under study.” Yet in practice, the translation of the term “gender” into Arabic carries more variety, in itself as much as in its derivative forms. The development of the term in women’s studies and Western feminism, with all its sociocultural implications, was reflected in its translation into Arabic with the increase in its usage in Arabic writings and translations since the 1990s.

An early common translation of the word “gender” was an explanatory one—al-naw’ al-ijtim’, meaning “social gender,” soon simplified as al-naw’ in the fields of development and social sciences—and became widely used after extensive translation of developmental documents and material under the auspices of international development organizations. In the context of cultural studies, another explanatory translation appeared as “the sociocultural construction of the sexes” and was used by prominent feminist scholars, such as Hoda Elsadda, in their writings in Arabic. By contrast, with the growing understanding of its meanings and implications, making the term self-explanatory, the journal Alif proposes al-jun sa as a translation of “gender” (“Editorial” 1999). Al-jun sa was created in an attempt to move beyond the search for an equivalent meaning of “gender” and into the process of coining the term al-jun sa by deriving it from the Arabic root (j n s), a parallel with the terms al-thuk ra (masculinity) and
al-‘un tha (femininity). The new term was seen as being open to further development. However, al-jun sa has not received general acceptance since its introduction in Alif. Meanwhile, we notice that the word al-jender (gender) is being increasingly used, now found frequently in Arabic writings and enjoying derivational flexibility through the application of Arabic grammatical rules to the root (j n d r).

Consequently, it was inevitable during the production of EWIC Arabic that the issue of translating “gender” would arise. Looking back at the history of the translation of the term into Arabic it becomes evident that the word al-naw’ does not carry the cultural connotations or the feminist dimensions that are essential to the term. I also claim that because of the extent and constantly repeated usage of this translation in development literature and some sociological writings, the word al-naw’ carries developmental connotations when used, for instance, in literary or political contexts. However, for a person such as myself, coming from a background of literary studies, the term al-naw’ initially denotes “genre” rather than “gender.” I therefore consider it too limited and not an appropriate equivalent to the notion of “gender.” Concerning the explanatory phrase “the socio-cultural construction of the sexes,” it is obvious to me that it stresses the limitations prevalent in al-naw,’ which required an explanatory translation when using the term “gender” in contexts other than a developmental one, and particularly in the field of cultural studies.

Now, with the widespread use of the concept of gender in Arabic, and the fact that it has become self-explanatory to the majority of specialized readers, I find it logical to use the word “gender” transliterated in Arabic, because of its cultural and epistemological connotations and implications, particularly when used within a feminist discourse. Al-jender is therefore used in EWIC Arabic as a translation of the same word in English, not as an easy way out, but based on a recognition of the specificity of the term—its history, meanings, connotations, and implications. The word “gender” is among the most problematic terms in Arabic translation—a complexity intensified by the fact that it is often understood in the Arabic sociocultural context as a foreign concept; and since it implies the empowerment of women, it is looked upon with skepticism, if not rejected altogether. Thus the Arabic translation of the word “gender” mainly appears in feminist and development contexts, and the Arabic equivalent is not yet well-defined. Arabic seems still to be in the process
of experimentation with the translation of “gender”; so as part of this experimentation, and with the hope of reaching a comfortable equivalent of the word in Arabic, I, as the translation editor, was given the right, by WMF, to take the responsibility of, and for, selecting the translation of “gender” in EWIC Arabic. Again, whenever the issue was raised with the translators, they provided their own suggestions, but accepted my final decision as translation editor. It is a choice for which I consider myself fully responsible.

This decision was encouraged by the fact that Arabic has always assimilated and appropriated words from other languages (for example the word al-firdaws comes from “paradise”) and there are modern examples of foreign words being easily Arabicized (for example: dmoqr tiya and lber liya) without sensitivity and even being subjected to Arabic morphological and syntactical rules. However, the word al-jender does not appear here in its derivational forms because they have not been yet widely used in Arabic; the aim in EWIC Arabic is to suggest its use rather than insist on its derivatives. It is through the articles appearing in EWIC Arabic that an attempt is made to promote the use of the word al-jender as an Arabic translation of the English word (and notion of) “gender,” instead of equivalent and explanatory translations, which have been still used here in the sentences and contexts using “gender” in its derivative forms.

Explanatory Translation
Unlike the term “gender,” which does not seem to require explanation in specialized writings, we faced a term for which we could not but use an explanatory translation. Seham Abdel-Salam and Aida Seif el-Dawla, in two of the articles they were translating, faced the term “queer” in relation to specific sexual individual and group identities. Although the word “queer” (kwir) has started appearing in Arabic on certain Web sites, it remains unknown to the vast majority of the public; hence the demand for an explanatory translation of the concept, which had not developed with its sexual and cultural connotations up to the 1990s.

The word “queer” appears in volume 1 of EWIC in two entries: Nadine Naber’s “North America: Early Twentieth Century to Present” and Frédéric Lagrange’s “Sexualities and Queer Studies,” translated by Aida Seif el-Dawla and Seham Abdel-Salam, respectively. Aida and Seham involved me in the problem facing them in the translation of this term, for which there does not yet exist in Arabic an accurate equivalent
that is reflective of its gender and political dimensions. So far, when not using a transliteration of “queer,” the word is usually mistranslated in terms of either the judgmental notion of “deviance” (shudhudh) or through the misguided oversimplification in “gays and lesbians” (mithliyyun wa mithliyyat). Aida, Seham, and I worked on a translation of “queer”; during our discussions and our endeavors to come up with the closest possible translation, Aida suggested the use of the phrase al-hawiyīt al-jinsiya al-līnamatiya, more or less equivalent to “atypical sexual identities.”

The significance of this formulation, at this stage of translation, lies in translating the term into a value-free explanatory equivalent; and the focus was therefore placed on a sexual identity and its reference particularly to a specific atypical identity. As we put forward this explanatory translation of “queer,” we are well aware of its shortcoming in highlighting a gender identity (“gender” being already a problematic term in its translation into Arabic). Nevertheless, with the current absence of an equivalent of “queer” in Arabic, we hope that perhaps with an increasing interest in tackling and writing about this issue in Arabic in the years to come, translation alternatives will appear, either turning the word “queer” into a familiar term in Arabic, or using shorter derivative forms (such as al-līnamatiya” and so on).

Addition

One example of conscious addition can be found in the translation of nouns from English into Arabic. In English, nouns as such are not marked as masculine or feminine—unlike proper names and pronouns. Hence the noun “researcher” in English is not restricted to a particular gender but is applied to both the feminine and masculine. The predominant translation of “researcher” into Arabic is bīhith, which is limited, and excludes the feminine, dismissing the possibility of the English noun’s reference to bīhitha. This could not be ignored in an encyclopedia based on feminist theories and feeding into women’s studies. Therefore, such nouns appear in EWIC Arabic in phrases that include the nouns in a conjunction of the feminine and masculine forms (for example, al-bīhith wal-bīhitha or al-mutarjima wal-mutarjim), following the grammatical rules of Arabic, except of course in cases where a noun clearly refers to the masculine or feminine through concrete qualifiers (proper nouns or pronouns).

The issue acquires more complexity in the case of the plural form, as
according to Arabic grammar, the noun in masculine plural form can include both men and women. We chose not to abide by the rule, at the same time not to break it; hence the translation of, for instance, “researchers” as “al-bīhithīn wal-bīhithīt.” Here, the addition in Arabic of the noun in feminine form expresses an ideological stance, stressing equality between men and women and reflecting EWIC’s feminist discourse. Apart from the linguistic accuracy in translation, the repetition of Arabic phrases, which include both feminine and masculine forms, is an attempt on our part to establish the use of conjunction, moving toward a linguistic balance that reflects a feminist position in form and content.

**CONCLUSION**

If the act of translation refers, indirectly, to the existing imbalance in access to and production of knowledge, then the process of translating EWIC is a form of resistance to this inequality and an attempt at spreading specialized knowledge by presenting the methodologies, paradigms, and sources related to women’s studies and Islamic cultures, with the aim of encouraging interaction and propagating further research in Arabic. Translation is also a process of knowledge production in Arabic, particularly since it involves the work of a group of researchers and scholars specialized in Islamic cultures intersecting with Arabic culture/s.

In this sense, I view translation as a political act that seeks to spread knowledge and prevent the monopolization of access to and production of knowledge. Moreover, providing researchers and scholars in the Arab region with access to EWIC allows for more balance in making the methodologies, paradigms, and sources used by Western-based scholars available to Arab-based researchers and scholars, who can thus combine their own experiences, methodologies, and sources with those presented in EWIC. And finally, the role of translation carried out by the Women and Memory Forum in Egypt goes hand in hand with our political role in resisting epistemological hegemony and empowering Arab women. This is achieved here through translation, which creates a discourse in its own right, and through the production of knowledge in Arabic on the basis of feminist consciousness.

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NOTES

1. EWIC includes six volumes: vol. 1, Methodologies, Paradigms and Sources (2003; translated into Arabic); vol. 2, Family, Law and Politics (2005); vol. 3, Family, Body, Sexuality, and Health (2006); vol. 4, Economics, Education, Mobility, and Space; vol. 5, Practices, Interpretations, and Representations; and vol. 6, Supplement and Index (vols. 4–6 forthcoming).


2. The Women and Memory Forum (WMF) is an Egyptian research center, registered as a nonprofit nongovernmental organization, concerned with the study of women in Egyptian and Arab history. The founding members are a group of Egyptian women academics, who seek to combine research with activism. The main WMF projects include the Archive of Voices (women’s biography project); Memory Papers (published studies); Storytelling (re/writing fairytales from a feminist perspective); Translation Project; and working toward the establishment of a specialized library and documentation center. The Translation Project currently involves the production of seven readers in Arabic on gender and feminism. For more information on the Women and Memory Forum, see http://www.womenandmemory.org.

3. I am focusing my discussion here on the translation of the word “women.” The translation process problematizes the term “women” versus “woman,” while it accepts and retains the original usage of the phrase “women and Islamic cultures.” In her elaborate introduction to vol. 1 of EWIC, Suad Joseph mentions that the initial title of this project was Encyclopedia of Women in the Muslim World. Although she does not explain the reasoning behind the change of title, Women and Islamic Cultures proves more inclusive, as it involves women in relation to Islamic cultures in different parts of the world (including non-Muslim countries). http://www.arabicacademy.org.eg/FrontEnd/SearchResult.aspx?key=gender.

4. In her article “Translating Gender,” Samia Mehrez (2007) explores the derivative process of al-Junis and promotes its usage in Arabic as a replacement to all other alternatives.

5. In his comprehensive recent study of Arab sexual identity politics, Joseph Massad (2007) refers to the Arab versions and translations of identities such as gays, lesbians, and transvestites. However, he does not tackle the “queer” identity, nor does he address the forms of existence (or absence) of its cultural equivalent in the Arab world or the Arabic language.

6. Al-hawiyt al-jinsiya al-līnamatiya is a phrase combined of three words: al-hawiyt, which means “identities”; al-jinsiya, which can be roughly translated as “sexual;” and al-līnamatiya, which means “atypical.” It is worth noting that al-jinsiya is derived from the Arabic word jins, which carries old and new meanings, including “sex,” “biological sex,” “national origin,” and “type” or “kind,” which are in turn derived originally from the Greek genos—the origin of the English “gender.” For more on the cultural history of the word jins and its derivatives in Arabic, see, for example, Massad 2007, 171–72.
WORKS CITED