On the ground

New directions in Middle East and North African studies

Edited by **BRIAN T. EDWARDS**

A Northwestern University in Qatar symposium

On the ground

New directions in Middle East and North African studies

On the ground

New directions in Middle East and North African studies

Edited by **BRIAN T. EDWARDS**

Foreword by **EVERETTE DENNIS**

A Northwestern University in Qatar symposium

NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY
IN QATAR

First published by Northwestern University in Qatar and Akkadia Press, 2014

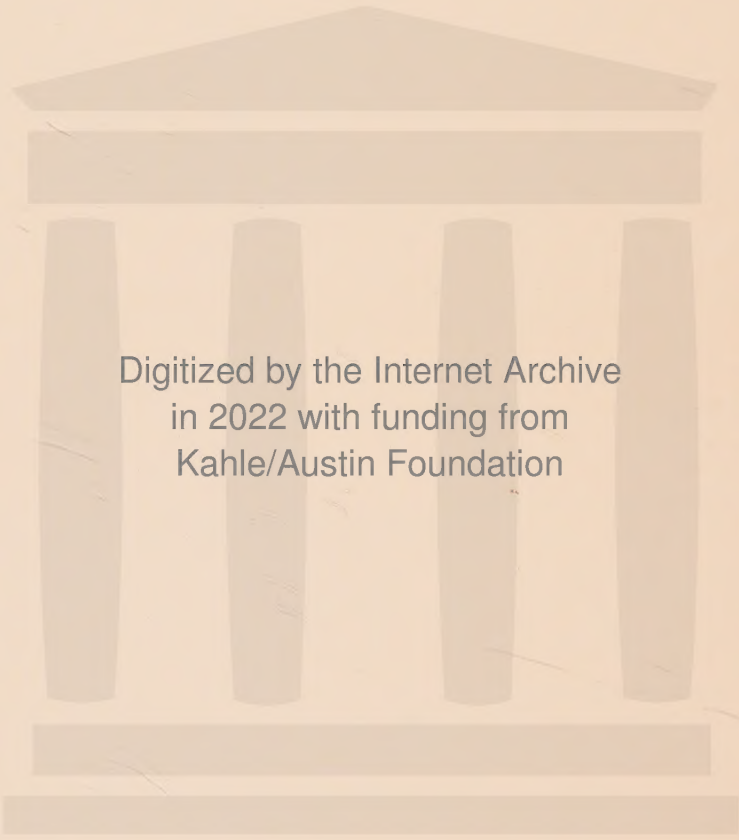
ISBN 978-9948-22-001-5

Typeset in Arnhem and Gotham
Printed in Dubai by Oriental Press
Cover and text design by Peter Burgess

Northwestern University in Qatar
Doha
qatar.northwestern.edu

Akkadia Press
Dubai and Doha
www.akkadiapress.com

Contents



Foreword

Just short of two years after the upheavals in the Middle East erupted in what would be called the "Arab Revolutions" or "Arab Spring," an academic symposium in Doha, Qatar took advantage of new scholarship informed by those events and linked to earlier study. This monograph is a result of that conference and reflects collaboration between Northwestern University's Middle East and North African (MENA) Studies Program, based in Evanston, Illinois, and Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q).

Being late to the party, in the scholarly world, can have certain advantages, as Brian Edwards, editor of this volume, explains in the introduction. MENA studies traces its modern roots as a multi-disciplinary field in the United States to the post-World War II period – with antecedents going back much further. However, Northwestern's formal program in the field dates only to 2011. As Professor Edwards suggests, this "late start" allowed Northwestern to benefit from the legacy of established scholarship, avoid the rabbit holes of earlier controversies and narrow its program's focus with a greater sense of relevance and urgency.

In 2008, the university established its first international campus in Doha in the form of a school of communication, media and journalism, which subsequently added a liberal arts program. While not planned as a MENA studies enterprise per se, NU-Q quickly established classes to help its students understand the culture of the Gulf and Middle East region. This resulted in a modest suite of courses in Middle East and Islamic studies, as well as those especially focused on media in the region.

The NU-Q efforts in Middle East and Islamic studies were also *late to the party* in Doha's Education City, where different coursework at sister campuses such as Georgetown University in Qatar, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar and the Qatar School of Islamic Studies was already in place. Our students could sample and integrate those programs with our own curriculum and specialty courses. NU-Q, as the sixth of six US schools invited to Education City by the Qatar Foundation, was literally the new kid on the block.

NU-Q's interest in creating a Middle East studies certificate program inspired invitations to Northwestern colleagues in the US, encouraged by Professor Edwards, who directs the MENA program and had earlier presided at two symposia in the US. Those conferences were called "New Directions in Middle East and North African Studies" and were held in May 2010 and April 2012. This is, in effect, the third installment in that series.

That earlier work was hailed as fresh and exciting, appreciating earlier scholarship and making an end run around old controversies by showcasing the creative new scholarship of (mostly) young scholars from the social sciences and humanities. We invited Professor Edwards and a group of his MENA colleagues to come to Doha to consult with our media and liberal arts faculty as they crafted the Middle East studies certificate program. A symposium involving NU and NU-Q faculty and following the *New Directions* model was held in conjunction with that visit. On September 11, 2012 (a date set coincidentally), 10 scholars presenting papers connecting what Professor Edwards calls the "circulation of political discourse" and "transnational migrations."

Many of these papers draw on or are related to the upheavals of the "Arab Spring" of 2011 and beyond, while others present an earlier legacy that helps illuminate the backdrop for MENA study. As Professor Edwards' introductory essay explains, this work is multidisciplinary, with contributors from anthropology, sociology, history, political science, law, media studies and other fields. It connects findings from ancient texts and scholarly traditions with contemporary observations and analysis and even digital media. This is a collection of preliminary yet well-formed ideas – reflective essays by scholars that hint at the larger body of work in which they are engaged. It is, as the introduction states, a promissory note on research still to come, but satisfying in its own right.

We at NU-Q are proud to have hosted the symposium that led to this monograph, which has been expertly edited by Professor Edwards. Having several of our NU-Q colleagues represented in the conference – and two in these finished chapters – suggests the kind of productive collaboration that is possible with an international campus. For me, personally, working with Professor Edwards and his gifted colleagues was a distinct pleasure. It is our hope that this volume will advance scholarship and stimulate public discussion of one of the most dynamic regions of the world, one much in need of continued, considerate study.

EVERETTE E. DENNIS, PhD
Dean and Chief Executive Officer
Northwestern University in Qatar
Autumn 2013

Introduction
The advantages of arriving late

BRIAN T. EDWARDS

There is an advantage in arriving late to the party. You can catch up on the conversations that have been going on for some time before you arrived, missing the original intrigue, perhaps, but happy too that much of it died out before you got there. You can sidestep those strands that seem to have become mired in argument and obsessive dispute. And your presence – your new perspective – can sometimes open a fresh angle on what seemed a closed circle.

Arriving late to the party is perhaps the rule of scholarship in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. So many conversations have been going on long before the latest generation arrived, first as students and then as teachers. There is always plenty of catching up to do – it frequently worries graduate students, and often younger professors, too. But there is the life cycle of careers in research and teaching; new perspectives and new approaches are the rule.

In area studies, however, there is an additional advantage to coming late to the party. Middle East Studies as an academic formation focusing on the modern and contemporary region emerged in the United States in the wake of World War II. To be sure, there had been American scholarship on the region before then, and some institutional clusters of academic specialists in the United States, generally referring to themselves as Orientalists and focusing primarily on philology and the ancient or medieval Middle East. The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, for example, was founded in 1919, and Princeton's Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures was founded in 1927, and specialized in the study of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages, and on the medieval and premodern periods. With the end of World War II, however, the new international prestige and power of the United States seemed to many Americans in government and academia to require the creation of more knowledge – more expertise – about parts of the world that had been under British and French colonial control or influence. As Zachary Lockman writes in his critical history of the academic study of the Middle East in the United States: "Just as the evolution of 19th-century academic Orientalism was linked with the expansion of European power into Muslim lands, so too was the development of Middle East studies as an academic field closely connected with

the emergence of the United States as a global superpower and its deepening involvement in the Middle East."[1]

Those involved with foreign policy, including academics, emphasized that the need for area expertise was a national imperative. Listen to the tone of the editorial note in *The Middle East Journal*, the journal of the then newly formed Middle East Institute, in the inaugural issue, January 1947:

> No apology need be offered for adding a quarterly journal relating to the Middle East. Except to a very few Americans – Foreign Service and Army officers, educators, businessmen, travelers – this area is essentially terra incognita. Such a circumstance was a matter of no great practical consequence when the world was large and only loosely knit together. Now that the Middle East is very near the United States in point of time-distance and almost equally near with respect to matters of concern in American foreign policy, it deserves such thoughtful attention as can be initiated and encouraged.[2]

If the editor's note suggests the relevance of scholarship to foreign policy, the contents of that first issue are just as telling. Articles entitled "Nationalism in Morocco," "The Arab Tribal Community in a Nationalist State," "The Communist Movement in Iran" and "The Struggle for Multi-Party Government in Turkey" shared the pages with the reprint of statements by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, the text of an agreement between the US and the Kingdom of the Yemen, the text of a note from the US to the Soviet Union regarding the question of the Turkish Straits, and a digest of labor relations in Lebanon. Created by a combination of scholars and statesmen, the Middle East Institute was funded by donations from corporate sponsors and foundations. The contents of the inaugural issue of the *Middle East Journal* reflect the broad public of policy makers, business people and general readers the journal hoped to address. Although the editors promised not to take an editorial stand, the somewhat limited focus on questions of nationalism, communism and political institutions revealed an emerging Cold War political perspective.

Foundations – including Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford – would be crucial in funding the rapid development of area studies programs in US universities in the late 1940s and 1950s. Some of the early leaders of the growing field came from Europe and the Middle East itself. In 1947, Lebanese historian Philip Hitti came to Princeton, where he created a new Program of Near Eastern Studies out of the former Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, the first such program in the US. H.A.R. Gibb left Oxford University in 1955 to lead Harvard's new Center for Middle Eastern Studies. And Austrian scholar Gustave von Grunebaum, who had fled the Nazis, landed first at the University of Chicago in 1943, and then at UCLA in 1957, where he was appointed to direct their new Center for Near Eastern Studies; he would be named the first president of the Middle East Studies Association upon its founding in 1966.[3]

As the Cold War heated up, and as the colonial order began to crumble, the imperative to develop area studies gained ground

quickly. In response to the Soviet launch of Sputnik, the first human-made satellite, in the fall of 1957, and a general sense that the US was falling behind the Soviets in education, the federal government encouraged a significant ramping up of education across the board. President Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958, with provisions for increases in education funding at all levels. Math and science were, of course, major beneficiaries of the NDEA, but it was recognized that more expertise in foreign languages and area studies would be required in the new world order. The famous Title VI of the 1958 act, entitled "Language Development," established research centers, language institutes and fellowships. The Higher Education Act of 1965 expanded these initiatives. Together, these acts created a network of "National Resource Centers" in area studies (including the Middle East), Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships (FLAS) and other key components of Middle East studies programs today. These innovations strengthened the link between the government's interests and the work and funding of scholars.[4] This, too, is the period when new think tanks such as the aforementioned Middle East Institute (founded 1946) and the RAND Corporation (1948) forged – or attempted to forge – connections between academics and government policy.

There would be many peregrinations of the developing field from 1947 through the long Cold War and beyond, to the present day. The highlights of such a story would certainly include the foundation of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in 1966, an organization that began with fifty members, but which now counts more than 2,700 individual members, 60 institutional members and 39 affiliated organizations. Edward Said's influential and controversial critique of the academic study of the Middle East in the West, most famously in his 1978 study *Orientalism*, and the debates around it in a range of academic fields and subfields, would be another key episode in the recent history of Middle East studies. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of major historical events in the region – especially the Palestinian Intifada beginning in December 1987, increasing awareness of a new Islamic revival and the 1991 Gulf War – led to further divisions in a field that seemed increasingly polarized. Following the events of September 11, 2001, a renewed focus on the politics of Middle East studies scholarship, and of the personalities involved with the field, would make Middle East studies an often fractious and challenging place. By 2001, the links between foreign policy and academic research on the region had arguably become more diffuse, but that did not stop some from accusing the field of complicity with the designs of those who would attack the United States. Indeed, conservatives accused academics of abusing Title VI funding.[5] Meanwhile, the renewed public obsession with the Middle East and the political projects of the Bush administration expanded government funding in a number of areas, even while conservatives pushed for limitations on and reform of Title VI.

Let me return to my opening metaphor of coming late to a party. For a variety of reasons, Northwestern University decided to create a robust institutional program in Middle East and North African studies later than many of its peers. In early 2006, the university signaled its intent to put significant institutional resources into developing faculty resources in Middle East studies. Daniel Linzer, then Dean of Northwestern's Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (and since September 2007, Northwestern's provost), appointed a faculty committee to make recommendations for the development of the field. That committee, chaired by Professor Carl Petry of Northwestern's Department of History, now the Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani Chair in Middle East Studies, and including two contributors to this collection (myself and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd), delivered a report that made a variety of recommendations for building Northwestern's offerings that reflected both institutional needs and changes in the study of the region. We have embraced the opportunity to bring fresh perspectives and approaches to the study, and appreciation of a region that is incredibly diverse, remarkably dynamic and especially complex.

As the interdisciplinary formation that is Middle East Studies developed its own tradition of scholarship, in a sense it too came late to a different academic party. The current generation of scholars – well-represented in this collection – emerge from a field that itself has been undergoing change as the impact of discussions in other subfields, including literary theory, postcolonial studies, political theory and sociocultural anthropology, have questioned their own methods, their own relationships to political history and power. At MESA's annual meeting over the past decade, the impact of these greater scholarly trends has been exhilarating to note. In the field at large today, younger scholars are pursuing a dynamic set of new directions in thinking, teaching and writing about a region that has recently shown the world that older paradigms for understanding it – particularly as a region stuck in its own past – were academic errors, not prescriptions.

Shortly after the Middle East uprisings of 2011 – the so-called "Arab Spring" – frustrated with narratives of those who claimed the Middle East was always stuck in the past or was naturally beholden to authoritarian leadership, the estimable journal *Foreign Affairs* published the essay, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring." With the title of the essay displayed prominently on the cover of the Summer 2011 issue, its author, F. Gregory Gause III, a senior political scientist, claimed: "The vast majority of academic specialists on the Arab world were as surprised as everyone else by the upheavals that toppled two Arab leaders last winter and that now threaten several others."[6] While Gause self-deprecatingly included himself in the company of those he chastises, his essay neatly and silently delimited the field of Middle East studies to preclude those disciplines outside political science (and a narrow version of that field, to boot) where richer discussions have been taking place and

which might reframe the conclusions he comes to in his essay.[7] For him, before the winter uprisings, "we in the academic community made assumptions that, as valid as they might have been in the past, turned out to be wrong in 2011." Unwittingly and unfortunately, the essay reassures those outside university settings that to attend to Middle East studies scholarship is unnecessary, since the failure of academic specialists was symptomatic of larger American mistakes: Academics have nothing new or different to offer.

And yet in the work of many of the scholars gathered here, and of those with whom they are in dialogue, questions of political or cultural identity and widening inequalities and increasing political and economic oppression had indeed been richly explored. In the fields of literary and cultural studies, socio-cultural anthropology and sociology, religious studies, media studies, and the work of a younger generation of historians, the old "truths" are like those conversations at my imagined party that seem to have run out of steam. With a fresh and invigorated perspective on the region learned from extended time in the region, a rich appreciation for its many languages, ethnicities, religions, nationalities, and trans-national points of contact and affiliation, new directions in the field escape the narrower political prescriptions of the 1947 issue of *The Middle East Journal* and the 2011 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. They teach us not to accept the received wisdom, not to keep the region at a distance, and to recognize the deep history of connections between and across the region and the US, and also the places and spaces outside of them. And they encourage and excite us to teach this receptive approach to a yet newer generation of students and readers for the years to come.

The essays collected in this volume emerged from a meeting held in Doha, Qatar, on September 11, 2012, a date chosen arbitrarily, but an anniversary which could not go unnoticed by at least some participants and members of the audience. These short pieces represent working papers or interim reports on manuscripts in progress by 10 faculty members working in Middle East and North African studies at the two Northwestern campuses. The subtitle of the collection emerges from a symposium series organized by Northwestern's Program in Middle East and North African Studies (and its forerunner, the MENA Faculty Working Group). The first two symposia took place in Evanston, Illinois, in May 2010 and April 2012, and invited leading young scholars from a range of institutions to share their work. For this, the third in the symposium series, eight of the MENA faculty from Evanston traveled to Doha and were joined by two NU-Q faculty. Together, we staged a daylong symposium. The papers collected here emerge from those presentations, with the benefit of discussion and the opportunity for revision. The disciplines represented range from political science to literary studies, from history to anthropology, and from communication studies to law. And so, on the face of it, one might have expected a more disparate or disconnected set of essays. However, as the reader will soon see, this is hardly the case.

While the various authors respect the methodologies and procedures of their home disciplines – and sometimes speak directly to them – they also just as frequently gesture across disciplinary boundaries. The organization of this volume highlights the multiple connections that link these essays. To be sure, the scholarship presented here will be of interest to students and researchers based in a number of disciplines. What is perhaps more interesting is the ways in which the authors here address scholars from other fields and borrow from modes of scholarship based outside their disciplines without sacrificing their primary allegiances.

There are of course multiple ways to highlight the connections across the essays, each of which would potentially bring out different intellectual affiliations and points of dialogue. I have chosen to divide the essays into two groupings, both to highlight the interdisciplinarity of this collective conversation and to underline what I think are some of its overarching contributions. The first group of essays, called "Circulation of Political Discourse," brings together thoughts by five scholars who together focus on questions of how politics get felt, thought, expressed and circulated. The second, called "Transnational Migrations," shows in a variety of ways how people, ideas and forms move through the region.

The authors in Part I of this collection offer a silent rejoinder to the critique levied by Gause. Through research before and after the Arab uprisings, these scholars, working in a range of disciplines, offer a variety of well-drawn examples of how Middle East scholarship, particularly when it focuses on the local and the individual, can open up understanding of the pressures that revealed themselves on a large scale in 2010 and 2011. As these scholars show us, and have shown us in their previous publications, those pressures were indeed visible far before they exploded on the global media stage. Leading off the collection, Jessica Winegar focuses her essay on an affect – an emotional state – that was manifest in Cairo in the year prior to the uprising of January 2011, and which helps to explain the sentiments that eventually found massive collective expression. She shows how the sentiment of being or feeling *zahaq* – which she translates as "fed up" – explains the experience of workers at two different cultural projects in Cairo: one a celebrated NGO founded in 2005, the other a state-sponsored cultural garden that was created by Suzanne Mubarak in 1990 to "bring culture" to children of a poor district in Cairo. Winegar argues that the affective states of boredom and cynicism that she witnessed among workers in both settings may not be merely moods leading to disaffected politics. Indeed, she argues, they can become resources for political agency.

In dialogue with Winegar's work as a cultural anthropologist, Wendy Pearlman, in the second essay, brings a focus on emotions to her own work as a political scientist. Pearlman explains how over the course of two books about Palestinians, she came to see emotive experiences as central to understanding the relationship between citizenship and political regimes. Interested in what she

calls the "affective foundations of citizenship," Pearlman outlines a comparative project that shows how emotions across the Middle East vary from fear to cynicism to shame. To be sure, she and Winegar are in dialogue, and while the two scholars have different means of gathering data and different disciplinary uses for that data, it is useful to compare Winegar's findings about *zahaq,* or "fed-up-ness," in the case of Egypt, to Pearlman's focus on the micro- and macro-level effects of affective states. Pearlman's interest in emotions leads her to the moment when both the collective and the individual barriers of fear are broken down, allowing mass resistance to develop – a key turning point in the recent history of the region.

Sonali Pahwa takes an interest in the expression of personal feelings in yet another direction, and brings in two additional realms: personal writing and digital media. In her work on Egyptian women's personal writing online, Pahwa considers the concept of a digital home, the space crafted in the online world of a blog, and the ways that space allows young Egyptian women to negotiate the restrictions on their daily life. She finds that in so doing, they are recrafting previously prescribed pathways and otherwise delimited social roles for Egyptian women and engaging the digital world opened up by the Internet both to enter public life and, in the process, to transform the public-private divide. Engaging key concepts from cultural anthropology – particularly that of the socially crafted space – and using ethnographic fieldwork as the basis of her archive, like Winegar and Pearlman (and also Hoffman and Khalil), Pahwa's essay is one of several bridges here between the interpretive social sciences and the more text-based approaches to be found in literary and legal studies.

Joe Khalil's work on youth-generated media provides another lens on the digital worlds of the Middle East, while shifting the rubric by which to analyze such materials. His cases are drawn from research in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, where he has been researching the ways in which young people use a variety of media to participate in public life, and often to challenge political power. Taking up ideas advanced by Joe Downing on "radical media" and Clemencia Rodriguez on "citizen media," Khalil uses his case studies – work by a Lebanese blogger-activist and by a Saudi woman filmmaker – to show how Arab youth are appropriating a wide media toolkit to put pressure on the status quo. In this, of course, his work and Pahwa's are in direct dialogue: They are both looking at how youth use media to reshape their lives and social space.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's essay rounds out the first part of this collection. Hurd draws on discussions from a range of disciplines – especially anthropology, religious studies and political theory – to focus attention on the ways in which the promotion of international religious freedom makes assumptions about what it means to be religious and what it means to be free that may run against practice outside the West. Drawing on the example of the current conflict in Syria, Hurd argues that the ways in which religious freedom is exported as a putatively universal norm – what she calls

the "globalization of religious freedom" – tends to distract us from recognizing that there are politics behind this export, and that what seems universal is always also situated in history. In Syria, she argues, alternative possibilities for negotiating religious differences present themselves; she identifies an "agonistic model of religious freedom." Paradoxically, however, these models may be foreclosed by those proponents of religious freedom. She argues that we must recognize the particularity of Syrian models of religious freedom and acknowledge the limitations and bias of top-down, universalist models of freedom.

Hurd's essay, identifying as it does another ideology that crosses national borders in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, is a perfect bridge to Part II of this collection. It is comprised of five papers that in various ways contribute to discussions about the transnational movement of peoples, ideas and cultural forms. In the past two decades, scholars in a variety of disciplines have been responding to the imperative to understand the way "globalization" has been understood, felt and expressed.

Many theorists have dated the beginning of globalization as a historical period to the early 1970s, generally because of the demise of the Bretton Woods system. But as historians and cultural and literary critics have done further research, they have brought forth earlier episodes where a transnational or comparative approach to understanding phenomena previously understood through national(ist) lenses seems most appropriate. In so doing, they reopen questions that seemed closed, often challenging basic premises of the related disciplines in the process. Thus, projects such as Henri Lauzière's study of Egyptian reformers in Mecca in the 1920s and Rebecca Johnson's study of the early Arabic novel in the 19th century are not only in dialogue with Middle East studies scholars working on these particular places and times, but also with discussions from a range of disciplines pursuing what Johnson calls "transnational circuits of literary and material consumption."

Lauzière takes on a fascinating moment in the modern history of Islam: the relationship between Egyptian religious scholars and the Saudi state. Those interested in Egyptian Salafism have noted this link, but most dated its genesis in the 1970s. Lauzière looks a half-century earlier and shows how early 20th-century Egyptian religious activists played an important role in turning the new Saudi state into a center of religious learning in the 1920s. The influence was in both directions, to be sure, as Egyptian reformists such as Rashid Rida and Hamid al-Fiqi traveled between Cairo and Mecca, where they edited journals, engaged King`Abd al-`Aziz ibn Sa`ud and had a firsthand look at Saudi Wahhabism. As Lauzière puts it, these Egyptian reformers were indeed "walking a tightrope" as they developed ideas that would be influential in the process of Islamic reform back in Egypt, negotiated the religious rigidity to be found in the Saudi state and tried to find ways to critique Wahhabi anxieties about modern science. In the process, of course, the Egyptian activists

were influenced by the Saudi context, and Egyptian Salafism more generally owes a significant aspect of its own heritage to this moment in transnational intellectual history.

Rebecca Johnson's essay focuses on a different occasion of transnational cultural intersection, in the service of a larger historical argument about the history of the novel itself. Johnson discusses Khalil al-Khuri's 1859 novel *Wayy, Idhan Lastu bi-Afranjī* (*Alas, I Am Not a Foreigner*), which is claimed to be the first novel in Arabic. If so, al-Khuri's work displaces the 1913 novel *Zaynab,* which has until recently been considered the first of its kind. This is not merely a piece of literary trivia: It promises to revise our accounts of the Arabic novel itself, which has until recently been characterized as derivative and a cultural import from Europe. In *Wayy,* she finds something more complex, and retells the story of the Arabic novel as embedded within a transnational circuitry where cultural and material objects were in continual motion. The subject of *Wayy,* after all, is an Aleppo merchant who is trying to marry his daughter to a European visitor. Thus, by focusing on the layered, cosmopolitan Aleppo, *Wayy* teaches its readers to understand the local "not against the global, but within its unequal structures of exchange."

With its focus on transnational processes of cultural exchange, Johnson's discovery from the mid-19th century maps in compelling ways against the two essays that follow it, despite their contemporary focus: Katherine Hoffman's essay on Libyan exiles in the borderlands of southeastern Tunisia and western Libya, and my own on what American culture looks like in its 21st-century circulation throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In my essay, the kinds of situations Johnson focuses on seem not impossibly distant, despite the temporal remove, but somehow repeated in the ways that both audiences and cultural producers in Iran, Egypt and Morocco take up and re-craft American cultural products. My essay seeks to bring to the foreground the question of the circulation of a literary object or cultural product precisely because it has generally been relegated to the background in literary and cultural studies. I propose that objects such as Iranian redubbings of *Shrek* or Moroccan films that borrow Hollywood formulas for more localized problems, such as Laila Marrakchi's *Marock*, which would previously have been off the radar of comparative literature and Middle East studies, are in fact points where transnational cultural production and global politics come together and help inform each other.

Hoffman's ethnographically rich account of the encounter of Tunisian and Libyan Berbers in the borderlands of southeastern Tunisia during the recent Libyan Civil War provides further evidence that the nation as a form is in many cases hardly the dominant form of social identification. Her essay shows how the lived experiences of refugees revolves around and puts into action numerous other social and cultural affiliations. This is particularly true during a revolutionary period, when the arbitrariness of the ways nation-states collect individuals are exaggerated. Based on multiple research trips

to the region between the fall of Tunisia's President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and the fall of Libya's Muammar Gadhafi, as well as subsequent visits, Hoffman's conversations with displaced Libyans and their Tunisian hosts reveal the ways Berber language, identity and shared cultural values exceed the idea of being Libyan or Tunisian among these refugee communities.

The final essay, by Kristen Stilt, takes us into legal studies and the ways in which references to Islam and Islamic law are incorporated in modern constitutions, particularly the new constitutions recently and soon to be crafted in the Middle East. Stilt shows how decisions about how to figure Islam and Islamic law into these constitutions is frequently imported from other national constitutions, and is thus influenced by decisions in other countries with Muslim majorities without respect to localized histories and contexts. Discussions of the cultural aspects of globalization reference the global flow of ideas and forms, and Stilt's essay shows how Islamic sharia itself experiences transnational migration. Her comparative account, therefore, opens up Islamic law for legal scholars and students focused on other disciplines. It also brings a richly researched set of examples to discussions about "constitutional migration" within legal studies.

These ten papers are all reports on in-progress projects, promissory notes for books and articles yet to come. Since they were crafted to participate in an interdisciplinary dialogue, it may seem apt that they focus on the points of connection across the disciplines. In doing so, they also bring forth new directions in both the subfields and disciplines these scholars are working in and the field of Middle East and North African studies at large. To conclude by invoking one last time the metaphor with which I opened this introductory essay, the advantages of arriving late are here compounded by gaining an early perspective on the work of this set of Northwestern scholars.

Notes

I would like to thank Rebecca Johnson and Jessica Winegar for reading a draft of this introduction and offering helpful comments and suggestions.

1 Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism,* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 111.

2 "Editorial Foreword," *The Middle East Journal* 1.1 (January 1947): 1.

3 Lockman, 126. Franz Rosenthal, In Memoriam: Gustave E. von Grunebaum, 1909 – 1972, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973), 355 – 358.

4 Jere Bacharach, in an address to the Middle East Library Association during the Clinton Administration, pointed out that the Cold War might have been used in 1958 as a cover for getting more funding to higher education. He argued that Strom Thurmond, a US Senator both then and in 1995 when Bacharach made these remarks, "denounced the bill for its 'unbelievable remoteness from national security considerations,' declaring that it was merely the latest ploy for the federal-aid forces" and that the administrations of both Presidents Nixon and Reagan attempted to eliminate Title VI funding. [Jere L. Bacharach, "The State of Middle Eastern Studies in Institutions of Higher Education in the US," *MELA Notes*, No. 62 (Spring 1995), 1 – 4.] Also, in *Contending Visions of the Middle East,* Lockman's chapter "The American Century" argues that the overlapping interests of US government, funding institutions and Middle East scholarship converged in the early Cold War, particularly

as modernization theory emerged as a powerful trend in American social science in the 1950s and 1960s. This is not to say that there wasn't discord or tension in the field, and the otherwise divergent scholarly traditions of Orientalism and the area studies paradigm of the newer Middle East studies did at times cross over. But academic Orientalism, with its guiding assumption that there were inherent and somewhat static characteristics of a generalized "Muslim world," could buck against modernization theory's goal of effecting change.

5 Here, among other public charges levied against the field of Middle East Studies, I am referring to Martin S. Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, 2001). For a balanced review and discussion, see F. Gregory Gause III, "Who Lost Middle Eastern Studies?" *Foreign Affairs* 81.2 (March–April 2002): 164. See also Zachary Lockman, "Behind the Battles over Middle East Studies," *MERIP: Middle East Report Online.* Merip.org, January 2004. Accessed February 2013.

6 F. Gregory Gause III, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs* 90.4 (July – August 2011): 81 – 90.

7 This is ironic, since in 2002, Gause's critique of Martin Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand* emphasized that political science was the sole focus of Kramer's attack on the field of Middle East studies: "There is nothing in the book about those who teach language and literature or those who write the history of the region. Nor is there treatment of Middle East anthropology, a vibrant field with a leading theoretical role in its discipline. The book deals solely with those who study contemporary Middle Eastern politics." F. Gause, "Who Lost Middle Eastern Studies?" op. cit.

Part I

Circulation of political discourse

How politics gets felt, thought, expressed and circulated

Cairo residents sit beneath a poster of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.
Photo: Shutterstock

1

Fed-up and bored

Affect and political action in revolutionary Egypt

JESSICA WINEGAR

In the years leading up to the uprising that ousted authoritarian Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak from power, it was commonplace to hear outside observers and Egyptians alike blame the so-called apathy of Egyptians for the absence of revolt. Widely held views that Egyptians preferred to spend their time sipping tea at coffee shops, or watching television serials, or depending on the state for everything were immediately quashed in January and February 2011, when millions of Egyptians rose up in an effort to take down the regime that had oppressed them for decades.

What do we make of this seemingly overnight reversal of affect, from so-called apathy to anger and hope? In this short piece, I suggest that closer attention to the daily expressions and experiences of emotion before, during and after a dramatic political event reveals how people come to mobilize in support of a political cause. Paying close attention to everyday affect also guards against broad characterizations of the emotions of an entire society, which, as we see in the case of the pundits imputing apathy to Egyptians, is misguided. Through analysis of the following episodes from my ethnographic fieldwork throughout particular locations in Cairo before and during the 18-day uprising, I hope to show that what observers might have characterized as apathy was, for many Egyptians, an exasperated "fed-upness" that actually held in place – in an active sense – the grand expectations of dignity, freedom and social development for when the time came to enact them. That time was the pivotal moment of the 18 days.

On the eve of the Egyptian revolution, everyday speech was peppered with variations of the word *zahaq*. On any day, one could hear phrases such as "*Ana zahqan, ihna zahqanin, zihiqt khalas!*" In part because of its semantic richness in everyday Arabic speech, *zahaq* is more agentive and less burdened by the bourgeois associations of the English word "boredom." *Zahaq* expresses the bundle of emotions of which cynicism and boredom are a part; it also implies a kind of fed-upness – a form of exasperation. For the people I knew in Egypt, the experiential aspects and expressive possibilities of *zahaq* made it less a "state" (or stasis) and more a processual action – one that built upon itself in crescendo fashion.[1]

Let us turn to two cases of extreme *zahaq*, of great expectations gone sour. The story begins in Cairo as it choked under the Mubarak regime. The state employees of a once internationally famous youth cultural center, located in a working-class neighborhood, sit on rusty chairs under a tree, swatting away flies as they wait for the children who rarely come. Sipping tea, with exasperated voices, they complain cynically about their low pay, lack of teaching resources and corrupt leadership. Across the city, at a newer non-governmental youth center, also in a mainly low-income neighborhood, the management cancels some children's activities and summons employees to more and more training sessions, and requires ever more paper reports. With these new requirements, many staff members grow wary and de-energized. Across state and NGO contexts, people are fed up and cynical as they make sense of the disconnect between their material, institutional circumstances and their aspirations to develop society by making youth more "cultured." The great expectation of cultural development seems forever stymied as the state diverts resources to the private sector, and as the private sector becomes subsumed in auditing practices.

The government youth center could bring out the *zahaq* in anyone. The Ministry of Culture in the Mubarak era was a huge, complex experiment in modernist development, an experiment that sat in uneasy relationship with those in other government sectors (such as the Ministry of Finance) functioning to privatize and liberalize the economy. As men became the faces of economic "reform," Suzanne Mubarak (the president's wife) became the face of cultural development. She spearheaded the opening of a culture garden in the district of Sayyeda Zaynab in 1990, with a mission to "bring culture" to the children of the neighborhood. "Culture" was defined through the architecture of the buildings and garden itself – done in a modern Islamic style that linked the site to old mosques and other Mamluk-era monuments nearby. "Culture" was also defined through the designation of various "centers" in the garden; for example, a large open-air theater, studios for visual arts and crafts workshops, and a children's library. This library housed some books that were published as part of Suzanne Mubarak's "Reading for All" series of affordable titles in literature and sciences, although the delivery of these books was rarely consistent.

In 1992, the garden won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. The jury noted that "the insertion of the park into this congested urban fabric has gone far beyond the original brief. It has generated a renewed sense of community by extending its presence into the surrounding streets. The residents take pride in their neighborhood as well as their park."[2] The Aga Khan prize committee seemed to agree with the Egyptian government – that the problem in "congested" working class communities was a lack of pride in the neighborhood, pride which can be inculcated by making people more "cultured." Yet the root issue was not a lack of "pride" or "culture" among neighborhood residents. It was a conflict between the state's paternalistic and bureaucratic approach to culture and the desires of both the residents and the architect to have the garden fully integrated into local systems of values and understandings of culture.[3]

By 2010, when I began fieldwork at the garden, it had fallen into utter disrepair. This once internationally famous site, a jewel in the crown of Mubarak-era cultural policy, was barely functioning. The central walk, once laden with royal palms and fountains, was now marred by broken stones, broken lights and dried-up fountains. Sewage overflowed from the bathrooms. Tall grass and weeds had overrun the playground, whose creaky, wobbly structures stood like desiccated animal carcasses. Half of the workshops and half of the library were locked up. Officially "awaiting repairs," they were the victims of a stifling state bureaucracy, as well as a complex corruption scandal allegedly involving the National Center for Children's Culture, a money-laundering NGO and local drug dealers. A crackly sound system with frayed wires threatened to ruin any theater or music performance. The few children who visited the garden (usually on field trips with local schools) were greeted with a bare bones puppet show and a meager amount of dried out markers or old broken crayons.

The employees of the culture garden were all college graduates with specialties in the arts and/or education. They were, in large measure, committed to the state planners' developmentalist vision. In their own youth, many of them had also been the subjects of state cultural development. Often the first educated in their families, or the first to have acquired objectified knowledge of "arts and culture," they were indebted to the idea that cultural development promises upward mobility. Their great expectation was to create a more modern, refined and cultured society by helping youth take the same route they did – via state institutions. Yet these ideas were formed at a time before state institutions became overwhelmingly burdened by ornate bureaucracy, authoritarianism, corruption and the transfer of resources to the wealthy for private-sector projects. The employees knew this history, and in fact were cynical about the government as a result, but that did not disabuse them of their aspirations. Expressions of boredom and cynicism actually recycled these aspirations, because they were articulated within the normative framework of state developmentalism from which they had benefitted in their lifetimes.

On the day I met Rashid, a teacher in the crafts section, he had just returned from one of his many visits to government offices to protest the corruption at the garden and get resources flowing again. He was very cynical about whether his attempts would amount to anything (in fact, he was later charged with insubordination). Yet at the same time, he proudly showed me the ceramics projects he had created with kids several years ago and spoke of what the art department "should" be doing. As the workday came to a close, I asked if I could speak with him some more on my next visit."You're welcome to come back anytime. But," he smirked, "you'll always find us sitting under that tree." He pointed to the lonely tree that provided needed shade to the employees locked out of their buildings.

Layla, another one of the art teachers, frequently made rounds of tea for the group as they sat there for hours, waiting for the kids, who rarely came. When we spoke on these boring mornings, she was nostalgic about her early days at the garden, when there had been

adequate resources and crowds of kids to teach. She talked about being exhausted with all the art projects she managed and directed, but also how fulfilling it was to see the garden full of kids doing art. But Layla, too, was cynical that the garden would never return to its former glory. She lamented that her co-workers did not care to fight for their rights, and that the higher-ups were corrupt. She couched her comments within the great expectation of returning to an imagined ideal of "real" cultural development.

One oppressively hot summer day, we had no work to do and were wishing that the Ministry would at least open the locks on the art studios to give us indoor shade. Layla started grabbing at her neck in exasperation. She exclaimed, "That's it! *Zihiqt*! I'm going to die! I can't take this anymore." Here we can sense how *zahaq* is a process that foretells an endpoint, how it is a ground for political agency. At times such as this in the garden, when Layla reached her limit or when Rashid returned, fed up, from a government office with another tale of failure, negative emotions spurred passionate conversation about what exactly needed to be accomplished so that they could go about culturing youth again.

On some days I went straight from this field site to another, where I was always pleasantly surprised to encounter more material resources, but sometimes met the same boredom and cynicism. A half-hour ride from the culture garden, through more low-income neighborhoods and past a gated community on the one mountain that overlooks the polluted city, one comes to an NGO, founded in 2005, with a similar mission of uplifting children through cultural exposure. *Alwan wa Awtar* (A&A): The name means "colors and strings (of an instrument)" and is a reference to the development through the arts model that has won A&A international accolades, such as an invitation to meet Michelle Obama at the White House. A&A occupies three apartments in a neighborhood dominated by government housing projects built for families displaced by a 1992 earthquake. The layout of the NGO also signals the notion of culture operating at the center: one apartment hosts arts, theater, and crafts workshops; one is for a library, a computer center, and literature and etiquette classes; and one is for what the organizers call "non-traditional" education, mainly in Arabic and English literacy skills. The first-floor apartments surround one of the several courtyards in the complex, an area overgrown by weeds.

The teachers and administrators at A&A tend to come from more privileged backgrounds than those at the state culture garden. But their experiences at private schools or colleges, and with childhood arts or music lessons, also inculcated them into the notion that development via arts was key to societal development more broadly. In contrast to the teachers and administrators, the administrative assistants at A&A were often from the same neighborhood as the aforementioned state culture garden and had visited it as children. They also considered arts and culture as a means of personal and social development. Shaymaa, for example, said that she found her job personally beneficial because she was learning "so much" from working there about how to raise her

own future children. But she also spent her work hours either frantically organizing kids into classes or waiting for long stretches during meetings and between activities scheduled on a course grid.

Whereas funding for the state culture garden has dried up (or been stolen), A&A enjoys support from various national and international donors. But that does not mean that employees are always hopeful and energized. In the past year three years, as A&A's programs expanded, it also began to introduce rationalization and accountability measures in response to demands from these funders, as well as to the rising corporate ethos among elite Egyptian NGOs and their elite staffs. While the culture garden workers sat on rusty old chairs, bored and cynical about the disconnect between their material resources and their developmental aspirations, A&A staff members became frustrated with the disconnect between new material requirements and their developmental aspirations.

In the summer and fall of 2010, the NGO's directors introduced a series of mandatory staff training sessions. The most prominent training for the full staff included a two-day workshop on UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child and a four-day workshop on staff development. Two of the volunteer staff balked at the extent of these training sessions, saying that they were a waste of time that would be better spent on teaching the kids. Other staff members appreciated some aspects of the training, but the long afternoons were marked by sighs of exasperation and complaints of exhaustion and hunger. Interspersed among the fun activities when colleagues joked with one another, I heard cynical queries about how the training could actually be applied to benefit the work with children. At one of the sessions, after being presented with a list of principles of the UNICEF convention, doubtful faces turned into exasperated questions about how staff could possibly dispose of a hierarchy of rights between children and adults. In their view, contra the UNICEF convention, adults were in charge of developing children culturally, so how could children be considered on an even plane? As with the culture garden, *zahaq* was often expressed within a framework of commitment to the cultural development project.

Hani was one of the main proponents of this training, and in fact had initiated and run the session on children's rights. Driving me down the mountain after a frustrating day at the organization, he told me that the problem was that everyone needed to be brought up to the same "international standard" of a "rights-based approach" to cultural development. But a couple of months later, he called me on my cell phone to tell me that he had resigned. He told me that the new office manager came from "al-corporate" – meaning the corporate world. This person was insisting that he and other section directors write detailed work plans and fill out Excel spreadsheets with all sorts of data that could be tracked and coordinated. He admitted that he thought that these things were important, but that he just "couldn't bear" filling in Excel spreadsheets anymore because they detracted from the fun – the time with the kids. Hani was getting bored with the very processes of

centralized rationalization that he had brought to the organization, and cynical that they would never translate immediately into better programs. But his new realization did not reduce his commitment to cultural development. He continued on as a consultant with A&A. He also dedicated most of his time to building another organization with a similar mission of helping youth through arts and culture, though one with a decidedly less paternalistic framework.

In both of these cases, the great expectations of cultural development went sour as people experienced a disconnect between their aspirations and their material circumstances – whether these were a paucity of crayons, sound equipment or salaries, or whether they were an excess of private-sector funds, training flip charts or Excel spreadsheets. What are the reasons for this disconnect? For the state institution, they go back at least to the Nasser era of the 1950s and 1960s, if not before. In this era, the great expectation of creating a modern Arab nation in which individuals could be developed into productive citizens resulted in the bloating of the state bureaucracy and a command economy replete with auditing procedures and surveillance practices. In the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, privatization and market liberalization resulted in a diversion of resources from state institutions to private sector projects. As wages stagnated, corruption increased. These decades also witnessed the spread of neoliberal forms of audit culture and surveillance, which mapped onto the previously existing forms.[4] At the NGO, these new practices were framed as an antidote to the inefficacy of state programs. But they actually braided into people's experiences with the bureaucracy of state institutions. Nobody wanted to be just a "*muwazzaf*" – a state employee who, it is imagined, spends his or her day pushing papers. So whether the state starts diverting its budget from public institutions towards subsidizing the private sector, leading to corruption at the higher levels of government and leaving poor kids without crayons, or whether private donors and corporate-minded employees implement accountability practices, leaving people with piles of Excel spreadsheets, the affective result is similar: *zahaq*.

When people expressed "fed-upness," they were able to momentarily suspend the great expectation, to permit the realization that the ideal society (or ideal self) they were wishing for was not really possible to achieve in its entirety. But this was a suspension of the great expectation, not an abandonment of it. In the cases I have discussed here, we see fed-up Egyptians creating an affective reservoir that held the desires behind great aspirations in place. These emotions, I suggest, kept people attached to normative ideals.[5] In these Egyptian cultural institutions, people became fed up when things were not going as they hoped, and the expression of that fed-upness allowed for a constant reiteration of the ideal.

In this case, one might argue that the bundle of emotions associated with *zahaq* actually brought forth the pivotal moment of mass demonstrations. Suddenly, in this moment of transformation,

it seemed that the promises of grand expectations – of cultural development, yes, but more broadly of dignity and social justice – could be kept. In the years of expressing fed-upness in daily life, many Egyptians had honed their vision of an ideal society, and their demands for how to achieve that. When a few hundred activists began the call for a demonstration, those visions and demands were clearly articulatable and translatable to everyone. The week after Mubarak's departure, I visited the culture garden to find the employees busy cleaning up the place. They had found some old paint in the storage area and were painting trees and benches to spruce up their surroundings. Not only that, they were holding numerous meetings to collect evidence of the corruption that they had witnessed among their superiors. Meanwhile, over at the NGO, the group organized a revolution celebration, five new arts classes, new calls for volunteers and political-awareness sessions on the new proposed constitution. A sense of reinvigoration prevailed.

If these cultural-development advocates had not spent the past years fed-up, they might have forgotten what it was they were so invested in. They would not have reiterated, over and over, the ideals of their great expectations and the specific problems they needed to solve in order to meet them. The revolution proved that great expectations could be met – even if only in those heady days following Mubarak's departure. The reality of the persistent material circumstances had not yet set in. The nostalgic memory for those victorious days, that momentary success of a great expectation, perhaps keeps some people going through the *zahaq* many feel now. Perhaps we should consider fed-upness, boredom and cynicism not as a disaffected politics, then, but rather as a resource for political agency.

Notes

1 My analysis here is inspired by anthropologist Lori Allen's work on *zahaq* in the Palestinian context, where that emotion becomes a "political ethos" that signals "adaptation" to but not "acceptance" of strangling governmental regimes, in that case the Israeli occupation. See Lori Allen, "Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada," *Cultural Anthropology* 23.3 (2008), 457–487.

2 www.akdn.org/akaa_award5_awards.asp accessed October 1, 2012.

3 See Khaled Adham, "Making or Shaking the State: Urban Boundaries of State Control and Popular Appropriation in Sayyeda Zaynab Model Park," in *Cairo Contested: Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity*, ed. Diane Singerman. (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 41–62.

4 On different sources of audit culture, see Andrew B. Kipnis, "Audit Cultures: Neoliberal Governmentality, Socialist Legacies, or Technologies of Governing," *American Ethnologist* 35. 2 (2008), 275–289.

5 Yael Navarro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

A Palestinian activist in Jerusalem chants slogans at a rally supporting anti-government protests in Egypt. Photo: Ryan-Rodrick Beller, Shutterstock

2

An emotional lens on the 2011 Arab uprisings

WENDY PEARLMAN

I became captivated by the languages, culture and history of the Middle East and North Africa during a college semester abroad in Morocco in 1995. Morocco was the center of the world for me for years thereafter ... until I had an unexpected opportunity to visit Palestine. I studied at Birzeit University in the West Bank from January to June 2000 and never looked back. In the years that followed, I returned to Palestine nearly every chance I got. Three months into the second *intifada*, I conducted interviews with about two dozen Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These were published in 2003 as the book *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada*.

I undertook that project both to help myself understand the experiences of ordinary people and to bring their voices to a larger audience. When it was published, I gave book talks around the United States. I was surprised to find that the question and answer sessions repeatedly ended with the same query. People would tell me that they were moved by the personal stories of suffering under occupation, but they had trouble understanding why Palestinians carried out acts of violence against Israelis. I heard the same questions again and again: Don't Palestinians see that suicide bombings undermine sympathy for their cause? Why don't they use nonviolence instead? Where is the Palestinian Gandhi?

Some of these questions may have been disingenuous. Regardless, they raised a significant challenge that gave me pause. I knew from my study of history that Palestinians *had* used nonviolent as well as violent forms of protest, but I lacked a convincing explanation of why they had done so to different extents at different times. By then I was in my third year of doctoral studies in political science. So I made these questions the topic of my dissertation: Why do some self-determination movements use violent protest and others nonviolent protest? Why does a movement use different protest strategies at different points over time?

I researched those questions in the case of the Palestinian national movement and published my findings in 2011 as the book, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*. In it, I argue that paths to violence are multiple, but there is one prevailing

path to nonviolent protest: a path that demands that a movement have or create internal cohesion. Nonviolent protest requires coordination and restraint, which only a cohesive movement can provide. When, by contrast, a movement is fragmented, factional competition generates new incentives for violence, and authority structures are too weak to constrain escalation. This increases the likelihood that protest will become violent.

The book demonstrates this argument over nearly one hundred years in the history of the Palestinian struggle, from the 1918 Balfour Declaration through 2008. An additional chapter compares the Palestinian national movement to the South Africa anti-apartheid struggle and the Northern Ireland republican movement. I find that when the Palestinian movement used mass unarmed protest, such as during a general strike in the 1930s and the uprising of 1987, internal cohesion proved crucial. In those episodes, a legitimate leadership and grassroots institutional network helped people across social classes, religions and regions participate in demonstrations, boycotts, and acts of noncooperation and disengagement.

When the movement lacked strong central leadership, institutions or popular consensus, its organizational fragmentation contributed to the use of violent protest. Various forms of internal competition fed escalation in the armed revolt in the late 1930s, guerrilla warfare in the 1960s, and the militarized uprising beginning in the year 2000. At these junctures, weak authority structures invited the formation of militant splinter groups and obstructed efforts to reach ceasefires. Cracks in the self-determination struggle invited external actors to intervene and induce or coerce Palestinian parties to act in ways that furthered outsiders' interests. Moreover, divisions left the movement without the institutional capacity to carry out nonviolent protest on a mass scale, even when popular support for such a strategy existed. While the book focuses on the Palestinian movement, I do not at all wish to underestimate either fragmentation or the use of violence on the Israeli side of the conflict. Israel is a part of my story insofar as its repression of the Palestinian struggle has typically provoked or worsened its internal divisions. I criticize those policies by showing that efforts to fragment Palestinians have the effect of precluding a national strategy of nonviolent protest, while intensifying the tendency of protest to take armed forms.

I situate this research in a larger academic literature dedicated to investigating social movements. Since the 1960s, mainstream research in this field tends to view those who participate in protest movements as rational in the sense that they act on rational calculations of self-interest. People's political or economic grievances with the status quo do not automatically lead them to participate in a protest movement. This is the paradox of collective action: A protest movement, such as a nationalist movement or uprising against authoritarianism, seeks public goods that will benefit all members of society and from which none can be excluded. At the same time, the impact of every individual contribution is small. In consequence, a rational individual will seek

to "free ride" on the efforts of others. Rather than sacrifice to make a contribution to a collective effort, he or she will do nothing as others take the lead, and then enjoy the benefits when others attain the shared goal. Collective action is a paradox, however, because people *do* participate, and in doing so, they sacrifice not only time, money and energy, but sometimes risk arrest, injury or their very lives.

How do theorists explain why rational individuals make the seemingly irrational choice to participate in mass movements for change? Tackling this puzzle, most American scholars hold to the rationalist paradigm, and many adopt a focus on organizational factors, as I did in my work on the Palestinian national movement. This leads them to try to identify the various factors that reduce the costs of mobilization or increase its benefits. One dominant idea holds that social movements emerge when a political environment becomes more vulnerable or receptive to resistance. This might occur when an opposition's access to power expands, influential allies become available, or ruling alignments split. These and other changes shift an existing structure of political opportunities in ways that encourage challenges to authority. Another widespread argument holds that social movements emerge when pre-existing social networks or organizations grow strong. These can serve as vehicles encouraging and coordinating participation under conditions in which individuals are otherwise hesitant to take action.

As both a student and a teacher of social movement theory, I found these theories persuasive. The uprisings that swept across the Arab world in 2011, however, inspired me to rethink those assumptions. That year saw anti-regime uprisings even where organization was minimal and political conditions unfavorable. Moreover, it entailed protestors' participation despite the risk of death and highly uncertain probabilities of success. In some cases, the gap left by unfavorable structural factors has been filled by an intensity of emotions – hence, I put emotions at the center of my current research.

This research both compliments and diverges from my earlier work. In *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*, I focused on the organizational aspects of mobilization. In my investigations of the current uprisings, however, I have been drawn to explore the role of emotions. I know from my own personal experience, as well as years of bearing witness to and speaking with people about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that this topic also inspires intense emotions. Nevertheless, my first project completely bracketed the emotive experience in order to focus on how the structure of decision-making within a movement shapes what a movement does. Intellectually, I was simply skeptical about emotions as a factor explaining political action.

One expression prevalent throughout the Middle East and North Africa during the 2011 uprisings was particularly important in motivating me to rethink my previous assumptions: "The barrier of fear has broken." To me, and to the many citizens who invoked variations of this saying, it reflected something of the essence of what

occurred during that revolutionary year, and what rendered it such a profound turning point. Something fundamental had changed, regardless of the outcomes of the uprisings. Indeed, as of this writing, those outcomes remain uncertain. Elements of old regimes retain power in many countries, and civil violence rages in others. The euphoria of revolutionary victory is an increasingly distant memory. Still, something fundamental has changed in Middle East society and politics. That something, I believed, was not organizational as much as emotional.

I wondered what we might be able to learn about revolutionary collective action in general, and the Arab uprisings in particular, by analysis of the expression "the barrier of fear has broken" from a social science perspective. To this end, I began reading from a vast academic literature, much of it grounded in the fields of psychology and neuroscience. This research offers a wealth of knowledge about how people experience emotions and how emotions affect societal relationships on the one hand, and individuals' thinking, decision-making and behavior on the other.

I am currently working on several academic articles that link these general theories of emotions to the specific case of the revolts in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria. My goal is to explore what insight these theories can offer about how it came to be that millions of people rose up against authoritarian regimes. In the remainder of this paper, I offer a preliminary sketch of a theory that outlines how emotions were an irreducible component of the recent uprisings in two ways: as an outcome resulting from the macro-character of political systems, and as a cause at the micro-level of individual motivations and decision-making. I paint these arguments with very broad strokes. It does not capture the nuance, diversity and many exceptions either within countries or between them. Nonetheless, such generalizations are a useful foundation for theory building.

The Macro-Level: Political Systems

Various studies explore how the structure of social relationships constructs emotive experiences. I extend this view of emotions as social and cultural practice to consider how they also function as political practice. In the Middle East, authoritarian regimes were both produced and reproduced in part by the emotions that they generated in their populations. The affective foundations of citizenship in these regimes were feelings of fear and futility. The intensity of these political "feeling rules" varied across populations by class, generation and gender, and likewise varied across regimes. In dictatorships such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq, repression generated mortal fear. In hybrid autocracies such as Egypt, political cultures of fear were multifaceted. Regimes approached their populations through a combination of co-optation and punishment, while allowing controlled pluralism and limited freedom of expression. Those who benefited from the

system feared losing those benefits. Those who did not knew that, to expand their life chances and meet everyday needs, they were probably best to defer to those with power. Most ordinary people thus feared that pushing the limits of tolerable opposition could end in arrest or torture or, more commonly, could endanger access to employment, contracts, licenses, school admission or other myriad opportunities in which regime elements could impose or remove otherwise insurmountable obstacles.

These fears were enforced by monitoring and physical coercion by powerful security apparatuses, as well as state discourses that warned that the alternative to the status quo was a worse fate of chaos or radical Islam. No less, they were often self-enforced by the belief that the system was unchangeable and societally enforced by norms that regarded those who tried to make change as foolish, if not reckless. To go against the grain risked incurring others' judgment, with consequences of loss of esteem and feelings of shame or guilt. People in some social strata might experience emotional gratification in defiance; most of society, however, went along with the system most of the time.

Regimes that were too fierce to oppose, yet too illegitimate to accept, bred cynicism. Basic distrust of others' motives was a strategy by which ordinary people eked out some moral distance from a rotten system even as they resigned themselves to it. This obstructed the emergence of protest movements in two ways. On the individual level, feelings of cynicism defused hope of the possibility that the system could ever be reformed, much less revolutionized. Within society, such affects encouraged distrust. In a system built on distribution of unfair advantages, it was reasonable for citizens to suspect that everyone else was somehow dishonestly profiting from the status quo – or would if the opportunity arose. Such an emotional orientation – rather than simply a lack of organization or political opportunities – atomized citizens. It impeded them from discovering their common interests and collective capacity to challenge those in power.

Nevertheless, the very despondency that discouraged collective dissent generated a reservoir of resentment that might fuel it. Resentment, defined as "an emotional apprehension of departure from ... rightful outcomes and procedures," [1] could be mobilized as a resource for collective action. It provided a long-term foundation for righteous anger, which gives energy to defiance because it "puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul." [2] A latent revolution was thus just below the surface. To activate it, however, individuals' self-defeating emotions needed to be transformed into new, assertive ones. [3] This transformation focuses attention on the role of emotions as an explanatory variable affecting change in individual-level cognition and behavior.

The Micro-Level: Individual Motivations and Decisions

Emotions shape individual cognition and decision-making in several ways that encourage either political resignation or resistance. First, emotions affect citizen's attribution of blame. Research finds that sadness is associated with a tendency to blame situations, and anger corresponds with blaming people.[4] Second, emotions influence appraisals of events and subsequent actions. Whereas fearful or depressed people tend to be pessimistic in their judgments about the future, angry or exuberant people are more optimistic. Correspondingly, fear makes people more risk-averse, and anger more risk-accepting.[5] Third, individual-level emotions can become generalized across groups due to "emotional contagion" – the tendency of a group to converge in sentiment. Fourth, the more intense any of these emotions, the more likely they are to supersede individuals' deliberative decision-making and exert a direct effect on behavior.[6]

These findings about emotions shed light on the micro-level mechanisms contributing to the Arab uprisings. Under authoritarian regimes, despondent cynicism imbued citizens' sense that government is inevitably corrupt and corrupting – that it always had been and always would be. Feelings of futility encouraged resignation. As hopelessness gave way to anger, however, people shifted their attribution of blame from an amorphous "system" that could not be targeted to specific heads of state, whose ouster became a concrete goal.

The contradictory consequences of fear and anger fed a similar transformation in people's sense of efficacy. Under the old order, many citizens saw their own power as minimal and the power of the regime as all-encompassing. Fear encouraged them to withdraw from confrontation with threat rather than assail against it. It also redoubled their wariness of the risks that protest entailed and their skepticism that protest could come to any good. As fear turned to anger, however, people became more willing to face danger. They also became more hopeful about the potential for revolution, intensifying their demands from reform to the once-unthinkable overthrow of the regime.

It is important to emphasize that the meanings of fear and anger invoked here are intertwined with feelings of futility or empowerment. Emotions theorists conceptualize fear not primarily as dread of danger, but as insufficiency of power to confront a threat. Fear is the sense of a lack of control that renders it "of no use to stick your head out" in effort to regain control.[7] Similarly, anger implies not only an urge to fight, but also a sense that fighting is meaningful. It is the mobilization of energy to regain freedom of action. A subjective sense of efficacy is thus critical in distinguishing fear from anger. It was a crucial part of the undoing of the "barrier" that had to be broken in order for mass resistance to develop.

Beyond the emotions involved in initially pushing people to participate in protest, the social experience of acting collectively generates still other emboldening emotions. Those who join public protest often gain confidence from finding the support of others in an

emergent identity as a movement, as well as joy in being able to express more fully their own identity as political agents. These sentiments can become generalized due to emotional contagion. Moreover, they intensify as the police clash with the demonstration, whether or not particular members sought confrontation.

Activists also deliberately sought to activate certain emotions as a way of empowering protest. They thus sought to build opposition by associating it with such affects of solidarity, unity and patriotic pride. To that end, they averted divisive issues and emphasized national symbols such as the flag. At the same time, a kind of collective effervescence arose organically. It was indisputable in the enthusiasm and resolve with which groups chanted and marched, braved repression, occupied public spaces for days or months, and claimed the popular will in the universal slogan, "The people want the overthrow of the regime." Many who joined these movements did so to advance not only their freedom as individuals, but also their hope to create a new society built on better values. In joining with others, some felt exhilaration that they were already doing so, from the ground up.

The implication for rationalist and structurally oriented social movement theory, as I describe it in the beginning of this paper, is that "subjective" emotions are not mere byproducts of the "objective" factors typically cited to explain collective action. Rather, it may be shifts in emotions that give rise to shifts in political conditions for protest, rather than vice versa. In the Arab uprisings, many people came into the streets not because they were recruited through pre-existing networks or because changes in domestic political alignments indicated regime vulnerability. Their decision to protest was part of an experience of personal and collective transformation – of crossing an emotional barrier when they became just too "fed up" with the status quo. Citizens arguably began to *feel* differently in advance of any concrete alteration in the balance of power between regime and opposition. Indeed, it was these feelings that inspired sweeping numbers to protest, and thereby changed that balance – and with it, the face of Middle East politics.

Notes

1 Jack Barbalet, *Emotions, Social Theory, and Social Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 138.

2 William A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 32.

3 Helena Flam, "Emotions' Map: A Research Agenda," in *Emotions and Social Movements*, ed. Debra King (London: Routledge 2005), 19–40.

4 Dacher Keltner, Phoebe Ellsworth, and Kari Edwards, "Beyond Simple Pessimism: Effects of Sadness and Anger on Social Perception," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64. 5 (May 1993), 740–752.

5 Jennifer S. Lerner and Dacher Keltne, "Fear, anger, and risk," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8.1 (July 2001), 146–159.

6 George Loewenstein and Jennifer S. Lerner, "The role of affect in decision making." In *Handbook of Affective Science*, edited by Richard J Davidson, Klaus R. Sherer and H. Hill Goldsmith (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 619–642.

7 Nico H. Frijda, *The Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1986), 429.

An Internet café near Tahrir Square in Cairo, where social media played a prominent role in anti-government demonstrations. Photo: Julie Dermansky, Corbis

3

At home in the network

Women's digital and social mobility in Egypt

SONALI PAHWA

Writing in blog space has a peculiar intimacy: Your uncensored thoughts are online for all to read, and the friends who comment on your posts are anonymous strangers. This "public privacy" has attracted many Egyptian women to write in the blog genre. Indeed, the blog gained a reputation in Egypt as a women's genre as early as 2006, when three blogs by women were turned into bestselling books by the Shorouk press. The authors used the confessional intimacy of blogs to tell stories usually exchanged among female intimates. Ghada Abdel Aal's misadventures with potential bridegrooms in *Ayeza atagawwiz* (I Want to Get Married) and Ghada Mahmoud's anecdotes from life as a young wife and mother in *Ma' nafsi* (On My Own) were online phenomena that maintained gendered associations of women with private space and intimate discourse. Conversely, political activists Asmaa Mahfouz and Mona Seif used the digital genre to claim a space where they could perform the role of authoritative public figures by invoking gender identity only strategically.

However, these prominent examples of bloggers who used the genre to enter public life obscure an important aspect of the digital phenomenon: the way in which it participates in a spatial transformation that often makes the public-private divide irrelevant. Digital writing genres did more than bring formerly obscure voices to public prominence; they also created interactive new sites for conversation through posts, responses and reciprocal comments. In this paper I examine the transformation of women's social space through digital media in Egypt, with a focus on new mobilities that these media produced. In my work with professional women in their twenties, I found that they used blogs as nodes in which to integrate spaces of home, work and political interest. These women's hybrids of physical and digital bodies incorporated them in new circuits, like Donna Haraway's cyborgs, while their blogs drew these circuits together into a new kind of a digital home.[1]

A 2007 survey revealed that "personal" blogs accounted for a formidable 47.5 percent of the Egyptian blogosphere, far outnumbering literary or political blogs.[2] Many Egyptians were using blogs to socialize, rather than to make statements. In a subsequent

review of the first decade of blogging in Egypt, Ahmed Naji defined the major blog genres as those of Islamists, gender interest groups, political activists and religious minorities, pointing to a further trend of using digital media to consolidate networks marginalized in the public sphere.[3] Since women particularly lacked urban social spaces they could call their own in Cairo, it was fitting that they embraced blogging and microblogging.

The three women whose stories I tell here moved frequently around the city to work and meet friends. But since each lived in her parental home, her social home was more often than not online. I compare their uses of online blog "homes" to assess how each used hers as a meeting ground. Moreover, I describe how their lateral movements on networks allowed the women alternatives to prescribed paths of upward mobility through careers (or marriage) and afforded them connections beyond work, family and university. As they came to inhabit their homes on the network, I show how the *habitus* that each cultivated here carried through offline, revealing ways in which digital sociality was a rite of identity formation.

Publics within homes

Lobna, Fatma and Eman came home from work, logged on to their networks, and often "went out" again without leaving the house. Their digital public life was both social and intellectual, resembling discursively the nineteenth-century German salons analyzed by Seyla Benhabib, who showed how these institutions combined forms of rational communication with intimacy among relative strangers.[4] The blog medium seemed at first glance to have perfected the integration of public and private discourses with which salon-goers of an earlier era experimented.

Lobna was a 23-year-old news photographer whose job was well suited to her personality. She told me she had always been an information addict. Her job at a daily newspaper entailed traveling all over the city on assignment, but she still found herself using social media to experience a different sort of mobility. Most of her college friends had become more housebound, and she met them these days almost exclusively on Facebook or online chats. "If they don't have to go out to work, many of them don't go out at all," she lamented. For Lobna, digital social media were a crucial means of maintaining her older social circle and integrating newer professional acquaintances into it. She sat before the television set in her parents' living room with her computer on her lap, chatting with friends and relaying bits of news from news websites to family members. Lobna seemed very comfortable with this combination of familial and professional roles, perhaps because she had always been what she called "the Reuters of the family." But without digital media, she could hardly have combined her childhood and adult communities so artfully. Her Facebook page, which combined links to news stories, her comments and playful social chatter, frequently shifted the line between serious

and whimsical communication and gave Lobna a way to consolidate her social persona as both an effervescent young woman and a professional journalist.

But other young women, who could not combine familial and adult roles so smoothly, used separate online spaces for different communities. Blogs tended to be their favored digital genre over social media outlets such as Facebook. Eman, an engineer turned literary blogger, uses her blog to get away from her exemplary persona as an upwardly mobile young professional. She began her eclectic bilingual blog in 2005, while still a student, as a space in which to dabble in writing in Arabic while she studied in English. Since Eman started blogging when the Egyptian blogosphere was very new, she ended up conversing with people who wrote about very different things. She spoke about the blogosphere then as something of a frontier territory and space of adventure. Her own blog also maintained elements of surprise, moving between Arabic and English. Eman said she did not like being tied to a writing genre, either. "I don't want to forget that I was happy or sad ... leaving aside concerns with politics or any issue – I just *write*."

Eman's notion of friendship was just as iconoclastic as her notion of writing, and just as much enabled by digital media. She treasured her blog relationships more than many of her childhood friendships. After a conservative upbringing and an Islamic education, her views had become leftist over the years, and she felt distant from the world of her childhood. "When I speak to old friends now, we end up arguing because we're different." On social media, she is too closely tied to that familial world. "Here you'll find the kind of people who said 'We are sorry, Mr. President' after the revolution. I still check in on Facebook, and enter into debates with friends, but I find it aggravating." In friendships formed online, by contrast, differences of opinion made for livelier conversation. Eman compared her exchanges with readers on her blog and the microblog Twitter to the kinds of conversation she used to have when she called in to a live broadcast on Radio Cairo. The anonymous intimacy of these exchanges with regular visitors made blogging worthwhile for her. But when her blog became somewhat famous, Eman found it tedious to clarify her views to strangers. "When I got recognition, I found I didn't want it any more," she confessed. "[My blog] wasn't the home that I loved anymore; it became too noisy. There were times when I shut it down."

Eman's concept of home, like Lobna's, was a space where she felt in her element. It was where she could combine her different personas into a *habitus* with its own space. She could link her different voices and embody herself most fully here. But she did not want this online persona to become a public figure, as with so many celebrity bloggers, since that would compel her to act according to the norms of a bourgeois public sphere. It was in the playful voice of the personal blogger that Eman was best able to maintain her idiosyncratic identity. Her ideal home was made of layered spaces and discourse

genres, and it gave her the freedom to refine her opinions and change her mind. This mobile and flexible access to multiple friendship networks via her blog and Twitter was more rewarding for Eman than the status of a public figure. The latter was too impersonal to offer the pleasures of friendship, and perhaps too convention-bound for Eman to make it her own.

Eman made an exception to her rule of writing in an inexpert voice, however, when she started a group blog for women's social critique called *Kullina Laila* (We Are All Laila).[5] Together with a friend who also resented the constraints on women's mobility in urban and public space, Eman called for a day of blogging in 2006 on the topic of women's lives in Egypt. By 2009, We Are All Laila featured participants from eighteen Arab countries and lasted an entire week, forming a network that emboldened women to write personal stories as a matter of public concern. The gender solidarity that produced this network allowed and indeed prescribed an affect of intimacy, even without the form of conversation, and the bloggers were free of the responsibility of representing women's lives. Eman found it therapeutic to write here. But when she felt this group blog had helped her enough, she moved on to other group projects – she did not want to assume the role of a public feminist intellectual.

Eman's story, as an example of how Egyptian women use digital media to form intimate networks, resembles what Michael Warner has called "counterpublics." Members of a blog community have an embodied relation to one another, as in Warner's counterpublics, and the blogs maintain "a repertoire of highly temporalized affects and interests."[6] But since this aspect of the media genre is not specific to women's blogs or subaltern identity politics, we can rethink the subordinate status of intimate communities in Warner's argument from an earlier historical moment. Eman and many of her peers were blogging not to project a subaltern *public*, but to create alternative *homes*, away from the normative constraints of the public sphere. Their personal blogs gave them a liminal space to cultivate personas more complex than those of dutiful daughters and competent professionals. In cases such as Eman's, the support of other bloggers and readers gave her the courage to plan on a career change. She began to take evening classes in project management, and planned to quit her job and work full-time with Global Voices Online and other networking projects. Eman's blog home thus accommodated an alternate self, enabled new connections and made lateral mobility possible.

Reimagining home and the world

Eman was one of a rising demographic of Egyptians in their twenties who abandoned a conventional career path of upward mobility in favor of horizontal and, particularly, transnational networking. They searched foreign websites for grants and jobs, and often joined chat rooms to meet people of different backgrounds. For those who

worked in transnationally oriented professions, such as translation and international human rights, networking cultivated cosmopolitan knowledge and hopes of opportunity. I'll conclude this paper with the story of one young woman whose transnational trajectory took her to study abroad, then to work in Egypt, and who used her blog to synthesize the two parts of her life.

Fatma was a 29-year-old researcher from a middle-class background who worked at a feminist non-governmental organization in Cairo and traveled to conferences abroad. She first established a digital presence by writing on a group blog with friends. She then started her own blog when she returned to Cairo to bring together her multi-sited personal and professional worlds. A quiet and determined young woman, Fatma was something of an exception in the elite bilingual world of Egyptian human rights organizations for not having a foreign-language education or family connections to the profession. She counted herself lucky to have found friends at university who were lifelong comrades and who helped her into the field. They were politically radical, like herself, though she was a devout Muslim and her friends were not. Fatma had often been an outsider, whether as a foreign student abroad or a non-secular feminist in Egypt, and her online home was a space for consolidating her multiple identities. Her blog is particularly interesting for its mix of scholarly feminist posts and very personal stories. I analyze it as a contentious home that staged these incompatible voices or positions across online networks.

Fatma's feminist commitment to bringing personal questions into political debates was clear: She met me in her office and spoke candidly about her life as colleagues walked in and out. But on her blog, she wrote of the difficulty of combining personal and professional roles, and of being a perpetual misfit. She blogged, for instance, about her recent decision to stop wearing a *hijab* after fourteen years. She had lately found herself convinced by the writings of Islamist thinkers Gamal al-Banna and Amina Wadud, who argued that covering was not a religious duty. But convincing friends and families of her decision was a delicate matter. Some of Fatma's friends cautioned her against making a declaration on her blog, concerned that her extended family would read it. But she did so anyway. She did not see a blog post as a public statement of identity so much as a place to write about the process of claiming an identity.

Fatma decided to write this post in English, as she sometimes did with controversial topics. "A lot of constraints fall down when I use English," even though she was not fluent, she said. She wrote about her journey from being persuaded to veil on theological grounds, to coming to question the social meaning of *hijab*, then ended with a bitter summary of how little room there was for her story where she lived:

> I want to say that what struck me [was] the polarization of the Egyptian society, that [had] on a side the conservative powers, which includes my family, my extended family, neighbors, and many other categories of the

Egyptian society, and on the other hand the progressive powers, which include the human rights defenders, academics and journalists who constitute my social circle. I hated [the] unstopping nagging and the covered threats of my family, and I hated the extra warm congratulations of my progressive friends [7]

Gone was the tactful, careful attempt at community building in many of Fatma's other blog posts and at her job in the NGO. She admitted failure on her blog when she could not do so elsewhere. But even this was an attempt to connect with readers who might similarly struggle to explain themselves and suffer the dismay of their intimates. "If you're a feminist, you must write about your experiences so others can learn from your struggles," Fatma asserted.

Fatma was fluent in a transnational discourse of academic feminism and wrote several blog posts in this register that drew comments from Islamic and secular feminists abroad. Every now and then, however, she wrote about experiences that were thoroughly local, which tested the limits of her social networks. When she wrote a post about a new boyfriend and her anxieties about sexuality, some friends warned her not to expose herself. One told her bluntly that she was performing "an emotional striptease." It seemed that such confessional writing risked inviting not recognition, but voyeurism. The blogger's body seemed exposed without a feminist discourse. Yet Fatma continued to blog about matters with which her local interlocutors would more likely identify and to leave highly personal posts up for their scrutiny. She wanted sympathy from closer to home than her transnational feminist networks.

In Fatma's effort to represent experience that was distinctly her own, with cautious references to academic feminism, the architecture of the blog proved useful. She personalized her online home with a mix of scholarly and other writing genres. And like other female bloggers in Egypt, she made strategic use of girlish décor and naïve biographical statements such as "I'm just an Egyptian girl" to personalize political and social critique as part of a young woman's intellectual development. Even the occasional rant against people who did not understand her seemed forgivably adolescent in this setting. While Fatma's personal and professional worlds collided in often uncomfortable ways, her blog let her act as still a liminal being in the process of coming into adult identity. Here she could write the ever-unfolding story of reconciling her social background and idiosyncratic professional journey.

I have offered some stories from the blog lives of these Egyptian women as examples of place-making through networking. The connections that they made online enabled women to socialize and rehearse the *habitus* of independent-minded young women in digital versions of intellectual salons. Returning to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as an embodied repertoire for relating to one's world, I have shown that these Egyptian women used blogs as digital homes from which to rehearse personas that were girl-next-door, cosmopolitan

and critical all at the same time. Eman's blog persona became more rewarding than her professional identity, and she decided to switch to a career that allowed her to live that persona. Fatma's blog was conversely a space for inhabiting her professional feminist persona in everyday social terms. Their digital homes made these women not just upwardly mobile, but able to move across roles.

Of course, there are women bloggers in Egypt who are public figures (Nawara Negm, Asmaa Mahfouz). They write authoritatively about politics and use newspaper-like templates for their blogs. The blog genre in Egypt has certainly made a place for female political commentators, where women were previously more often seen in the lightweight role of current affairs talk-show hosts. But political bloggers have only occasionally been able to perform authoritative roles offline, such as at protests. Their declining role in post-revolution politics would suggest that it is not so easy to carry the *habitus* of a digital political space into the public sphere. By contrast, an unassuming army of personal bloggers has forged alternative careers in literary writing, translation and feminist activism, through networks developed from their digital homes. These online spaces of work and play – or playing at work – gave them room to fashion paths to professions outside a prescribed progression from student to adult identity.

Notes

1 Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (NY: Routledge, 1991).

2 Otterman, Sharon, "Publicizing the private: Egyptian women bloggers speak out," *Arab Media & Society* 1.1 (2007), www. arabmediasociety.com? article=13. Also cited in Wael Salah Fahmi, "Bloggers' Street Movement and the Right to the City: (Re)claiming Cairo's Real and Virtual 'Spaces of Freedom,'" *Environment and Urbanization* 21.1 (2009): 93.

3 Ahmed Naji, *Blogs from Post to Tweet* (Cairo: ANHRI, 2010). Available online at www.anhri.net/en/?p=670 accessed August 2013.

4 Seyla Benhabib, "The Pariah and Her Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Biography of Rahel Varnhagen," *Political Theory* 23.1 (1995), 5 – 24.

5 The blog's title referred to Laila, the activist protagonist of Latifa al-Zayyat's 1960 novel *Al-Bab al-maftuh (The Open Door)*. It can be accessed at kolenalaila.com/en/

6 Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002), 71.

7 atbrownies.blogspot.com/2011/06/latest-decision-taking-veil-off accessed August 2013.

Easier access to media-making tools has led to a rise in youth-generated media at a time of upheaval in the MENA region. Photo: Shutterstock

4

Youth-generated media
A brief introduction

JOE F. KHALIL

Since 2006, I have spent time in a number of Arab cities examining youth-generated media – that which were made famous in connection with protests in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. Youth-generated media refer to the communicative ways in which young people actively challenge the social, political and cultural spheres of power with the intense excitement of a social movement. From vibrant graffiti, protest songs and placard writings to tweets and Facebook campaigns, youth are exercising their communication rights across the Middle East and North Africa.

As the "Arab Spring" uprisings have shown, the interest of Arab youth in cultural politics is evident in the burgeoning of youth-generated media and young people's participation in public life. Benefiting from newly introduced media freedoms, young people are engaging in both traditional mainstream and alternative media. But for years before and during the so-called Arab Spring, younger generations from Morocco to Iraq expressed their cultural politics through a variety of communication tools and outcomes. Using tools and platforms as diverse as theater, dance, puppets, murals, print, video, radio, cassettes and loudspeakers, they embarked on a myriad of alternative communication projects. They initiate, imitate, explore and develop ways to communicate their fears and anxieties about a changing world in which they rarely have any say. Although children and youth under the age of 24 make up more than half of the estimated 300 million people in the Arab world, their active participation in media and public remains limited.[1]

One objective of my research is to account for the increased visibility of youth-generated media in an empirically based and theoretically inspired framework. Historically, the study of the relationship of media and youth has been largely limited to media directed *at* youth, rather than media generated *by* young people themselves – in other words, research concentrated on youth-oriented media's effects and consumption patterns. By introducing the concept of youth-generated media, my research departs from the effects and consumption studies to examine youth cultural politics and material possibilities at this specific historical juncture in the Arab world.

There are three departure points for my work. First, this research is theoretically anchored in the interpretive humanist tradition. I am more interested in the critiques of the development model that came from Paulo Freire's books on liberating pedagogy, John Downing's radical media as an aspect of symbolic and material participation in resistance and social change, and Clemencia Rodriguez's discussion of citizen media as providing "access and space" for participation.[2]

My second point of departure regards the definition of "youth." Instead of adopting the blanket 12–14 age bracket commonly applied in UN and World Bank documents, I suggest we recognize the complexity of young people's identities. In this, I engage the sociology of childhood, which recognizes that any attempt to define youth is most often (mis)guided by an adult understanding of what being young means and insufficiently acknowledges how young people define themselves.

Third, media must be more carefully defined. Media extends beyond the traditional mass communication platforms to include a range of traditional (storytelling, poetry), emerging (tweets, posts) and culture-jamming (graffiti, flash mobs). This definition escapes the conceptual penitentiary, wherein "media" is limited to newspapers, film, TV, Internet and cellphones – all "objects" – and interpreted anthropologically as socio-technical institutions.[3] In a course I taught on alternative media in the Middle East, I encouraged students to see the human body as a tool of expression, to examine squares, cars and walls as instruments of communication, to appreciate banners and placards as meaning-making objects and to study them together with 'media' as traditionally defined.

To investigate this phenomenon with adequate nuance, my research is concerned with the creation and circulation of youth-generated media. What motivates young individuals or groups to engage in media development? What type of media are Arab youth creating? How do youth conceptualize, execute and circulate their media? What social, economic and cultural contexts affect these media? And what are the implications of youth-generated media on Arab discourse? To be more precise, what do young Arabs do with media, not what do media do to them?

There is ample evidence to suggest that youth make their voices heard, whether in dress, cultural preferences or everyday activities. Today's youth, however, are exploring additional modes of expression to communicate among each other and with other social groups. This is especially the case with increased access to cheap media-making tool kits such as photocopy machines, cameras, mobile phones, computer software and the Internet.

As the means of producing media become cheaper, smaller and more accessible, youth are appropriating these tools to produce meanings in non-traditional forms. In the process, they re-define the utility and usage of these media. Youth-generated media are not only limited to a specific social, cultural or political context. They do not

only figure in industrial and developing societies, but have also been flourishing in both liberal and extremist circles.

Let me illustrate youth-generated media based on my fieldwork in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. My intention is not to compare and contrast youth in these countries. Instead, my interest is in juxtaposing some of their experiences through the development and circulation of youth-generated media.

Lebanese blogging and activism: Fink Ployd

The first case study is set against a border skirmish between the Lebanese radical group Hezbollah and Israel, which triggered a 34-day war, complete with ground battles and attacks on civilians. Unlike previous similar conflicts, the conflict commonly referred to as the July 06 War was broadcast live and featured a broad range of political views, commentary and footage. Given the amount and range of coverage, the popularity of a website like bloggingbeirut.com – which received more than 400,000 hits a day during the war period – might seem surprising. What drove such traffic?

At a cost of approximately US $600, a twenty-something Lebanese man who uses the *nom de plume* of Fink Ployd managed to share his thoughts, organize collective action and re-write part of the war narrative.[4] Ployd also commented on media coverage, dispelled rumors and, in the process, developed an alternative news service.

Between July 26 and August 14, 2006, a viral, open-source, guerrilla urban intervention – based on stickers marked "I ♥ Beirut" that were posted on public property – made its way across twenty five cities in the United States, Europe, North Africa and Lebanon. Appropriated from Milton Glaser's "I ♥ NY logo," "I ♥ Beirut" was first launched by a New York-based collective blog called The Lebanon Chronicle.[5] Ployd joined their call, reaching out to his blog's audience to expand the reach of the campaign.

He then proceeded to develop a forum, www.Iheartbeirut.com, to exchange ideas and suggestions on developing the campaign and linking various individuals and organizations. An individual in Switzerland volunteered to redesign the logo, enhancing the color and re-formatting it for printing purposes. With the new logo, Fink asked his audiences to download and post it on significant landmarks. But more important, he requested them to photograph the stickers in context and email him the pictures. Ployd described the purpose of the whole campaign as "to show support, to see it on the streets and then share it online."[6] Over the next twenty days, Fink re-organized these pictures in various collages to reveal how the stickers were displayed in cities such as San Francisco, Paris, London and Auckland. The campaign also appeared in the foreign press such as *The New York Times* and art magazines such as *Glamcult*.

Referring to his blogging activities as a "news reporting service," Ployd believed that "it was a media war with certain perspectives

missing" and claimed that Blogging Beirut helped rectify the situation by offering one of those perspectives. While power and Internet outages, lack of access, and a range of logistical problems may have hindered bloggers, Ployd insisted on providing "rich media" with photos, audio and video clips. Branding his own BloggingBeirut.com TV, he managed to produce a number of videos about life under siege. The first was of Beirut at night with no electricity – just a shot in the dark of Beirut's skyline; the last portrayed a nightclub in the mountains, complete with interviews and commentary. In between, he produced a video documenting the effects of an Israeli air raid on a power station south of Beirut. Between July 13 and July 15, thousands of tons of oil spilled into the Mediterranean Sea after an air raid on a petroleum depot. This event affected him personally: "Anyone who knows chemistry knows what would happen with such an oil spill," he explained in conversation. By July 25, Blogging Beirut was reporting an "environmental disaster" along the coastline. Two days later, Reuters reported that a slick had reached some 50 miles up the coast and estimated it could contain up to 30,000 tons of oil.[7]

One immediate question emerging from my research on Blogging Beirut is how young people's often collective, collaborative and sequenced work seems an essential characteristic of youth-generated media. Ployd's activities demonstrate one of youth-generated media's core characteristics: its ability to develop a chain of media and other activities that work in concert to achieve young people's communication goals. The story of the oil spill demonstrates young people's ability to draw attention to self-expressive stories that create sequences of actions, which involve media as well as forms of activism. Similarly, the "I ♥ Beirut" campaign integrated sequentially a number of media-related activities, from printing the stickers, claiming public space, and taking and emailing the photos to editing and posting a collage.

Saudis and the Silver Screen: Haifaa Al Mansour

In the 1960s and the 1970s, citizens of Saudi Arabia were exposed to uncensored Egyptian, American, European and Indian films. Conventional movie theaters did not exist, but university auditoriums, sports clubs and tents doubled as viewing areas. At the time, the shortage of cinema halls was not the result of a particular ruling, but rather a lack of public and private investment for such projects. It was not until the oil boom of the mid-1970s that some dedicated open-air theaters became available exclusively for men. In 1979 and following the failed siege of the Grand Mosque, public viewing of movies declined sharply under pressures for more conservative practices.[8] As a result, the film experience was limited to the privacy of homes or private theaters with the introduction of VCRs, satellite television, DVDs and the Internet. Only recently did Saudis venture into producing their own movies, which they still cannot show inside the Kingdom.

In the absence of institutions that would stimulate filmmaking, the possibilities for experimentation are increasing in a virtually vacant media space, with digital technology offering opportunities for creative or tech-savvy young Saudis. Movies in various formats are traded, copied or shared on the Internet; at the same time, young Saudis are experimenting with smart phones or home-video production kits. The computer and Internet are taking the place that movie theaters traditionally occupied for distributing films. Once watched, these movies become the subject of online discussion groups, blogs and Facebook comments. In this capacity, new media are re-inventing the spatial and social spaces of movie viewing. But particularly interesting is the appearance of homegrown video and film production.

Educated in both Cairo and New York, Saudi filmmaker Haifa Al Mansour has been making movies since 2003.[9] Al Mansour's first three short films reveal what Faye Ginsburg calls "cultural revival, identity formation and political assertion."[10] Particularly interesting is her choice of topics, which echo many of the fears and ambitions of Saudi society. First, she filmed *Man?* (*Who?*) (2003), which tells the story of a killer disguised as a woman who slits a young mother's throat.[11] Then, she shot *Al-Rahil al-Murr* (*Bereavement of the Fledgling*) (2003), the story of a child who leaves his village, vowing never to return. Finally, she made *Ana wa al-Akhar* (*The Only Way Out*) (2004), the story of three young men – an Islamist, a liberal and a fence-sitter – who explore their differences while lost in the desert. Al Mansour's ability to develop her film projects was challenged by numerous socio-cultural obstacles, including *ikhtilat* (Saudi restrictions on the free mixing of the sexes), prohibitions against filming in public and a lack of equipment. She expected some opposition "because the film deals with one of the most sensitive topics in Saudi society – women – but I didn't expect that strong a reaction. I think controversy is a healthy sign if it is well-directed. It makes people think and question a lot of things that have been taken for granted."[12]

Al Mansour's choice of topics is as important as her processes of production and distribution. Al Mansour shot on location in Saudi Arabia and recruited members of her family and friends to act as crew and actors. At the expense, perhaps, of professional audio-visual quality, she selected basic equipment and trained her crew to use them. Her process shows an attempt to develop a participatory project where community stories are told by community members and viewed by the community itself.

More important, her creative distribution strategy helped revive movies as a Saudi cultural manifestation. In a country where movie theaters are banned and film viewing is restricted to the privacy of individual homes, Al Mansour and her growing Saudi supporters wanted to engage the broader community with the film's messages. Uploaded on a website in 2003 – before YouTube was even introduced – this distribution method created a spatially and socially negotiated

sphere for movie viewing. As the first female Saudi filmmaker, she is shaping a Saudi identity of producer, as opposed to consumer of films; at the same time, she is acting as a role model for other females.

Taking these two case studies as indicative of a larger longitudinal study, let me make two general observations:

1 Youth-generated media are subject to co-optation and dominance. Particularly alarming is how market forces threaten to assimilate young people's practices. Al Mansour moved from being a filmmaker to film consultant to television host, only to leave Saudi Arabia and relocate to Australia. It is too soon to evaluate her recent return to filmmaking, but the marketing campaign associated with her work suggests the emergence of a market-savvy filmmaker.

2 Young people's media development practices change as their cultural politics are modified or completely transformed. Fink Ployd's website somehow went into the Internet black hole as he became disillusioned with new media's potentials and moved to more community-based, face-to-face activities, particularly around issues of environmental protection.

As a phenomenon, youth-generated media is the result of an increased access to cheap media-making toolkits and amplified networks of media exchange and circulation of all kinds. As a concept, moreover, youth-generated media is a reflection and refraction of societal structures, political struggles, cultural tensions, economic uncertainties and new media possibilities. At the core, youth-generated media are associated with questions of economic and cultural globalization, particularly issues of dominance, resistance and hybridity.

By operating alternative and parallel networks of self-expressive media development and circulation, some young people have achieved an environment for participatory communication. In the larger project that will emerge from this research, I tell vivid stories of drag-racing video makers, the first female blogger in Saudi Arabia, video letter producers and media-event organizers. Additionally, I recount the history of young poets, pirate radio, poster designers and others associated with contemporary popular movements. In line with Freire's argument, young people are reclaiming their rights to be treated as human beings in solidarity with others around the world.

Notes

1 See Nādir Farjānī, *The Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building a Knowledge Society* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2003), and *Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development* (New York: United Nations, 2009).

2 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979); John Downing, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001); Clemencia Rodríguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media*. (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 2001).

3 See Downing, *Radical Media.*

4 Fink Ployd, interview by Joe F. Khalil, February 12, 2008, and March 4, 2008, Beirut, Lebanon.

5 John Cranmer and Yolanda Zappaterra, *Conscientious Objectives: Designing for an Ethical Message* (Mies, Switzerland: RotoVision, 2003).

6 Ployd, interview by Joe F. Khalil, February 12 and March 4, 2008, Beirut.

7 Lin Noueihed, "Oil Spill Adds Ecological Crisis to Lebanon's Agony," *Reuters*, July 27, 2006, news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1241&dat=20060727&id=_n9TAAAAIBAJ&sjid=QoYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5148,478732 accessed August 2013.

8 In 1979, the Grand Mosque in Mecca – one of the Muslim Holy Shrines – came under attack by religiously motivated critics of the monarchy. The mosque siege was carried out by a small group of religious extremists; interestingly, their call for a halt to the cultural inundation of the kingdom by the West struck a deep chord of sympathy across the Kingdom. This event strengthened the position of conservatives within the Kingdom.

9 Al Mansour is a graduate of the American University in Cairo, where she studied comparative literature, and the New York Film Academy. She participated in an international exchange program sponsored by the US Department of State. Al Mansour's first feature film, *Wadjda*, made its debut at the 2012 Venice Film Festival.

10 Faye Ginsburg, "Embedded aesthetics: creating a discursive space for indigenous media," in *Planet TV: A Global Television Reader,* S. Kumar and L. Parks, eds. (New York: NYU Press, 2003), 308.

11 The story echoed a news item: an armed activist had slipped through police roadblocks thanks to a long black veil.

12 "Shooting from the Heart: Alumni Spotlight Haifaa al Mansour," www.aucegypt.edu/alumni/spotlight/almansour.htm accessed November 11, 2009.

Civil war in Syria led to calls for protection of Syrian Christians in the name of religious freedom. Photo: Kobby Dagan, Shutterstock

5

Religious freedom and the crisis in Syria

ELIZABETH SHAKMAN HURD

The "First Freedom"

In the United States, religious freedom is described as the "first freedom," a fundamental human right and a *sine qua non* of modern democratic politics, if not of civilization itself. Americans, we are told, invented and perfected religious freedom. It is ready for export – and exporting it we are. A rapidly escalating number of actors are engaged in promoting religious freedom across state borders. Some are American, but many are not. Some are state-sponsored, and others are not. Legal guarantees of religious freedom are embedded as riders in trade agreements, aid packages and humanitarian projects around the world. Diplomats are taught how to persuade their counterparts to safeguard religious freedom. Foreign policy establishments are formalizing and bureaucratizing its promotion.

The most recent example is Canada, where Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced recently that his government is creating an Office of Religious Freedom at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, modeled on the Office of International Religious Freedom in the US Department of State. The EU is also promoting religious freedom in its external-affairs programming, adding clauses to bilateral trade agreements with North African and Central Asian trading partners that guarantee a commitment to religious freedom. Initiatives to train EU diplomats in religious freedom promotion are also in the works.

Again, the emphasis is on formalizing religious freedom advocacy by public authorities. At the United Nations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is in its third decade of promoting religious freedom and recently initiated a campaign to combat incitement to religious hatred. This office has a large bureaucracy, led by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. It focuses on ensuring state compliance with international human rights norms and standards developed over the past 60 years and embodied in declarations such the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among others.

The promotion of religious freedom is ubiquitous, and not only by evangelicals. An impressive array of institutions and public authorities across the political spectrum, secular and religious, have taken up the cause of religious freedom, which is fast becoming a language used to garner international political legitimacy. When the Moroccan Justice and Development Party won the November 2011 parliamentary elections, prominent party member and future Minister of Justice and Liberties Mustafa Ramid underlined the party's commitment to religious freedom: "We have a progressive approach to Islam. The Islamicization of Morocco will be achieved only by re-establishing justice and religious freedom."[1]

In all of the excitement surrounding religious freedom as a universal norm – who can be against religious freedom? – it is easy to forget that these are political projects, situated *in* history and implemented by powerful state and international authorities. It is easy to overlook the fact that religious freedom is a site of politics, discipline and governance. It is easy to be swept up in the collective common sense that guaranteeing religious freedom is what stands between us and pre-modern political orders based on tyrannical forms of religious authority that leave women and minorities in the dust. Positioned as the only alternative to these highly unappealing options, it is not surprising that religious freedom projects and policies have gathered so much momentum.

Yet the promotion of religious freedom is not simply about the spread of a universal norm or international legal standard. Instead, these are projects that help to define what it means to be *religious* and to be *free* in the modern world. Reaching consensus on an issue as complex as what it means to be religious – to be free, to be a human being with dignity – may seem difficult, if not impossible, yet this is what these projects claim to do. They shape and constrain political realities and religious possibilities on the ground. They lead to the creation of new categories of actors in world politics, the adoption of new tasks, mandates and commissions, and the dissemination of new models of social and religious organization. These dynamics are hard to see because over the past two decades the right to religious freedom has become what Lila Abu-Lughod calls a "dialect of universality."[2] Religious freedom is "being disseminated through international institutions and practices so that it is, to some extent, everywhere – translated, resisted, vernacularized, invoked in political struggles and made the standard language enforced by power."[3] Like human rights, religious freedom has in some sense captured the field of emancipatory possibility. Religious freedom stands in for the good and the right in many difficult and often violent situations.

I would like to step back for a moment from both the excitement and the anxiety surrounding the frenzied promotion of religious freedom. What happens if we examine the political and religious worlds that these projects are creating? What is being made and done in the name of religious freedom? What alternative possibilities for

negotiating across deep lines of social and religious difference are foreclosed upon by this laser-like focus on securing religious freedom, at any cost? I will explore these questions in reference to the conflict in Syria. I then ask whether the world created by religious freedom is a world we want to live in. And if not, is there an alternative?

Crisis in Syria

Calls for the protection of persecuted Christians in Syria and around the Middle East have been a cornerstone of US-based foreign policy advocacy in the wake of the uprisings. There are serious concerns here, and we need to pay attention to these developments. But let's look more closely at how the problem has been framed and the consequences of this framing. Specifically, consider the paradoxical possibility that framing the problem in Syria as a crisis of religious freedom may help to *create* the very problems that religious freedom purports to solve.[4]

Joe Eibner of Christian Solidarity International has lobbied US President Barack Obama to urge UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon to declare a genocide warning for Christians across the Middle East. Howard Berman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee says that the future of minorities is "on our agenda as we figure out how to help these countries" and their treatment of Christians and other minorities is a "'red line' that will affect future aid."[5] Habib Malik of Lebanese American University calls for Western nations to stand up for the rights of Christians, who he says may be cleansed from lands where democratic elections are used to oppress minorities rather than empower them. While this must be done "in a way that is not misperceived on the other end," Malik says, "the West should not be cowed."[6] *USA Today* reports that "Christians in Syria, where Muslims have risen up against President Bashar Assad, have been subjected to murder, rape and kidnappings in Damascus and rebellious towns, according to Christian rights groups."

The momentum builds. The logic of the story is clear: When Muslims rise up against Assad, the result is Christian persecution. But the Syrian protests are *not* captured by the notion of Muslims rising up against Assad. This is the regime's story. For decades, the Assads have relied on the threat of sectarian anarchy lurking just below the surface to justify autocratic rule. When the media, government officials and public figures frame the revolt not as a popular uprising against a secular autocracy, but as an armed sectarian conflict pitting Sunnis against Alawites and their Shiite allies (Iran and Hezbollah), it hardens lines of religious difference. It brings these lines to the surface, accentuates, and aggravates them. This makes sectarian violence *more*, rather than less, likely. This framing of the conflict energizes and fortifies categories of religious difference (Christian, Alawite, Sunni) that might not otherwise necessarily define it. Syrians, like people everywhere, hold multiple allegiances, often celebrate diverse traditions, are frequently of

mixed backgrounds, and do not always fit into the rubrics of religious identitarianism that are demanded by the sectarian foundational assumptions of religious-freedom discourse. Left out in the cold, these "in-between" individuals find themselves in the impossible position of having to make political claims on religious grounds, or having no grounds from which to speak.[7]

In the case of Syria, advocacy in the name of religious freedom adds fuel to the fire of the very sectarian conflict that religious freedom claims to be uniquely equipped to transcend. To suggest that the conflict stems from a failure to acknowledge the rights of believers conceals the ways in which social divisions cut across sectarian divides. It obscures the ways forward that emerge when the focus is not on beliefs or communities of believers, but on shared human needs and visions. The crisis in Syria calls for an approach to protecting human life and dignity that goes beyond calls for freedom of belief, and that loosens the grip of this construct on the political imaginary of the conflict.

The enforcement and enhancement of the logic of sectarianism extends beyond Syria to other contexts, where calls for the protection of persecuted minorities have become a defining feature of the political landscape. A similarly tragic trajectory characterizes the uprising in Bahrain, where an embattled regime challenged by both Shiite and Sunni dissenters has framed the conflict as sectarian, mobilizing Sunni against Shiite on the claim that the latter are controlled by a predatory Iran.[8] As Joost Hiltermann argues, "by whipping up sectarian sentiments, the [Bahraini] government hopes to change the perception of the conflict from one that pits a popular pro-democracy movement against an authoritarian regime to one of a sectarian struggle between Sunni and Shia, with the strong government needed to maintain order."[9]

In Syria, Bahrain or elsewhere, the complex histories, experiences and ambivalences that inflect and shape contemporary religious identification cannot be squeezed into the rigid categories solicited and imposed by the discourse of religious freedom. Here, recent scholarship in religious studies is helpful. As Noah Salomon and Jeremy Walton argue:

> What makes someone a believer or a member of a faith community and what makes someone not so? What life experiences, confessional commitments and ritual practices qualify one as an insider, and which prohibit an individual from inclusion? Are 'insider' and 'outsider' categories that we must inhabit permanently, or can we move creatively between them? Most important, should scholars [or governments?] attempt to adjudicate these questions of religious identity and belonging, thereby becoming arbiters of orthodoxy?[10]

In this passage, Salomon and Walton allude to the complexities of religious affiliation and practice. They acknowledge the difficulties of assigning individuals to the category of believer or non-believer. They allude to the structures of power – the "arbiters of orthodoxy" – that are implicated in deciding who is in and who is out. Contemporary

international religious freedom advocacy works in the opposite direction. Instead of questioning the power of established authorities to make designations, and rather than interrogating the ability and willingness of individuals to live according to these designations, these projects reify these categories, funnel people into one community or the other, and reinforce lines of difference that otherwise might not be as salient. Religious freedom, paradoxically, serves as an arbiter of orthodoxy. Is there an alternative?

Other Freedoms

The globalization of religious freedom is not a sign of the triumph of rational, peaceful religion as individual belief over its archaic and violent rivals. It is also not a sign of the triumph of religion over secularist attempts to run it off the court. There is a more complex – and less self-congratulatory – story to be told. These political and religious initiatives draw lines that divide religion from nonreligion (often marked as "culture"), differentiate believer from nonbeliever, and mark off one religious community from another. Religious-freedom advocacy does not merely enforce a universal norm, as liberal internationalists would have it. Instead, it helps to create individual subjects and "faith communities" for whom *choosing* and *believing* in religion are seen as the defining characteristics of what it is to be a modern subject, and the right to choose to believe (or not) as the essence of what it means to be free. To achieve this unity in freedom of belief, belief in belief, as it were, across communities of believers and nonbelievers, is for many advocates what it means to have achieved religious freedom.

This top-down model of religious freedom may empower religious authorities at the expense of dissenters, doubters and those on the margins of a community. It may also undermine democracy. [11] This is not because democracy is necessarily secular, but because the hierarchical, institutionalized forms of religion defended by US bishops, the US Department of State, Open Doors, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Christian Solidarity International and other powerful advocates for religious liberty heavily regulate – and may shut down – the spaces in which non-established, diverse and democratic forms of religion actually have a chance to flourish.

If the problem that religious freedom is designed to solve is to find ways to live together across deep, multidimensional social diversity and difference, then it may be something that necessarily occurs, if it is to mean anything, *outside* of the spaces enacted through legal regulation by authorities public and private, religious and secular. This requires an alternative approach to the construct. One possibility is to adapt to this context a notion of freedom articulated by Foucault. In this image, William Connolly explains, freedom is "not reducible to the freedom of subjects; it is at least partly the release of that which does not fit into the molds of subjectivity and normalization." This leads to a "conception of rights attached not

to the self as subject, but especially to that which is defined by the normalized subject as otherness, as deviating from or falling below or failing to live up to the standards of subjectivity."[12] Religious freedom emerges here as a site of resistance or mode of insurrection against institutionalized authorities, rather than as a form of religious and political discipline. Rather than being enforced by powerful authorities, it is attached precisely to that which is defined by these authorities as otherness, as unorthodox, as dissenting, or as minoritarian.

An example is the campaign by the US Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which represents 80 percent of Catholic nuns in the United States and currently faces disciplinary action by the Vatican for promoting, among other things, doctrinal errors and "radical feminist themes." These criticisms were detailed in the recent "Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious." In Castelli's description of the assessment, "religious freedom emerges as nothing more than a mode of shoring up the authority of the Magisterium of the Bishops, not a set of values that shelters and protects the acts of conscience undertaken by Catholic women religious in the United States. Yet ironically, recourse to a robust notion of personal conscience is an unambiguously orthodox position in Catholic theology and a fully justifiable exercise of religious freedom on the part of the nuns."[13]

The agonistic model of religious freedom that I draw attention to here is not something that can be promoted by a state, a church, an international organization or any other centralized, hierarchical authority. As mentioned above, it is attached to and emerges as a site of resistance to attempts to arbitrate orthodoxy, whether secular or religious. If this is the case, and if religious freedom is not something that can be promoted by arbiters of orthodoxy, whether religious or political, then what *are* all of these centralized, hierarchical religious and political authorities promoting? In whose name do they speak? Are the authorities empowered by the viral spread of religious freedom actually capable of assessing and judging the lives of those they seek to redeem?[14]

I think not. It is incumbent on scholars, practitioners and others to re-imagine religious freedom as a site of resistance against powerful institutionalized authorities, both religious and secular, rather than as a form of religious and political discipline imposed by them. It is time to respond to the tsunami of religious freedom advocacy in the name of alternate ways of being religious and being human, now sidelined, ironically, by the hegemony of religious freedom.

Notes

1 Souad Mekhennet and Maïa de la Baume, "Moderate Islamist Party Winning Morocco Election," *New York Times*, November 26, 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/11/27/world/africa/moderate-islamist-party-winning-morocco-election accessed August 2013.

2 Lila Abu-Lughod, "Against Universals: The Dialects of (Women's) Human Rights and Human Capabilities," in J. Michelle Molina and Donald K. Swearer, eds., *Rethinking the Human* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 87.

3 Abu-Lughod, 85.

4 This section expands upon my post, "Believing in religious freedom," The Immanent Frame, March 1, 2012, bit.ly/wqmRWT. This post is part a series, guest edited by Winnifred Fallers Sullivan and myself, in conjunction with a joint research project on religious freedom. The series (http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/the-politics-of-religious-freedom/) considers the multiple histories and genealogies of religious freedom – and the multiple contexts in which those histories and genealogies are salient today.

5 Oren Dorell and Sarah Lynch, "Christians fear losing freedoms in Arab Spring movement," *USA Today,* January 31, 2012, usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/story/2012-01-30/arab-spring-christians/52894182/1 accessed August 2013.

6 Quoted in Dorell and Lynch.

7 Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Theologizing Human Rights: Christian Activism and the Limits of Religious Freedom," in Michel Feher with Gaëlle Krikorian and Yates McKee, eds. *Non-Governmental Politics* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 684.

8 Joost Hiltermann, "Bahrain: A New Sectarian Conflict?" *The New York Review of Books Blog*, May 8, 2012. Hiltermann observes that, "Sunni-Shia interaction is what defines daily life at the workplace and in many neighborhoods."

9 Ibid.

10 Noah Salomon and Jeremy F. Walton, "Religious criticism, secular criticism, and the 'critical study of religion': lessons from the study of Islam," in Robert A. Orsi, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 406.

11 Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, "The world that *Smith* made," The Immanent Frame, March 7, 2012, blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/03/07/the-world-that-smith-made/ accessed August 2013.

12 William E. Connolly, "Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness," *Political Theory* 13 (1985): 371.

13 Elizabeth A. Castelli, "The bishops, the sisters, and religious freedom," The Immanent Frame, May 16, 2012, blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/05/16/the-bishops-the-sisters-and-religious-freedom/ accessed August 2013.

14 Lila Abu-Lughod, "Anthropology in the Territory of Rights, Islamic, Human, and Otherwise..." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 167 (2010), 255.

Part II

Transnational migrations

How people, ideas and forms move through the region

Mecca in the late 1920s saw foreign Islamic reformers balancing political realities with modernization efforts. Photo: Corbis

6

Walking a tightrope

Egyptian reformers in Mecca, 1928 – 29

HENRI LAUZIÈRE

When it comes to the development of modern Islamic reform in the 20th century, there is something of a blind spot in historical scholarship. While few would deny the rise in influence of Saudi emirs and their religious scholars within reformist circles from the 1920s onward, little is known about the details of the relationship between leading Islamic activists, especially Egyptians, and the newly created Saudi state. Historians have noted how Egypt-based reformers put their skills, reputations and even their printing presses at the service of the Saudis, thereby appearing to be more or less in line with the understanding of Islam that prevailed in Najd. The best example is that of Rashīd Riḍā (1865 – 1935), whose repeated efforts to rehabilitate the Wahhabis and elevate their status are well-known. But beyond these general remarks, at least two fundamental questions remain unanswered. First, how and to what extent did the nascent Saudi state and the transnational movement of Islamic reform, whose intellectual center of gravity was in Egypt, influence each other? Second, why did a number of Egyptian activists such as Riḍā and his associates (who were in a relatively strong position to direct the course of Islamic reform) embrace the religious ideas emanating from the Saudi state, to the point of compromising on some of the liberal principles upon which their movement had been based since the time of al-Afghānī and `Abduh in the late 19th century?

Given the dearth of historical analysis on these issues, scholars have sometimes had to resort to wild guesses and generalities to explain these apparent discontinuities. In the case of Riḍā, some have speculated that a younger and more rigorist confidant – possibly Muḥammad Naṣīf in Jeddah – may have persuaded him to change his religious views and drawn him closer to Wahhabism.[1] Historian Albert Hourani, who seems to have felt strangely at a loss for an explanation, intimated that Riḍā's Syrian origins must have made him sympathetic to Hanbalism, which in turn must have made him sympathetic to Wahhabism.[2] Another argument, which is common but nonetheless verges on historical determinism, is that liberal tendencies in Egypt and other Arab countries had grown to such an extent that they elicited a natural counter-reaction, thus making

the triumph of Wahhabi ideas almost inevitable.[3] But while there is no doubt that the colonial context of the 1920s made it easier for certain Islamic activists to adopt a more conservative outlook, contextualization alone does not make for a satisfying historical explanation.

The aforementioned questions thus deserve closer examination than they have received, not only because they have not yet been properly answered, but also because they matter in the grand scheme of the history of Islamic activism. In a way, the epicenter of Riḍā's Islamic reform movement slowly started to shift from Egypt to the Saudi state in the 1920s – hence the need for a more substantial interpretation of how and why this change occurred. Likewise, understanding the intellectual origins of contemporary Egyptian Salafism requires us to examine Saudi-Egyptian connections, which began well before the 1970s. It is one thing to acknowledge that many of today's Egyptian Salafis are the products of Saudi institutions or that they received their training from Saudi-based scholars. But it is another thing to attempt to explain the part that early-20th-century Egyptian activists played in turning the Saudi state into an influential center of religious learning. To be sure, Mecca and Medina had always attracted students of Islamic sciences from various regions, if only because of the pilgrimage; but in the early 20th century, the intellectual reputation of these two cities did not match that of Cairo by any means.

So how do we go about finding empirically grounded answers to these questions? One way is to direct our attention to the Islamic reformers who chose to support the nascent Saudi state *in situ* – a fact that is not widely known. In the mid-1920s, a few Egyptians activists did indeed relocate to the Hijaz on purpose. There were others who came from Morocco, Algeria, India and, later, Mali, to name a few countries, but extant evidence suggests that the Egyptians formed the most significant contingent of foreign reformers in the Saudi state. Their contributions from the late 1920s to the 1940s go well beyond that which I can acknowledge in this paper. For example, they proved instrumental as founders of, and teachers in, new educational centers such as the Saudi Scientific Institute and Dār al-Ḥadīth in Mecca, as well as Dār al-Tawḥīd in Ta'if. But one of their achievements is particularly noteworthy because it yielded what is arguably the richest primary source on the activities of foreign reformers in the newly created Saudi state, namely, the periodical *al-Iṣlāḥ* (The Reform) that was published in Mecca in 1928 – 29. Its founder and editor was the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (1892 – 1959), a graduate of al-Azhar who had previously founded the pietistic organization *Anṣār al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya* in Cairo in 1926, which has since become a pillar of Salafism in Egypt. No other documentary evidence offers a comparable window into the goals and discourse of foreign Islamic reformers in what was then called the Kingdom of Hijaz, Najd and its Dependencies (*Mamlakat al-Ḥijāz wa Najd wa Mulḥaqātihā*).

It is not clear how Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī found employment in the Hijaz. But if the stories of his five closest colleagues are any indication, Rashīd Riḍā probably recommended him to King `Abd al-`Azīz ibn Sa`ūd. In any case, we know that al-Fiqī left Cairo for Mecca in 1928 and stayed there until 1930 or 1931. Named president of the newly created Meccan Department of Printing and Publication (*ra'īs shu`bat al-ṭab`wa-l-nashr bi-Makka*), he also worked as a teacher, in addition to taking the initiative of establishing the first modern Islamic periodical in the Saudi state. *Al-Iṣlāḥ* was modeled after Rashīd Riḍā's seminal reformist journal *al-Manār* (The Lighthouse), and in fact Riḍā himself confided that he met with al-Fiqī in 1928 to give him advice about his editorship. [4] Al-Fiqī was not only close and, by his own avowal, intellectually indebted to Riḍā; he was also, to some extent, an agent of the Manār school of Islamic reform in the Saudi Hijaz, as were other Egyptian disciples of Riḍā who collaborated to *al-Iṣlāḥ*, such as the Egyptians `Abd al-Ẓāhir Abū al-Samḥ and Muḥammad `Abd al-Razzāq Ḥamza.

That foreign Islamic reformers sought to influence the development of the Saudi state from within is not mere speculation. In 1926, Riḍā had already asked his readers worldwide to help the fragile new polity with their modern skills and knowledge. [5] With the support of his mentor in Cairo and the assistance of other Muslim activists who had moved to the Hijaz at the recommendation of Riḍā, this is exactly what al-Fiqī set out to do. But to understand the rationale behind this devotion to the Saudi state, one must look beyond the surface narrative. Although Riḍā and his associates did become apologists for the Wahhabis, a closer look at their writings reveals that they actually had mixed feelings about the religious scholars from Najd. In Riḍā's case, two things in particular still worried him in the mid-1920s. One was the Wahhabis' lack of modern knowledge and scientific inclination. How was the new Saudi state going to flourish without these? The other was the Wahhabis' self-defeating religious rigidity. Riḍā trusted King `Abd al-`Azīz to be open-minded and pragmatic in order to consolidate the new state, but he was not so optimistic concerning the religious scholars. If many of them remained narrow-minded, and if they refused to sanction the development of the Saudi state along modern lines, then how could King `Abd al-`Azīz succeed?

These concerns go a long way toward explaining the presence of foreign Islamic reformers in the Hijaz. In public, Riḍā and his associates supported the Wahhabis wholeheartedly in order to assuage the anxieties of other Muslims following the Saudi conquest of the two holy cities. But in private, these same activists attempted to reorient the Wahhabis away from their counterproductive opposition to modernist Islamic reform. For the most part, political reasons account for these attitudes. Riḍā's ultimate objective, for example, was clearly to ensure the triumph of a strong, modern, independent and still religious Muslim state in the post-Ottoman era. (An openly Islamic

version of Mustafa Kemal's Turkey, so to speak.) His best hope was the Saudi state: It could symbolize the reemergence of Muslim greatness and political power in a colonial world, provided that Wahhabi scholars and their followers did not sabotage the efforts of the Saudi king. Hence the need to render these Wahhabis more amenable to the modernist kind of Islamic reform that prevailed in Cairo.

In the first issue of *al-Iṣlāḥ*, Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī made it clear that the journal was to be the voice of Islamic reformers, and that its primary purpose was to help the Saudi state to progress as much as possible. This goal was to be achieved by providing written advice (presumably to both religious and political authorities) on religious, social and moral issues, and also by linking the Hijaz to the rest of the Muslim community worldwide. In other words, *al-Iṣlāḥ* was to facilitate the integration of the Saudi state into the transnational movement of Islamic reform and, hopefully, bring the former in tune with the ideals of the latter. But at the same time, al-Fiqī and his collaborators had to walk a tightrope. They were in the Hijaz to push for modernist reforms, but could not risk either discrediting or antagonizing the local *`ulamā'* and *umarā'* for fear of doing a disservice to the Saudi state itself – thus undermining their own agenda. One telling example is the fundamental compromise to which al-Fiqī consented in 1928. When he broached the idea of creating *al-Iṣlāḥ* to King `Abd al-`Azīz, the latter gave his assent, but reportedly demanded that the journal avoid dealing with political issues altogether.[6] In the Saudi Hijaz, therefore, modern Islamic reform could not be as multifaceted, independent or liberal as it was in Cairo. There were clear taboos.

But, in fact, *al-Iṣlāḥ* did tackle topics that were inherently political, such as the importance of independence and freedom, as well as the need for national industries (*al-ṣinā`āt al-waṭaniyya*) as a means to end economic dependency and prevent foreign domination. Evidently, what the king did not want al-Fiqī and his collaborators to do was meddle with Saudi politics and express any kind of criticism, constructive or not, toward the Saudi state. Criticizing other Muslim states, however, posed no problem. In November 1928, *al-Iṣlāḥ* published an anonymous article that offered a scathing critique of Egypt's government and its public servants. Based on speculations and anecdotal evidence taken from Egyptian newspapers, the article posited that Egypt had an absurdly high crime rate, given that more than half a million students graduated from al-Azhar and other religious schools each year, and that "perhaps" most of these students became judges and police officers. How could criminality be so widespread in the very Muslim country that was supposed to have reached the highest level of progress (*al-raqqī*) and modern civilization (*al-`umrān al-`aṣrī*)?

The answer, according to the article, was that Egypt was not really a "civilized country," regardless of its actual development. However, the Saudi state was depicted as the opposite. Despite the size of Najd

and the Hijaz, and despite the fact that most of their inhabitants were poor Bedouins with few resources, crime was virtually unknown in these parts. Whereas Egypt had thousands of murderers and tens of thousands of thieves (one wonders how the author arrived at these figures), the number of criminals imprisoned in the Hijaz apparently did not exceed thirty. Without any hard data, and without considering basic sociological factors such as demography or the possible link between urbanization and crime, the article drove the point home that the young Saudi state was a success story because 1) it had a religious constitution, 2) its inhabitants understood that constitution, and 3) sincere and capable men implemented that constitution. In sum, the article depicted the Saudi polity as the ideal Islamic state and the mirror image of Egypt: united, safe, virtuous and amazingly efficient, against all odds.

To be sure, praising the Saudi state in such terms was not uncommon at the time. Riḍā and other pro-Saudi reformers such as Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (1886 – 1969) similarly proclaimed the merits, real or imagined, of the new Arabian kingdom. But the ambivalent language of *al-Iṣlāḥ* stood out as truly unusual. On the one hand, the article conveyed ideas that blatantly contradicted the reformist message of *al-Manār*, as can be gauged from the comment – directed at Egypt and its Middle Eastern neighbors – criticizing "the prevailing sources of evil in today's greatest kingdoms with regard to civilization and scientific progress [*uṣūl al-sharr al-muntashira fī a`ẓām al-mamālik al-ān ḥaḍāratan wa taqaddumanfī-l-`ulūm*]."[7] In Cairo, the leading reformist periodicals never went that far. But on the other hand, *al-Iṣlāḥ* described the antidote to these evils in a distinctly modernist idiom. The emphasis on constitutionalism is noteworthy: The article argued that the Qur'an was the best possible constitution (*dustūr*) for guaranteeing the common good, hence the success of the Saudi state. It also presented God's revelation as a form of sociology *avant la lettre;* that is, as a source of knowledge (*`ilm*) about the moral ills and social diseases that lead to crime and indecency – a knowledge that any government must possess if it wishes to ensure social peace. Here again, al-Fiqī and his collaborators seemed to walk a tightrope between the promotion of a modernist understanding of Islam and the need to win over the Wahhabis without arousing their ire. There is indeed something ironic about the fact that the article pretends to condemn modern ways and ideas, while in fact promoting them. Other articles throughout *al-Iṣlāḥ* exhibit the same kind of ambiguity.

Additional evidence supports the interpretation that Egyptian reformers attempted, sometimes clumsily, to influence the Wahhabis. There is no denying, for instance, that al-Fiqī used *al-Iṣlāḥ* to promote the compatibility between technological innovations and Islam – a basic modernist principle that many Wahhabis still opposed in the late 1920s. We know that Riḍā himself had faced this problem earlier in 1928, when the Najdi scholar `Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al-Sa`dī (1889 – 1956) wrote him to complain about the proliferation of

Egyptian modernist publications that invited Muslims to learn and respect modern sciences. Al-Sa`dī had even accused *al-Manār* of being guilty of this sin. In his response, which he made public, Riḍā insisted that natural sciences were, on the contrary, an absolute necessity. Because no Muslim state could achieve power without them, modern sciences could not possibly be considered incompatible with Islam. In an effort to counter this false notion, Riḍā wrote that he intended to mail King `Abd al-`Azīz ten copies of his own Qur'anic exegesis so that the Wahhabis could learn from it.[8]

In Mecca, al-Fiqī tried to pursue his mentor's objective. It is no coincidence that many of *al-Iṣlāḥ*'s articles focused on the necessity and acceptability of modern science and technology, thus contradicting the aforementioned idea that scientific progress was a source of evil. Al-Fiqī argued that modern sciences, from astronomy to engineering, were of Middle Eastern origins and, therefore, could not be deemed Western innovations. In that sense, planes, tanks and submarines, as well as mechanical and electrical devices – including the telegraph – were all perfectly Islamic, for medieval Muslim scholars had previously developed the science behind them.[9] Moreover, *al-Iṣlāḥ* made sure to discuss and praise Riḍā's modernist exegesis, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, especially its sections on science and civilizational progress.[10]

But some Wahhabis continued to complain. In December 1928, al-Fiqī was forced to apologize for a previous article written for *al-Iṣlāḥ* by the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad `Abd al-`Azīz al-Khūlī (1892-1931), who was in Cairo. Among other things, al-Khūlī argued that the details of Islamic law had to be laid out according to the needs of the time.[11] While it is likely that this line of reasoning disturbed some religious scholars in the Saudi state, al-Fiqī did not refute it. Yet he apologized for having failed to properly review the article before publishing it, and corrected some doctrinal mistakes.[12] Thereafter, strict orthodoxy and orthopraxy became the leitmotiv of the journal until its final issue in July 1929. Articles about Marconi and the Wright brothers gave way to articles about Hanbali and Wahhabi figures. The contents and the tone of *al-Iṣlāḥ* changed so much that in 1929 one prominent Damascene scholar pressured the great Shakīb Arslān (1869 – 1946) to ask al-Fiqī to moderate the language of his journal for the sake of Muslim unity.[13]

All this suggests that as much as al-Fiqī and his team tried to promote Islamic modernist ideas while appearing religiously credible in the eyes of the Wahhabis, this balancing act often proved unsustainable. In reality, Egyptian reformers ended up subordinating some of the ideals of the *Manār* school to political expediency (ideals such as modernist political reform, rationalist reinterpretation of the religious tradition and tolerance of intra-Islamic diversity) and, by the same token, allowed themselves to be influenced by the religious ethos of the Wahhabis. On the whole, Riḍā and his associates then

considered the strengthening of Saudi state power and independence to be more crucial for the good of the *umma* than the promotion of certain liberal reformist principles.

Notes

1 Bernard Haykel mentions the existence of such theories in his "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 46 – 47.

2 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798 – 1939*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 231.

3 `Abd al-Rahman Abdulrahman `Abd al-Rahim, "The Effect of Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab's Salafiyya *Da`wa* on Religious and Social Reform in Egypt," in *A History of the Arabian Peninsula*, ed. Fahd al-Semmari (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 138 – 139.

4 *al-Manār* 29 (1928), 480.

5 *al-Manār* 27 (1926), 18.

6 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928), 5.

7 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928), 163.

8 *al-Manār* 29 (1928), 147.

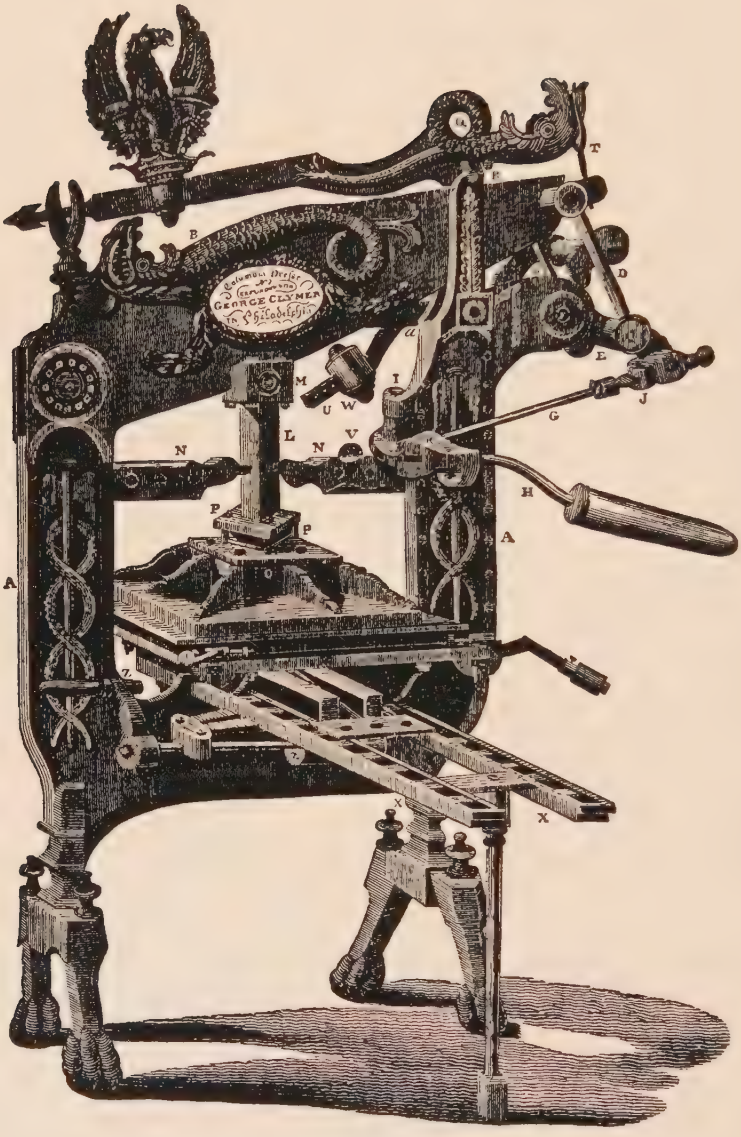
9 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928), 203, 221 – 223.

10 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929), 294 – 296, 381 – 382.

11 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928), 157.

12 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1928), 235.

13 *al-Iṣlāḥ* 1 (1929), 442, 444. Riḍā's disciples did not reveal the name of this Damascene scholar.



Khalīl al-Khūrī's novel *Wayy, Idhan Lastu bi Afranjī* dates to the 1850s, making it the first known Arabic novel. Image: Corbis

7

Importing the novel

Arabic literature's foreign objects

REBECCA C. JOHNSON

Khalīl al-Khūrī begins the introduction to his novel, *Wayy, Idhan Lastu bi Afranjī* [Alas, then I Am Not a Foreigner], by telling the reader about beginnings:

> Readers of books, ever since the craft of writing was established, have been sentenced with the punishment of also reading introductions. And if we are to embark upon this art, it is not appropriate for us to stray from the path of our honorable authors. So we must therefore present an introduction here, and struggle to understand what ... the pen has brought us to write. It is for the reader to burn it or tear it up if it does not suit his mood. [1]

Introducing as it does the earliest known novel to be written in Arabic, "beginnings" seems like an appropriate subject for meditation. Recently discovered in the rare books collection of the American University of Beirut, *Wayy* dates to 1859 – nearly half a century earlier than Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (long considered the first Arabic novel). [2] Yet while its cover, re-issued by Egypt's state press in 2007, heralds it as "the first Arabic novel" and thereby stakes a claim in the one of the central debates of Arabic literary studies, al-Khūrī seems less interested in establishing this status. Neither of his two introductions announces the inauguration of a genre, nor does either imply that he considered himself to be doing anything very *new.* Instead, al-Khūrī imagines himself as following the lead of the "honorable authors" who came before him. The genre in Arabic begins, it seems, with a gesture toward a derivative history.

To say this, though, isn't to tell scholars of Arabic literature anything they haven't heard before. In most literary histories, the Arabic novel has been characterized as derivative, a genre imported from Europe in the 19th century and then imitated by Arab authors until they finally produce a "real" or "authentic" Arabic novel, usually in the second decade of the 20th century. [3] Standing as a benchmark for modernity, the Arabic novel has been seen as representing a larger process of catching up with Europe, with acculturation characterizing the 19th-century period in which it was produced, the *Nahḍah*. A word meaning "renaissance" or "revival," the *Nahḍa* was once considered a period of cultural efflorescence initiated by contact with Europe – where the arrival of the West heralded progress. [4] This, though, is an

old story, and is being challenged by Arabists who are complicating the narrative of acculturation. I try to build on their work of reimagining the *Nahḍa,* as Samah Selim has written, as "a dynamic constitutive process," rather than the inevitable product of the so-called encounter with the West.[5]

This goal is complicated, however, by the fact that *Wayy* seems concerned above all with products of the West, from novels to hats and cigarettes. It tells the story of a "foreignized" Aleppo merchant (or *mutafarranj*, one who imitates the customs of the *afrānj,* or Franks) as he attempts to marry his daughter to a mysterious European visitor. It is a plot that serves as a microcosm for the *Nahḍah*'s cultural encounters, with the protagonist, Mikhālī, serving as a negative model for how one might "heed the voice of the age," as al-Khuri writes, as it calls for "moral and material progress" (44). Mikhālī's attempt at progress via acculturation fails, as his daughter – after spurning her Arab suitor – is rejected by the French count. As he tells Mikhālī, "Europeans aren't accustomed to marrying Arabs" (127). Mikhālī's despairing response comprises the title, as he tells him "*wayy, Idhan lastu bi-afranjī*"("Alas, then I am not a foreigner").

Mikhālī is not a foreigner (*franjī*) but a *mutafarranj* (pseudo-foreigner), one, as al-Khūrī describes it, who wears foreign clothes and speaks English or French more fluently than Arabic. Or, as the author pithily puts it, he mistakes "the European tailor's shop for a school for civilization" (162). That is to say: Far from denying the idea that the "new age" was characterized by material and immaterial things being "imported" from the West, al-Khūrī seems to be taking them as the object of his interrogation, focusing on the consumption of foreign objects and texts as the problematic locus of modernity.[6]

Even as it focuses the discussion back on products of the so-called 'encounter with the West,' *Wayy* does so with an understanding of objects that sees them as complexly tied up with agency, subjectivity and modernity. (After all, it is the *pen* that brings *him* to write in the introduction.) In emphasizing the materiality of his book and its fragility in the hands of consumers – the pages that a reader might tear or burn – we can see the novel as self-consciously embedded within transnational circuits of literary and material consumption. Al-Khūrī leads us to ask, what can be gained if we take the idea of "importing" seriously and try to understand the novel as both "*literary and material*," as a textual object in international circulation?[7]

To begin to answer this question, we might start with the opening scene, which could be categorized as depicting the arrival of the West:

> The Frenchman or Englishman who leaves the Boulevards or Regent's Street on the first of the month will easily find himself in Beirut by the middle of it ... packing himself, along with spools of un-dyed cloth and yarn, into one of the steamers at Liverpool, he arrives at the Beirut harbor imagining that he has entered a great stage. It trembles with people of the East and the West, and the South and the North, as our guest sees this multitude babbling in their

own language and wearing their own costumes – for they wouldn't know a pair of pants from the alif of their language (this is the letter "A") and use things proper to the West in a manner that provokes laughter. (4 – 5)

Al-Khūrī begins here by indicating some of the prominent features of this new age, in which steamships allowed foreigners and foreign goods to arrive with increasing frequency at the ports of the Levant. In the 1830s, the opening of steamship routes in the Mediterranean coincided with Ottoman trade reforms and the expansion of credit, rapidly opening the empire to new levels of foreign investment, trade and immigration.[8] The largest consequence of these changes was the rapid growth of the production of agricultural exports – silk thread in present-day Syria and Lebanon, and cotton in Egypt. In Aleppo, where this story takes place, farmers exported raw cotton to English and French factories, where it was transformed into cheap undyed yarn twists and "white cloth," which Aleppan manufacturers then re-imported to dye and weave for the regional market.[9] It is not surprising, then, that al-Khūrī imagines foreigners to pack themselves "along with spools of undyed cloth and yarn" into the steamer. The textile industry was a major thread linking Europe to the Middle East in the 19th century.

Al-Khūrī thus situates the action in the context of the incorporation of Ottoman cities into an emerging global capitalist system. It was what al-Khūrī's father-in-law and fellow author called the "great global chain," linked "by means of the steamship [and] telegraph."[10] Or, as al-Khūrī imagines more precisely, cotton harvested near Aleppo filled "the bellies of English ships" and fed "the mouths of Manchester or Liverpool factories" (45). Not everyone on the chain was equally sated, as "foreign investment" turned into "foreign loans on unfavorable terms" and then "foreign rule." By the time of *Wayy*'s publication, Ottoman provinces were importing far more than they were exporting, and cheap, European-made textiles were putting pressure on local manufacturers – Aleppans, Beirutis and Caireans were being integrated into the global chain, largely as consumers in a global market whose center was elsewhere.

But this scene engages more than the novel's material context: Al-Khūrī is equally – if not more – interested in the corresponding cultural and intellectual relationships being formed. Here, denizens of the port don't know a pair of pants from the "letter A"; it is a scene in which a foreign commercial good can be rhetorically interchanged with a foreign textual object (marked typographically with a Latin "A" in the margin notes). This encounter, to use al-Khūrī's formula, is represented as *material* and *cultural* – coinciding with a homology between Western goods and ideas trade, in which deficits correlate with what has been called a "perceived civilizational deficit" by many of the period's intellectuals.[11] Yet – as you might have already suspected – this scene is difficult to assimilate to such a discourse, the "syntagm of reform" where decay and stagnation are

overcome through knowledge imported from the West. Al-Khūrī's typographical joke gives us a hint about that: Allowing the letter "A" to be interchanged with a pair of pants, he renders what was phonetic as pictographic, with the A's two angled legs troubling the Western alphabet's capacity to signify knowledge. It becomes, like the language of the Arabs in the harbor, "babble."

Most important, in this scene, al-Khūrī satirizes the traveler who, as he writes, "like most Europeans, leaves his thoughts at home, exchanging them for mountains of arrogance and ignorance" (5). In making reference to European travelers, this scene calls to mind narratives written by some of al-Khūrī's European contemporaries, such as Alexander Kinglake, Lady Hester Stanhope and Alphonse de Lamartine, whose travelogue he will later quote at length. All depict a similar arrival: landing in the Beirut harbor amongst foreign ships, goods for sale and a throng of unintelligible Arabs in unfamiliar costumes. Al-Khūrī's version, in fact, is distinguished only by its brevity – it reads like an inventory of tropes, a banal checklist of European travelogue-exoticism. And it packs the subject of those narratives, the traveler, into the cargo hold – using *yashhan*, a verb for freighted cargo, to describe his journey. Thus we see al-Khūrī importing European texts into Arabic not to emulate, but to parody.

This scene, then, not only depicts the international circulation of goods, but the literary circulation of images. In this sense, it participates in one of the overarching projects of the *Nahḍah*, as its intellectuals theorized their participation in larger material and literary circuits, whether in positing a universal history of development, an international literary sphere, or by participating in what one critic has called "global radical culture".[12] These are all ways that the *Nahḍah*'s thinkers posed questions of modernity in the context of what they identified as an age of increased interconnectedness.[13] The question was how – and on what terms – to negotiate their position in the connected world. It was a question of what it meant to "be a civilized Arab" as al-Khūrī puts it, in the crosscurrents of global capitalism, empire, and the trans-regional and potentially global community of the faithful. It was an attempt to understand the local not against the global, but within its unequal structures of exchange.

It is in this context that I want to read this opening scene – not just as depicting the arrival of Western goods or European literary modes, but as identifying the larger networks in which the characters and their objects are already embedded. By beginning his novel in the Beirut harbor, after all, al-Khūrī sets the action in a nodal site of international trade, where "people of the East and West and South and North" come together to do business. That is to say, this is not a scene of arrival at all, but one that engages the question of exchange itself, as a process in which A's become pants, people become cargo, and empiricist travel narratives become parodies. Importation is figured as a scene of exchange invoking problems of translatability

and value, which on the market are not intrinsic but what Gayatri Spivak has called textual, in that they have no adequate literal referent. Value, as Spivak writes, "is a vanishing semblance" that "can never appear on its own" – it is produced in exchange and circulation, where it is always on the move, in constant deferral that opens a gap within "identity as adequation."[14] As she quotes Marx in another essay, "You may turn and toss an ounce of gold in any way you like, and it will never weigh ten ounces. But here in the process of circulation one ounce practically does weigh ten ounces."[15] Especially in the context of 19th-century Ottoman monetary crises caused by the debasement of the *kurush* and later the introduction of paper money – where for a time 10 *kurush* really did equal 1 – we can see representations of international trade as engaging the textuality of value.[16]

We can see this in this opening scene, as the narration turns to focus on a local figure, *a mutafarranj,* one of those who "uses things proper to the West in a way that provokes laughter". In his use of circulating goods, he is described in a series of displacements, qualifications and implied quotations. As the narrator continues,

> this man was enveloped in what it is only correct, in the absence of proper names, to call "clothes:" wrapped in a white coat with tails that is referred to in other places as a "riding coat" [ridīnkūt], he holds in one hand a cane that he grips like a ship's oar, and keeps his other hand in his pocket like one who is afraid his wallet will burst out of it. And in his mouth was a Faubourg chimney, by which I mean what they call a sīkāra [cigarette].

Here the displacements, the transliterations from riding coat to *ridinkūt* or cigarette to *sīkāra,* we can see value's vanishing semblance, as what he wears can only be valued as clothes "in the absence of proper names."

This description also marks the introduction of the *mutafarranjiyīn* to the reader, describing him as the consumer of imported goods and even composed of them – this man's hand is mentioned only as the holder of a cane, and his mouth as the location of his cigarette. A figure for the circulatory matrices of the *Nahḍah*, his own value – his being a "civilized Arab" – also appears as a vanishing semblance in a series of exchanges. "If you see a man in Western clothes in Damascus," al-Khūrī writes, "one assumes that his grandfather married a foreigner. The protagonist of our story, for example, Mikhālī, learned a little of the language of his grandfather's wife's brother's godfather – and thereby became foreign" (34). To paraphrase Marx, a Syrian is not a Frenchman, but here in circulation, an Arab can seem to turn into a foreigner. Incorporated into the *Nahda*'s transnational economy as a consuming subject, the characters can cease to resemble themselves. And so despite their best efforts, the actions of the *mutafarranjiyīn* make them seem like characters in a "play denouncing European customs." Circulation produces subjects that are themselves a kind of "vanishing semblance."

The potential for transfiguration is already apparent to the reader of *Wayy,* as the narration highlights the promiscuity of circulation in Mikhālī's misused objects. By figuring the protagonist as wearing a coat both present in the Beirut harbor and "referred to in other places," and smoking a cigarette connected imaginatively to the Faubourgs of Paris, al-Khūrī emphasizes the character's potential to be embedded in mobile scales of value – where what passes as "clothes" in the West are laughable in the East. Each of the objects Mikhālī consumes, in fact, is an international commodity whose value is determined not just by its local market, but in several at once. In a century when the price of Ottoman-manufactured products was particularly volatile, al-Khūrī's readers would have felt the contingency of value firsthand. Indeed, they would have read about it in al-Khūrī's journal, *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār* [The Garden of News], which first serialized *Wayy.* In addition to being one of the first venues for serialized fiction in Arabic, it was advertised as a "literary, political, commercial journal" – and was devoted to providing its readers with the knowledge necessary to do business on the world market. It was a venue, that is, in which one read about how consumer objects were "referred to in other places" and how they were valued there.

Subscribers read chapters from *Wayy* alongside the "commercial bulletin" that gave currency exchange rates and commodity prices in international trading centers. And next to these was a space reserved for advertisements, publicizing imported goods for sale – silkworm eggs from Egypt, codeine syrup from France – as well as books recently printed by al-Khūrī's press.[17] *Wayy* itself was advertised there, next to these circulating objects, and as one of them; the advertisement describes the novel's contents as "social criticisms ... presented in a humorous manner" and "170 corrected pages made from the plates formerly serialized in the journal and bound with a thick, colored paper cover."[18] Readers encountered *Wayy* as social interpreters and as consumers, and were thus identified with the consuming subjects criticized in the novel. Mikhālī's fate then serves as a warning for the reader, as he urges the reader to "say [like Mikhālī], 'Alas, then I am not a Foreigner'" (163).

By asking the reader to repeat after the protagonist, al-Khūrī addresses the reader as both a critic of the *mutafarranj* and as a potential *mutafarranj* himself, and interpolates the reader into his larger intellectual project: understanding the ability of consuming subjects to encode things with meaning in an international market where objects and ideas circulate in multiple systems of valuation at once. What is more, al-Khūrī also seeks to understand how subjects – as fused to objects – encode *themselves* with value.

What does it mean to think about the *mutafarranj* as a model for the novelistic subject, or to think of circulation as a basis of the Arabic novel? It means rethinking one of the primary assumptions about the rise of the Arabic novel: that the confluence of its emergence with nationalism produced the novelistic subject as a specifically national

one. Seeing circulation as a foundational interest and structuring possibility helps us out of one of the tautologies of the theory of the novel in general – where the "rise of the Arabic novel," to paraphrase William Warner, becomes the self-fulfilling story of the Arab rise of the Arabic novel.[19] Instead, we might incorporate the hundreds of non-national fictions that preceded *Wayy*.

Seeing the novel as a circulating object or representing circulation also means re-thinking the centrality of Benedict Anderson's thesis in studies of the novel. As Anderson argues, print culture began as an "appendage of the market," where commercial news "created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers, to whom *these* ships, brides, bishops and prices belonged."[20] Yet where Anderson assumes a national circulation and spatially-bound imaginary – *these* ships, *these* prices – *The Garden of News* gave commercial news about ships in multiple ports (or ships of multiple nations within a single port), and prices in multiple countries as they were recorded on a single day. If Arabic print in the *Nahḍah* is a "complex gloss on the word meanwhile," then it describes a simultaneity across spaces larger and more varied than the nation.[21] *This* is a meanwhile of the harbor or the valuation table.

Doing so also allows us to question the "unified literary fields" that are being theorized now in debates about world literature – fields often calibrated to a Greenwich Meridian Time of Western Europe. Instead, we might abandon our centers altogether for uneven circuits of exchange. Seeing the novel as one sort of object that circulates takes seriously al-Khūrī's homology of goods and forms as it poses the question of literary value in a connected world. To do so might just help us out of our debate of "arrival" and see the "rise" of the novel not as a rise at all, but as a series of exchanges.

Notes

1 Khalīl Afandı al-Khūrī, *Wayy, Idhān Lastu bi-Afranjī* [Alas, I Am Not a Foreigner] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Majlis al-`Alā lil-Thiqāfa, 2007). Hereafter cited in text. All translations of this text and all others cited in this chapter are my own. Because al-Khūrī writes before the standardization of punctuation marks, all punctuation is my own intervention in the text and is therefore highly interpretive.

This text is a facsimile reproduction of the second edition of the novel that was printed in 1860. The first edition, which was too damaged to reproduce, was also printed in 1860, but was originally serialized beginning in October 1859 in al-Khūrī's newspaper, *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār* (The Garden of News), a publication that characters in *Wayy* can be found reading or discussing. Although the novel is introduced by Muḥammad Sayyid `Abd al-Tuwwāb and its "discovery" attributed to him in Arabic-language press (al-Tuwwāb also included a discussion of *Wayy* in his 2007 book, *Buwākir al-Riwāya* [The Earliest Novels]), it was not entirely unknown to scholars of the *Nahḍah*. As literary critic `Abdallah Ibrāhīm points out in a November 2007 article about the novel's re-edition, specialists had had access to a copy of the novel in the American University of Beirut library, and he himself had read and written about *Wayy* (albeit briefly) in two of his own publications: *al-Sardiyya al-`Arabiyya al-Ḥadītha* [Modern Arabic Prose Writing] (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thiqāfī al-`Arabī, 2003), 214 – 216; and *Mawsū` a al-Sard al-`Arabī* [Encyclopedia of Arabic Prose] (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 2005), 418 – 420. The celebration and canonization of *Wayy*,

as I argue in the longer version of this essay, has more to do with shifts in canon norms inside the academy than with any introduction of new source materials. See `Abdallah Ibrāhīm, "Marḥā al-Liqā' al-Awwul ma` al-gharb," [Rejoicing the First Meeting with the West] *Īlāf*, November 24, 2007.

2 *Zaynab* was published in 1913.

3 See the influential essay by H.A.R. Gibb, "The Egyptian Novel," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 7 (1933), 1 – 22. Many scholars writing in and out of Arabic, as J. Brugman argues, have followed Gibb's assessment. See J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1984), 210 – 211. For more on *Zaynab*'s historical status, see Elliott Colla, "How *Zaynab* Became the First Arabic Novel," *History Compass* 7.1 (2008), 214 – 255. Colla sees its canonization in Egypt as a process taking place much later than the publication of Gibb's essay, and links it to its subsequent film adaptations and the nationalization of university curricula under Nasser.

4 See for example Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

5 Samah Selim, "The Nahdah, Popular Fiction and the Politics of Translation," *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (Fall 2004), 71.

6 "The New Age" [*Al-`Aṣr al-Jadīd*] is also the title of al-Khūrī's collection of poems, published in Beirut in 1863.

7 "*Al-Taqaddum al-adabī*" can be translated as either "moral" or "literary" progress, with both valences of the term in circulation in the nineteenth century.

8 Most notable among these reforms was the 1838 Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention, which outlawed the use of monopolies and reduced tariffs on British imports. Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800 – 1914* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1981), 91. As Fritz Steppat notes, the number of Europeans who came into Egypt alone rose from between 8,000 to 10,000 in 1838 to 30,000 in 1861 and 80,000 by 1865. Fritz Steppat, "National Education Projects in Egypt before the British Occupation" in William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers, *Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968), 283 – 284.

9 See Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 71 –.79.

10 Buṭrus al-Bustānī, "Khutbah fī adab al-`arab" [Speech on the Literature of the Arabs]. Cited in Stephen Sheehi, *The Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainseville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2004), 64.

11 Sheehi, 33.

12 Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 23.

13 Lital Levy, "Jewish Writers in the Arab East: Literature, History, and the Politics of Enlightenment, 1863 – 1914" (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007), 23.

14 Gayatri Spivak, "The Practical Politics of the Open End," in S. Harasym, ed. *The Post-Colonial Critic* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 96.

15 Gayatri Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," *diacritics* 15.4 (Winter 1985): 81.

16 See Sevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194 – 197; 206 – 213.

17 *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār* 75 (14 Huzayran 1859).

18 Ibid.

19 William Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel-Reading in Britain, 1684 – 1750.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 31.

20 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 62.

21 Anderson, 25.

Technology such as satellite television has made it easier for audiences in the Middle East and North Africa to make American cultural products their own. Photo: Shutterstock

8

American culture in its Middle East circulation

BRIAN T. EDWARDS

There is something about culture that comes alive in its circulation.[1] Whatever the private pleasures of reading a novel or watching a film – and whatever amount of solitude the artist occupied while he or she was creating the work of art – the interaction of reader or viewer with the creative work is inherently social. Anyone reading the words of another is put, however briefly, in a social interaction with their author – and, by extension, in a social relationship with others who also engage those words. The same holds true with the audience of a film, as the Iranian film director Abbas Kiarostami remarked upon with particular grace on the centenary of cinema:

> Originally, I thought that the lights went out in a movie theatre so that we could see the images on the screen better. Then I looked a little closer at the audience settling comfortably into the seats and saw that there was much more important reason: The darkness allowed the members of the audience to isolate themselves from others and to be alone. They were both with others and distant from them.[2]

This dual aspect of the cinematic viewing experience – both social and solitary – need not rely on seeing a film in the presence of others. As with the literary text, the conditions of viewing cinema are inscribed in the film's very address. As author of these words, I am addressing you, even if I can't see you, never meet you, and even if "you" do not exist at the moment I write these words. To be sure, I know that there is not one "you" who will encounter these words, and not one social context – particularly as I write these words for a publication destined to be circulated in both Qatar and the United States. There is not one "you," both because the US and Qatar are inherently diverse *and* because these words might go beyond social situations that I can now imagine. Yet there is also a limit to how and where they might travel. Their circulation is not fully predictable – but neither is it limitless.[3]

I begin with these remarks, abstract as they are, because the social aspects of the way literature and film make meaning are crucial to understanding how cultural products from the United States circulate in North Africa and the Middle East, and why and how it matters. As cultural products flow between the United States and the MENA region, and vice versa, they occasion responses that

exceed merely private ones. There is great interest, from news media to the realms of diplomacy, in what the popularity or notoriety of American cultural products and forms – which includes everything from cinema, TV, music and books to social networking sites and fast food outlets – means to the fortunes of the United States as a political entity in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite the fact that the circulation of American culture in the MENA region is frequently noted, the way it circulates and the meaning of that circulation is understood with too little nuance. This is because there is a popular consensus, at least outside of literature and film studies departments, that works of literature or film or art have a singular meaning, one that can be derived by examining the work in its original context, rather than multiple or contingent meanings that depend on the audience or context of the reception of the work.

The idea that a work of literature or film, or any cultural product from the United States, has an identifiable, legible and consistent meaning across contexts is, I contend, the basis for much of the misapprehension surrounding the ways in which "America" signifies in the Middle East and North Africa. There is a long tradition of collapsing the apparent popularity of American cultural products in the world with the alleged ability of the United States government's diplomatic machinery to win over "hearts and minds." Indeed, the latter has, at least since the Cold War, attempted to put the former into service, from State Department-sponsored jazz tours of the Middle East during the Eisenhower administration to hip-hop tours in the Arab world during the Bush and Obama administrations.[4] As then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put it, commenting on the state sponsored tour to Damascus of hip-hop artist Chen Lo and the Liberation Family: "Hip-hop is America ... I think we have to use every tool at our disposal."[5] The problem is that we have been wed to an idea that cultural productions have "simple" meanings – that, by and large, they mean one thing, no matter how complex that thing may be – and have failed to account for the way meaning is altered and detached from its original object (as well as its nation of origin, in many cases) as the object makes its way into and through new contexts.

For example, the commercial success of Azar Nafisi's international best-seller *Reading Lolita in Tehran* was sparked by the notion that the 1955 novel *Lolita* might offer a form of rescue for the oppressed Iranian women depicted on the former book's cover – with a frisson of notoriety carried over from the controversies surrounding the original.[6] Even though the very title of Nafisi's book emphasized that American novels such as Nabokov's regularly travel into new contexts, and the Iranian reading group at the book's center dramatized the way foreign readers may approach American fiction from an unexpected angle, the stubbornness with which readers insist that literary texts have fixed, rather than contingent, meanings, ran deep. "[Nafisi] makes you want to rush back to all these books to experience the hidden aspects she's elucidated," commented the

critic for Salon, an interpretation Random House evidently loved, since the publisher reprinted the quote in the paperback edition. Or, as NPR's Jacki Lyden put it, "Here, people think for themselves because James and Fitzgerald and Nabokov sing out against authoritarianism and repression" (again reprinted by Random House in the paperback). What was lost in these responses, even obscured by them, was the disconnect between an American understanding of *Lolita* – itself contingent and changing: The book had been banned in the US in 1955 because it ran against public mores (its first edition appeared that year in Paris), but was published in New York in 1958 to critical rave reviews, and would quickly enter the American lexicon to refer to prepubescent sexuality and the prurient desire for that sexuality – and Iranian readings of a novel that could only mean different things at both a temporal and geosocial remove.

To be sure, this disjuncture might seem natural to the Iranian readers in Nafisi's original reading group, but the difference of their reading – what I'll call below their process of entextualization – was collapsed when the account of their reading group itself became a cultural commodity for the US marketplace. In other words, a reductive image of Iran circulates within American culture that gave Nafisi's book, from the very title and cover image alone, a foothold in the US market. The circularity implied in the Salon quote – that reading *Reading Lolita in Tehran* would make American readers want to rush back to their own bookshelves to reread Western classics, rather than to learn more about Iran or read Iranian literature, including that which might challenge the shorthand Orientalism of Nafisi's cover – is part of the deception of Nafisi's work itself inside the covers, which promises education through armchair travel, but delivers more of the same. And the lesson of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is that this circularity – this inability to question or break through the old stereotypes about Iran – is a pernicious pattern. In fact, the circulation of American cultural products offers a surprising opportunity to understand sociocultural settings like Tehran's in their particularity.

Iranian audiences frequently take American cultural products and remake them as their own, a process which renders the text or object in circulation illegible to the culture of origin. This was the case I investigated in my essay "Watching *Shrek* in Tehran," which I wrote as a rejoinder to Nafisi's text (though I don't name or discuss her work within it).[7] Struck by the great popularity of the DreamWorks CGI film *Shrek* in Iran, I followed the path of the Hollywood film's circulation in contemporary Iranian culture, which led me to a vibrant series of competing dubbed versions, each with their own followers and some that were banned for reasons that had nothing to do with the original. As an Iranian woman explained to me when I inquired about the popularity of the Iranian *Shrek* during a time when political tensions between the US and Iran were high, the *Shrek* that Iranians loved was not really an American film any more at all. The film itself had become Iranian in its circulation.

This insight was learned in Tehran: that not only was the Iranian *Shrek* an Iranian cultural product, but indeed, it could be a vehicle to understanding more about Iranian film worlds as they engaged, recoded and remade the CGI film. This insight suggests the power of circulation to open up a nagging question at the center of discussions in public diplomacy and globalization studies. Namely, what is the impact of the digital revolution on the way American culture circulates internationally, especially in the Middle East and North Africa? For if much of what I have claimed thus far about the way literary texts and films are taken up by publics is generally true across the 19th and 20th centuries, there is no doubt that things have accelerated in the past three or four decades, and that texts have become more detached from their originally imagined public in the digital age.

Circulation is rapidly becoming a key term in comparative literary studies.[8] Literary scholars can learn much from sociocultural anthropology, where a vibrant discussion about what Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee influentially termed "cultures of circulation" puts needed pressure on the literary critic's tendency to focus on the meaning of literary or film texts, rather than to note the massive, episteme-shifting circumstances that arrive with globalization (understood as economic process, technological revolution, etc.). These changes necessarily force us to consider literary "meaning" within a different context.[9] Elizabeth Povinelli and Dilip Gaonkar meant to provoke when they went so far as to claim that we leave behind the analysis of meaning at all, and focus on the motion of text and other cultural artifacts in their transnational circulation: what processes of abstraction are required, what routes of transit, etc.[10] For my part, I have been concerned especially in tracing how meaning is made around cultural objects in motion. (I am interested in what Iranians say about *Lolita* and *Shrek*, for example, more so than I am interested in the different ways in which *Lolita* as novel and *Shrek* as digitally encoded CGI film prompt different circulatory matrixes and allow access to different communities of meaning-makers, though this must be noted as well.) In order to negotiate this apparent double-bind, I borrow from linguistic anthropologists Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban who remind us that *texts* are in fact processes of *entextualization.* Urban and Silverstein argue that texts are not simply codes in which history and "cultures" are embedded, but instead processes of social interaction within and against which meaning is created.[11] By extension, I maintain, literary and film texts and other cultural products must be read again and again in their new contexts. The various and manifold ways Iranians entextualize *Shrek* or *Lolita*, then, is part of the (Iranian) *meaning* of the text. For me, this fulfills and extends Edward Said's important injunction, three decades ago, that literary critics be worldly in their criticism, which for Said meant avoiding the monocentricism that comes from

not following the movement of texts into different contexts, both temporal and geopolitical. [12]

The theoretical discussion I have foregrounded here informs a historical argument about the circulation of American cultural products and forms in the MENA region, and how that circulation differs from antecedent moments. To be sure, American culture has made its way around the world and been consumed abroad for at least a century. [13] For students of US cultural history, it has been particularly interesting when American cultural products are consumed in places whose governments or majorities are politically opposed to or resistant to the United States. Cold War scholars have documented the way US cultural production was consumed in the Soviet Union and Soviet-aligned nations, where it was generally either rejected as corrupt (by authorities) or embraced (by dissidents) for its putative freedom, as with jazz music in the Soviet Union. While there was a greater range of responses present and possible than has sometimes been documented, it seems that, in general, the United States as a political entity was associated with American culture – whether positively or negatively – fairly closely. It was difficult, in other words, to separate the "meaning" of American culture from attitudes toward the United States. [14]

With the end of the Cold War and especially in the wake of September 11, 2001 – two turning points in perceptions of the United States as geopolitical entity – American culture has been increasingly popular and available in Iran and the Arab world. More often than not, these are cultural forms in circulation, rather than individual cultural products, films, music or texts (though via piracy, there is certainly a surfeit of individual works). A soon as I include Facebook and Twitter as American *cultural forms*, the increasing popularity of American cultural products becomes clear. There would seem to be analogues to the Cold War, but in the Middle East and North Africa, it is much easier to separate American culture from US politics – the detachment of the two is notable.

Why? What has changed in the meantime? My argument is that the arrival of the "digital age" has created such profoundly different conditions for living and for engaging with culture and cultural production – both in making it more accessible and malleable, and in fracturing the relationship between place of origin and artifact – that the detachment or separation of the American cultural product from US politics results.

As young Iranians, Egyptians and Moroccans consume American cultural objects and forms and make them their own, they are not beholden to the cultural values that supposedly accompany the products, even while they may often employ the foreign forms to critique aspects of their own nation – from both "liberal" and "conservative" positions. It is not the case, for example, that the putative freedom of a social networking site, call-in talk shows on Al Jazeera, Gulf reality television programs or genre-breaking comic

books leads to a world remade in America's image.[15] Sometimes the American forms in circulation have led to calls for greater freedom and democracy, such as in Magdy el Shafee's *Metro,* the first Egyptian graphic novel, and the works of the young generation of Egyptian novelists and writers, who had a role in sparking the discussions that lead to the #Jan25 movement. But this is accidental, and it is just as common that those in Egypt or elsewhere interested in promoting a very different organization of society (such as a conservative version of Islam) have used forms that emerged from the US, from Osama bin Laden's technologically advanced use of encoded JPEG images to transmit messages to his lieutenants and sophisticated manipulation of global satellite television through the circulation of his video recorded statements, to the popularity of Islamist websites and chat rooms on the Internet.[16]

Though digital media and social networking sites are important parts of the context for the realms I treat in my current book project, I give extended analysis on what will seem at first blush to be more traditional areas of cultural production: cinema, literature, and essays and columns from print media, as well as the discourse of public intellectuals and activities on university campuses in the region. The technologies and spaces of the digital age run through all of these settings, and my readings of individual films and works of fiction need to be oriented around the public discussions and debates about them that played out or were visible on the Internet. But I choose to privilege these spaces, too, because they allow for more extended and nuanced portrayals of the situations they emerge from or represent, which is perhaps why they have been largely ignored or simplified in mainstream accounts. A novel such as Ahmed Alaidy's cyberpunk account of contemporary Cairo, *Being Abbas al-'Abd*, an Iranian romantic comedy such as the 2007 film *Ezdevaj be Sabke Irani* (Marriage Iranian Style), or Moroccan films such as Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* or Faouzi Bensaïdi's *WWW: What a Wonderful World,* demonstrate more complex responses to the arrival of American forms, technologies and cultural products than Facebook postings and discussions. That their challenges to Egypt, Iran and Morocco have occasioned vibrant debate at "home" (which in the digital age includes the various diasporas via chatrooms, Facebook groups and the blogosphere) suggests that American forms in circulation end in such as Egypt, Iran and Morocco, and have been difficult to translate back to American debates or concerns. That is precisely my point.

By showing in detail how creative individuals in three settings have engaged with American and Western culture and cultural forms – and the debates and responses they have provoked among their contemporaries – I hope to provide a more nuanced portrait of contemporary Egypt, Iran and Morocco, with care to distinguish what is particular about these settings and the communities of individual artists and audiences in them. But it is not merely to help complicate our understanding of these settings that motivates my study. Rather,

by focusing on the moments when global culture – most frequently American or American-identified – has played a significant role in local contexts, I am taking on terrain that has been largely overlooked by specialists of the Middle East and North Africa *and* been distracting to non-specialist American commentators who have had occasion to comment on the contemporary Middle East. The very foreignness of these cultural objects and forms has either been reason to pass over them – for the Middle East specialists, the comic book in Egypt or the CGI film in Iran seem too foreign or hybrid to be worth an Area Studies approach – or too distracting to the journalists and columnists writing about the region for American audiences. As I have discussed elsewhere, for example, the overwhelming response in American media to the Egyptian mobilization against Hosni Mubarak in the winter of 2011 was to focus on the role of Facebook and other social networking media in producing the conditions for change.[17] Implicitly (and sometimes explicitly), the Western focus on Egyptian use of these media was a way of giving credit to the West (the good side of the United States – its technological innovation) as a way to counteract the bitter memory of the militaristic side (whether US financial support for Mubarak himself, or the invasion and occupation of Iraq). This is a vestige of what I call "American Century" thinking, putting America's role and influence at the unquestioned center of the account. And it exhibits the stubborn persistence of the logics of American Exceptionalism when thinking about the international sphere.[18]

The subject has been neglected by those with the expertise to put it in the context of contemporary Moroccan, Egyptian or Iranian culture and society. And it has been misunderstood by those who find themselves in utterly foreign locales and grab onto the familiar as a foothold. The latter include major columnists (Thomas Friedman, Fareed Zakaria) and cultural journalists such as the Canadian writer Richard Poplak, to pick a paradigmatic example, who attempted in 2004 to interpret Tripoli, Libya under Gadhafi by tracking down stories about the popularity of Lionel Richie, which led him to dead ends both physical and in terms of Poplak's ability to understand his setting.[19] Fareed Zakaria's best-selling essay *The Post-American World* might seem at first a more promising guide to the world after the American century. But in Zakaria's book, India and China – which he calls "the rest" – are threats to the American "world" because they are beating America at its own game, which maintains America at the center of a world he claims to be post-American. Zakaria fails to understand how the rules of the game have long been lost (or tossed), like a found board game without its paper insert.

I am addressing those interested in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa, to whom I want to show a dynamic region as it grapples with – and often savors and remakes – global culture and digital media. But I also address those interested in the fate of the American project in the 21st century. Too often the latter have

believed arguments such as Zakaria's post-American world, or earlier, Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* and Thomas Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, that were based on caricatures of the region, or based on the evidence drawn from what social scientists correctly call the elites of a culture. Here, I attempt to move back and forth between these influential representations and more local figures and texts to frustrate those grand narratives that have been charismatic but deceptive. To do so requires leaving American logics behind, and to immerse oneself in the local – its languages, its domestic politics and social meanings. And what remains, it is hoped, is an account of the contemporary that is not only more sensitive to its operative logics, but more hopeful about what it means to take up elements of American culture and make them your own.

Notes

1 The correct, though less graceful way, to put this is: "There is something about cultural products that come alive in their circulation." The history of the word "culture" has been well glossed by Raymond Williams, in *Keywords*, where he points out the divergent strands that would separate anthropologists from literary critics. Namely, that "culture" derives from and is related to the word "cultivate," as in cultivation, and leads both to our use of it to mean webs of social signification and objects or products of culture (whether high, middle or lowbrow culture). Rather than start this essay with the more correct phrasing for what I mean, I've decided to play on the ambivalence precisely because my larger point is that outside of academia (say in media and diplomacy) there is a collapsing of "culture" and "cultural products."

2 Abbas Kiarostami, "An Unfinished Cinema," text written for the Centenary of Cinema, Paris 1995, and distributed at the Odeon Theatre. Reprinted in the DVD release of *The Wind Will Carry Us.*

3 I am drawing on Michael Warner's crucial essay "Publics and Counterpublics." Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002), 49 – 90.

4 Quoted in Hishaam Aidi, "The Grand (Hip-Hop) Chessboard: Race, Rap and Raison d'Etat," Middle East Report 260 (Fall 2011), 25 – 39. See also: hiphopdiplomacy.org/category/us-state-department/

5 Quoted in Aidi.

6 See Hamid Dabashi's devastating critique of Nafisi's book, as well as its excavation of the original photo, which was edited for use on Nafisi's cover.

7 Brian T. Edwards, "Watching *Shrek* in Tehran," *The Believer* 8.3 (March/April 2010), 5–11. Also available online at: www.believermag.com/issues/201003/?read=article_edwards.

8 See my "Logics and Contexts of Circulation" for a full discussion of the lineage of the term and its usefulness for comparative literary studies. Edwards, "Logics and Contexts of Circulation," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature,* edited by Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 454 – 472.

9 Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity" *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002), 191 – 213.

10 Elizabeth Povinelli and Dilip Gaonkar, "Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition," *Public Culture* 15.3 (Fall 2003), 385 – 397.

11 Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, "The Natural History of Discourse," in *Natural Histories of Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1 – 17.

12 Edward W. Said, "The World, the Text, and the Critic," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Harvard UP, 1983), 35. For a development of this comparison, see my "The World, the Text, and the Americanist," *American Literary History* 25.1 (Spring 2013), 231 – 246.

13 See Victoria de Grazia's *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2005).

14 Kate Baldwin shows the negative version of this in Soviet responses to the Porgy and Bess tour and to Paul Robeson's presence in Moscow. Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002). See too Thomas Borstelmann, *The Color War and the Color Line* (Harvard, 2001). Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard UP, 2004). On the limits of the archive, Elizabeth Thompson's fine essay "Scarlett O'Hara in Damascus: Hollywood, Colonial Politics, and Arab Spectatorship during World War II," in *Globalizing American Studies*, ed. Brian T. Edwards and Dilip P. Gaonkar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) is a model.

15 Marc Lynch's excellent study of Al Jazeera network shows how the network's programming introduced new, "foreign" forms such as call-in shows, which allowed for the expression of previously private positions to a now large public. But this "democratic voice" did not necessarily mimic American models of democratic expression. See Lynch, *Voices of a New Arab Public: Iraq, al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2007). On reality television, see Marwan Kraidy, *Reality Television and Arab Politics: Contention in Public Life* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

16 See Gary R. Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

17 Brian T. Edwards, "Tahrir: Ends of Circulation," *Public Culture* 23.3 (Fall 2011), 493 – 504.

18 For an extended critique of the logics of American Exceptionalism in the context of the "American Century," and that which follows it, see Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "Introduction: Globalizing American Studies," in *Globalizing American Studies,* ed. Brian T. Edwards and Dilip P. Gaonkar (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1 – 44.

19 Richard Poplak, *The Sheikh's Batmobile: In Pursuit of American Pop Culture in the Muslim World* (Toronto and New York: Penguin, 2009).

Berbers in Tunisia fed and housed Libyan Berbers displaced during the 2011 uprisings. Photo: Samer Mohdad, Corbis

9

Berbers, borders and breakdown in the 2011 Libyan civil war

KATHERINE E. HOFFMAN

The 2011 revolts in North Africa and the Middle East, known by the not-so-inclusive moniker "Arab Spring," brought together Tunisian and Libyan Imazighen (Berbers) in the borderlands of southeastern Tunisia and Western Libya. Whereas some Tunisians and Libyans had long moved through this borderland for trade, work or family visits, others had little direct familiarity with their co-ethnics until the Libyan Civil War, when hundreds of thousands of Libyans took refuge in this region of Tunisia – as many as 10,000 per day at the peak of the crisis.

Imazighen are the indigenous people of North Africa who preceded the Arab invasions of the 7th and 12th centuries; their populations today are largest in Morocco and Algeria. They share the Tamazight language in its various geographic varieties. Historically, they differed from Arabs in law, political organization, dress, expressive culture and many ritual practices, and in Tunisia and Libya, they shared troglodyte dwellings carved into the mountains. Imazighen also share histories of both coexistence and tension with ethnic Arabs. The struggle for Amazigh linguistic and cultural rights gained recognition in 1980 in Kabylia, Algeria, in what is called the Berber Spring.

Such recognition, however, sidestepped Tunisia and Libya until the revolts of 2011. In Libya, the situation was violent and dire under Muammar Gadhafi, who, along with his government ministers, denied the existence of Berber people or language in Libya and instead insisted in official documents that the Libyan population was homogeneous and that the Berber language was "merely a dialect or accent" of Arabic. In 2008, Gadhafi threatened Amazigh activists by saying, "You can call yourselves whatever you want inside your homes – Berbers, Children of Satan, whatever – but you are only Libyans when you leave your homes."[1] Activists tell of peers who were harassed, tortured, jailed or killed for speaking out for Berber rights.[2] In contrast, discrimination in Tunisia has been subtle, taking the form of both governmental and popular insistence on the Arab identity of the Tunisian population, with a broadly recognized nod to a Berber past few admit to remembering. Today, Tamazight language

and renewed claims of Amazigh heritage are more robust in Libya than in Tunisia. [3]

The sudden coexistence of Libyan and Tunisian Berbers in 2011 for four to eight months was extraordinary for its rarity and scope. Tunisians housed and fed displaced Libyans outside the auspices of international relief organizations. Humanitarian organizations were more concerned with third-country nationals such as Sudanese and Somali guest workers fleeing anti-black violence in Libya. In some villages on the island of Djerba, Libyans became 10 percent of the village populations. In the frontier pre-Saharan town of Tataouine, the population doubled from 40,000 to 80,000. This transnational Amazigh coexistence is one of the hidden stories of the Arab uprisings. Some Libyans had heard there were Tunisian Berbers but had never met them, and vice-versa. Still others had no idea Berbers existed outside of their community or village, and thus underwent a kind of identity awakening when they met their co-ethnics from across the border.

From June 2011 to May 2012, I carried out five research trips to southeastern Tunisia to interview Tunisians and Libyans about their experiences of revolution and war in the borderlands. I researched the extraordinary organizational logistics through which Tunisian laypeople orchestrated the reception, housing and feeding of tens of thousands of Libyan families. [4] By the time I began my research, displaced Libyans lived in camps, youth hostels, community centers and private furnished homes offered without charge by villagers. [5] Some wealthy Libyans rented hotel rooms or houses, especially the pro-Gadhafi elite who fled after the fall of Tripoli in late August 2011, but this population is outside the scope of my study. The Libyans in this war context were called "refugees" (*al lajiyin*)by the Tunisians, but others insisted on calling them "displaced people." The label of "refugee" is a contested one for this population; officials at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as officials at the Danish Refugee Council and Red Crescent whom I interviewed, disagreed as to whether Libyans were a displaced or refugee population. During the Libyan civil war, many families from the Nafusa Mountains took refuge with relatives in Tripoli, not yet under siege. Those fleeing into Tunisia and Egypt crossed international borders to seek protection, as a refugee must do by definition. But Libyans' choices for relocation reflected less an intentional choice about which government could best protect them, and more an assessment of which roads or desert thoroughfares were open and safe to travel. For Berber men commuting to fight in the Nafusa Mountains, Tunisia was a safe base for their families and just a three-hour drive away.

Narratives of longstanding co-existence were part and parcel of the oral histories that people in these borderlands created during and after the Libyan civil war. Yet there had not been such massive coexistence between these groups since 1912, when Italy colonized

Libya. By 2011, there were deep cleavages between the populations. Most striking to the Tunisians were Libyan governmental policies that they argued created a people accustomed to plenty and to a foreign migrant workforce, and that gave little incentive to workers to work full days or to claim ownership over their efforts. One Tunisian from the border, working at the UNHCR refugee camp in Remada, referred to a Libyan teacher acquaintance of his when he said, "If you got paid regardless of whether you taught your classes, would you bother to get up in the morning?" Clearly, many displaced Libyans were of more modest economic status; this was evident in their descriptions of their meals, especially the centrality of the humble barley they farmed in the mountains, which was favored over store-bought soft wheat flour. While Tunisians' narratives of solidarity and shared fate across the border were pervasive, equally common were tales of discarded food, abuses of generosity and dissatisfaction with furnished homes without air conditioning offered free of charge to the Libyans by Tunisian villagers. Wasteful and lazy behavior was shocking to the modest Tunisians who volunteered their time, energy and meager resources to help the Libyans, and who often lacked air conditioning themselves.

Borderlands and Transnational Crossings in Theory and Practice

Roadside stands near the border, selling nationalist souvenirs of the revolution with the reinstated Libyan flag (first flown from 1951 to 1969) as well as the Tunisian flag, raised questions about the nationalist sentiment and about borderlands in theory and practice. Post-independence governments have been deeply invested in enforcing the borders they inherited from colonial regimes. Moreover, even when borders "were originally 'artificial' creations, they have long since become an integral part of the lives of borderlanders ... borders have an impact on social identities and have come to 'demarcate mental space.'"[6] International borders are deeply meaningful for many people; they are naturalized via school lessons, bureaucratic administrative procedures, economic systems and even children's play, as with the homemade flags Libyan refugee children made to decorate their camps. Yet the border in and of itself is nothing without human mediation, narration and policing. As Kate Lloyd, et al., write, "borders and borderlands define ourselves and others. They both separate *and* bring together."[7]

The experiences of separating and bringing together via the border have potentially more impact on ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples who defy national demarcation yet are subject to the regimes of individual states. To illustrate this, I offer a few glimpses at challenges to the status quo of the border or new opportunities in the borderlands at the intersection of the 2011 revolts, transnational Berber coexistence, and the breakdown of the Tunisian and Libyan states.

The same border crossing actions are subject to different "legality claims" or "efforts to portray actions as legal or illegal,

regardless of whether the law specifically addresses such actions," as Maria Lorena Cook argues.[8] In other words, Cook continues, "Legality claims may be expressed as legal discourses or social practices in informal settings outside of official legal institutions." Key among these legality claims were instances in which individuals and groups portrayed their actions as moral, upright or otherwise defensible, regardless of whether they were officially sanctioned by law or policy. A key arena of challenges to legality claims during the Libyan Civil War was in transnational families and marriages, and the border-crossing work required of them.

One example comes from Noujoud, a woman originally from the Nafusa Mountains but who had married and raised children and grandchildren in Douiret village, in southeastern Tunisia, where I met her this past April. A young Libyan man in her extended family died fighting Gadhafi's militias, and Noujoud and a small group of women headed from their Tunisian village to the border to attend the funeral in Libya. Like most rural women, they had no passports. Border guards refused the women access. Yet rather than accept this, the women appealed to the guards' sense of solidarity with the Libyan rebels and to their shared Islamic faith. They referred to the deceased as a "martyr" and a "revolutionary," and explained that attending the funeral fulfilled a religious duty. The border guards succumbed and allowed the women to cross. In Cook's terms, these women "both evade[d] and engage[d] the law by drawing simultaneously on legality claims that [were] 'above the law' and recognized 'on the ground,' or negotiated with authorities" (563). Who could argue with elderly women's claims to doing their familial and religious duty? They clearly presented no threat.

People told me two stories about marriage between Libyan women and Tunisian men. The first was told to me by a Libyan woman who had relocated from a camp to a youth hostel. While en route, she had had one hand hennaed by a Tunisian woman (she claimed she needed the other hand to work). The Libyan future bride was a resident in a camp at which a young Tunisian man worked. The marriage was arranged by the young camp resident's father, who had already been seeking a suitable husband for his daughter. In the more dramatic second story, the future Tunisian groom's father's family was hosting the Libyan bride-to-be and her family. When the bride's father returned to Libya at one point in the fighting, he told his host that if he did not return to Tunisia, he wanted his daughter to stay in Tunisia and marry the host's son. The father died in Libya, the story goes, and so the two were engaged. No one I spoke to had actually attended one of these weddings or knew the individuals firsthand. Arguably, what matters is what these stories tell us about goodwill, shared values and belief in the possibility of solidarity across the border in a time of war.

A second set of challenges threatened the status quo of Tunisia and Libya as separate but equal countries. These threats were integral

to the cohesion during the civil war of the idea of Tunisia as a land of peace and order, and Libya as a lawless land. This characterization is striking, given that Tunisia had no policing in some of its southern provinces for the first three months of 2011, after the police and military retreated with the fall of President Ben Ali. In fact, in villages such as Guellala on the island of Djerba, local men with no previous organizational experience set up village patrols and checkpoints. They then used these new social networks to orchestrate the care of refugees as they arrived.

Many of the Tunisian community organizers I interviewed explained the registration processes they designed to keep track of the Libyans in their villages, neighborhoods and other locations where Libyans settled. I collected lists (albeit incomplete) of displaced Libyans from the local Tunisian men who organized their housing. We located these archives in unlikely places: under a truck seat parked in a private locked garage, in a Quranic association headquarters and, in one village, in the locale of the scout troop. With this information, it is possible to sketch a profile of many of the refugees' origins, at least for the villages keeping information about hometowns or birthplaces. In the village of Ajim on Djerba, for instance, about three quarters of the displaced Libyans were from Berber-speaking towns and villages. Full information on the displaced is simply not available, as Tunisian host communities did not consistently succeed in eliciting accurate information from those taking refuge in their midst. Many Libyan men were afraid of reprisals: In the first months of the war, Gadhafi's spies infiltrated Tunisia to intimidate political opponents, so Libyan men were reluctant to show their identity cards, declare their wives' and children's names, and register their temporary residences. The tension was palpable in Tunisia during the crisis up until Gadhafi's death, and there was much uncertainty. Some refugees' desire for privacy and anonymity conflicted with the order that Tunisians were attempting to instill. There was no law in place requiring Libyan registration, only collectively defined rules. The narrative developed on the Tunisian side was of and Libyans *themselves* as lawless – not just their government – as evidenced by their driving habits: driving on the wrong side of the road, passing on the right, running red lights and generally wreaking havoc on the already-stressed host communities.

The trans-border understanding of Tunisia as safe haven, however, was shaken in April 2011. Gadhafi's militias crossed the border into Tunisia and directly attacked the refugee camp established just a few kilometers from the border and run by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (UAERC) along with the Tunisian Red Crescent and the Tunisian army.[9] Tunisians and Libyans were both terrified at this military confrontation against alleged rebels living in the camps; the conflict brought Tunisian men into the streets with rocks and handmade weapons. Swift reprisals by the Tunisian

military pushed the militias into retreat, but both refugees and local Tunisians remained unsettled at this sudden shift in the location of the border between safe and dangerous zones.

In addition, most Libyan refugee families went home for Ramadan, but women and children returned to Tunisia when they saw firsthand how food was scarce, wells were poisoned, electricity was rationed, and landmines and freely roaming armed youths made parents fear for their children's safety. During Ramadan, landmine education became an important NGO activity, especially at the border where stickers, posters and drawing books distributed by the Mines Action Group all attempted to train Libyans to recognize these lethal weapons.

A third area of new transborder relations concerned Amazigh activism in the wake of the revolts. The political regimes that limited Amazigh activism were gone. The first Tunisian Amazigh organization participated in the Nalut Cultural Festival in Western Libya in April 2012, and activists are building on new opportunities to connect face-to-face rather than through Facebook and social media, where they met before the revolts. Tunisian activists said they felt overshadowed by the Libyan activists because Tunisian resources were so meager in comparison. Additionally, there were budding attempts at cultural tourism and exchange across the border. Tunisian tourism has for decades been primarily beach-based, but the Ennahda Islamist leaders heading the Tunisian government after the fall of Ben Ali spoke out against beach package tours catering to Europeans. Cultural tourism and exchange is underway in Guellala village on Djerba, where enterprising young men are building on the network of vacant homes that villagers had prepared for the refugee families, and are recruiting Libyan Amazigh families to vacation among them. One organizer told me that among the positive effects of this transborder contact would be that Tunisian children playing with Libyan children and speaking Tamazight would no longer associate the Tamazight language with the elderly.

A fourth and final area of challenge to the status quo of the border was a shift in cross-border trade. In Ramadan 2011, the Tunisian government prohibited the export of subsidized goods, including dates and lentils – heavily consumed in Ramadan meals – water and gasoline, as these became scarce with heavy trade into Libya. A once-legal activity (trade) became an illegal activity (smuggling) through the redefinition by the Tunisian state: "Borders allow market actors to play states against states, regions against regions, cities and communities against cities and communities. Markets also exploit the economic inequalities of people and goods in space and time."[10] For some traders, smuggling through Ras Ajdir led to armed conflict with the paramilitary gendarmes who monitored traffic on the single road leading to Tripoli. Given Tunisian laypeople's generosity in orchestrating refugee relief, and the international accolades they received for it, the Tunisian state risked appearing

tightfisted by restricting trade. Yet clearly even humanitarian sensibility had its limits.

In conclusion, I want to echo refugee scholar and advocate Merrill Smith, who claims that popular solidarity is "essential to refugee protection and enjoyment of rights."[11] This solidarity was a practical matter for Tamazight monolingual Libyan children who had not yet started school and could live in Tunisia among co-ethnics with whom they could communicate. But on a symbolic level as well, Berber heritage tended to go hand-in-hand with social conservatism, especially gender conservatism, and a perceived piety that many Berbers believed distinguished them from other Tunisians and Libyans. In this respect, for some Tunisian and Libyan men in particular, it was not the shared Berber heritage that they articulated as important, but instead the shared values that they associated with this heritage, exemplified by their desire to segregate the sexes outside the home.

For some Amazigh Tunisians, the experience of engaging in their own revolution, and then quickly turning to host Libyan revolutionaries in their communities, raised new possibilities of transnational Amazigh consciousness. Certainly, new understandings of the nation-state emerge from revolutions. But there may also be new forms of collective popular identification *outside* the framework of the nation-state, led not only by rebels who take up arms, but also by the refugees of revolution and the laypeople who organize these refugees' lives in exile.

Notes

The research in this piece was supported by the National Science Foundation's Cultural Anthropology Program under Grant No. 1148741.

1 Cable entitled "Libya's Berber Minority Still Out in the Cold," July 3, 2008, wikileaks.mediapart.fr/cable/2008/07/08TRIPOLI530.html.
The cable was marked classified by US diplomat Chris Stevens, who was later named Ambassador to Libya in 2012 and killed in an attack on the American consulate in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. On attacks on the homes of Berber leaders in Yefran, an important Berber town in the Nafusa mountains, see a report entitled "Regime-Orchestrated Attacks against Berbers in Yefran," January 13, 2009, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/wikileaks-files/libya-wikileaks/8294907/REGIME-ORCHESTRATED-ATTACKS-AGAINST-BERBERS-IN-YEFREN.html accessed August 2013. This report was classified by US Ambassador Gene Cretz.

2 Amnesty International has documented the Libyan government's intolerance for calls to recognize Amazigh heritage and its insistence on ethnic heterogeneity and lack of discrimination in Libya. See its 2011 report, "Four Arrested Amid Fears of Amazigh Culture Crackdown," www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE19/001/2011/en/9371e88b-0e7f-4820-84e3-78b767a23259/mde190012011en.html accessed August 2013.

3 On the Amazigh movement in Tunisia see Stéphanie Pouessel, "Les marges renaissantes. Amazigh, Juif, Noir. Ce que la révolution a changé dans ce 'petit pays homogène par excellence' qu'est la Tunisie," *L'Année du Maghreb* 8 (2012), 143 – 160. Also available at anneemaghreb.revues.org/1432?lang=en#text accessed August 2013.

Reports in Western media have amply covered the Amazigh public protests and calls for revival in Libya since the war, as in Tim Hume, "A Rebirth of Berber Culture in Post-Gadhafi Libya," *CNN.com*, September 3, 2012, www.cnn.com/2012/09/03/world/meast/libya-berber-amazigh-renaissance/index
accessed August 2013. It remains to be seen how the end of the regime and activist efforts may shape linguistic and cultural practices in Libya.

4 Preliminary findings on these organizing efforts are in Katherine E. Hoffman, "Local Hosting and Transnational Identity," *Forced Migration Review* 39 (2012): 12 – 14. Also available at www.fmreview.org/north-africa/hoffman.html

5 In addition to the two camps established by the UNHCR, the State of Qatar built a camp outside of Tataouine, and the Red Crescent Societies of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) along with the Tunisian Red Crescent established another near the Dehiba border. All camps together accommodated around 6,000 to 7,000 people, including both Libyans and third-country nationals from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. See Ivana Vuco (SPO, UNHCR), "End of Mission Report: Libya operation, south Tunisia (PROCAP) (14 Jun – 16 Jul 2011)," accessed September 30, 2012. Available at oneresponse.info. See also Agence-France Presse, "Qatar opens camp in Tunisia for Libyan refugees," May 30, 2011, www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hAwDIwt0_hmB08_pqtt6UMuqc0pQ?docId=CNG.457a26ab62ddf88061e8abe5baa61c04.ab1
accessed August 2013.

6 Carola Lentz, "'This is Ghanaian territory!': Land Conflicts on a West African Border," *American Ethnologist* 30.2 (2003): 274.

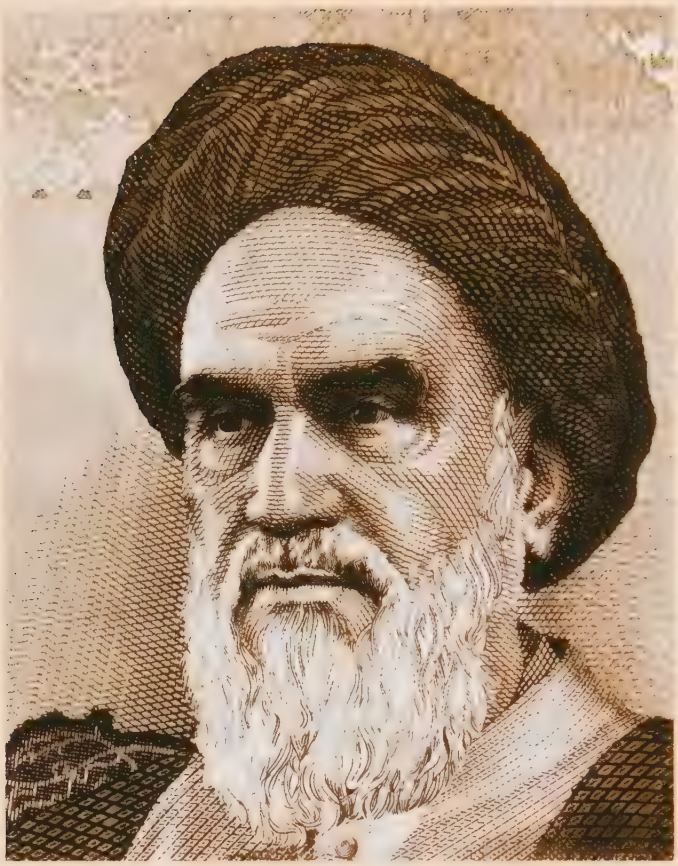
7 Kate Lloyd, et al., "Stories of Crossings and Connections from Bawaka, North East Arnhem Land, Australia," *Social & Cultural Geography* 11.7 (2010), 703.

8 Maria Lorena Cook, "'Humanitarian Aid Is Never a Crime': Humanitarianism and Illegality in Migrant Advocacy," *Law & Society Review* 45.3 (2011), 562.

9 Although it apparently was well-run, this camp was dangerously situated, unlike some of the allegedly lower-quality camps, as reported by the medical relief group Libya United: It is worth noting that the UNHCR camp in Remada improved dramatically between this report and my visits to it in August 2011, with air-conditioned tents, a women's socializing tent and some basic schooling. See www.scribd.com/doc/55255460/Libyan-Refugees-in-Tunisia
accessed August 2013.

10 Markus Perkmann and Ngai-Ling Sum, eds, *Globalization, Regionalization and Cross-Border Regions* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), quoted in Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, "Theorizing Borders: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," *Geopolitics* 10 (2005), 642n52.

11 Merrill Smith, "Resettlement in Exchange for Protection and Local Integration in Egypt: A Dubious Bargain," *Fahamu Refugee Legal Aid Newsletter,* October 31, 2011, frlan.tumblr.com/post/12164604700/resettlement-in-exchange-for-protection-and-local
accessed August 2013.



The 1979 Iranian constitution, with Ayatollah Khomeini as its first supreme leader, reframed the concept of an Islamic state. Photo: Georgis Kolidas, Shutterstock

10

Constitutional Islam

Genealogies, transmissions and meanings

KRISTEN STILT

The incorporation of references to Islam and Islamic law in modern constitutions is now a well-recognized phenomenon. More than twenty nations provide that Islam is the religion of the state (which I call the Islamic "establishment clause"), slightly fewer declare that the Islamic Sharia or its principles are a source or even the main source of legislation (which I call the "source of law clause"), even fewer declare that the nation is an "Islamic state" (which I call the "Islamic state clause"), and some make explicit the idea that laws that conflict with Sharia, however that may be interpreted, are invalid (which I call the "repugnancy clause").[1] This trend has grown in recent years, with the notable cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, and countries that are now or will soon be in the process of writing new constitutions, including Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, are nearly certain to retain existing language and possibly even add additional phrasing.

Legal scholarship has studied the judicial interpretations of these clauses, most commonly in single-country studies, to some extent regionally, and, more recently, in a broader comparative sense.[2] This line of scholarship tends to offer snapshot pictures of the jurisprudence of the clause in each country. Works of this kind take the existence of the constitutional language as their starting point, or perhaps provide minimal historical context to the adoption of the constitution (or the amendment) that contains the relevant clause. When included, these brief historical descriptions typically speak in terms of the internal dynamics within the particular county, and frame the debates as between secular forces resisting the clauses and Islamist camps who want their inclusion.

However, these clauses were not scripted anew in each national context. The establishment clause appears in basically the same form, and while there is more variation in the source of law and repugnancy clauses, they are recognizable by the same basic phrasing in the constitutions in which they appear. These phrasings, or scripts, are a part of a global trend, and once they came into existence, they became readily available for use – or non-use or explicit rejection – by drafters in other nations. The choices made in one constitution, and the apparent reasons for those choices, influence the drafters and

the public at large in the next context. With each new constitution or amendment, the state of constitutional Islam worldwide shifts and readjusts to take into account the new development.

For example, in the recent national debates in Tunisia about the new constitution, one relatively noncontroversial issue was the retention of the establishment clause, which was in the Tunisian Constitution since its independence in 1959. A more controversial possibility was the addition of a source of law clause stating that some form of the Islamic Sharia is "a" or "the" source of legislation. In explaining why Tunisia would not adopt a "source of law" clause, the founder of the Islamist party Ennahda, Rachid al-Ghannoushi, referred to Afghanistan as a negative model, saying that conservative forces in that country had tainted the formulation. Further, Ennahda hoped that by including only the establishment clause, it would make Tunisia a model for countries undergoing similar transitions, which seems to be a reference to Libya and possibly Egypt, although it is unlikely that the latter will remove its "source of law" clause. By "model," al-Ghannoushi surely hoped that more than merely the constitutional language would be emulated; for him, adopting the establishment clause and rejecting the "source of law" clause indicated some kind of mild Islamism, in contrast to a more extreme version in Afghanistan. What is significant about this example, and the many others of its kind, is not just what textual formulation Tunisia adopted, but rather why it did so, with what purposes and goals in mind, and the way in which the discourse about its adoption sought to situate Tunisia vis-à-vis other countries.

Constitutional Islam, in the sense of the constitutional adoption of language referring to Islam and Islamic law (Sharia), is globally interconnected. And yet we have very little understanding of how each country making constitutional choices is influenced by existing dynamics worldwide or in specific countries that are particularly relevant due to factors such as similarities in legal systems and geographical proximity. Attention to constitutional migration is growing, but consideration of constitutional Islam is notably lacking in the comparative constitutional and historical literature. This paper introduces a larger project that will work in this vast gap to provide a thorough and compelling account of the development of constitutional Islam across time and place. Rather than separate national accounts, this project offers a moving picture, spanning the Muslim world, bringing to life public conversations and private drafting sessions about controversial constitutional choices, and starring figures such as the rival Pakistani and Indian members of the Malayan constitutional drafting commission.

The historical arc of constitutional Islam begins with the Ottoman Empire and continues today with contemporary constitutional developments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and potentially Syria. At each point, key questions need to be asked, including: Which clauses did the country adopt or reject and why? What did it hope

to achieve in matters ranging from substantive law to structures of power? Were particular institutions, such as courts, envisioned to interpret the language? What other countries served as a source of reference, positively and negatively, in the national process? Did such countries already have judicial interpretations of the clauses that influenced the drafters of the new constitution? Proceeding to a further level of detail, and recognizing that a focus on the national level can obscure more nuanced dynamics, these same questions will be asked about the different constitutional actors within the country, including individual drafters and the public generally, to examine subsets of motivations, intentions and influences.

The Constitution of the Ottoman Empire in 1876 is the first appearance of the Islamic establishment clause. Initial investigation suggests that the Ottoman drafters chose this language, which had not been part of Islamic legal discourse prior to that time, after reviewing constitutions from countries that enshrined Christianity as the religion of the state or made some form of it the official church of the state. Once it appeared in the Ottoman Constitution, the former Arab Ottoman provinces that emerged following the dissolution of the Empire, such as Egypt, included the clause in their own constitution. While the establishment clause from the Ottomans was readily adopted, the reasons for doing so were distinctly local and typically expressions of an anti-colonial sentiment, rather than any affinity for the dismembered Empire's constitutional character. The script was retained but took on new meaning and significance in new contexts.

The Constitution of Pakistan in 1956 marks a crucial early example of a self-declared Islamic state, as well as the first appearance of the repugnancy clause. Pakistan's constitutional choices had a ripple effect across the Muslim world in 1956 and beyond, just as Iran's did in 1979. Pakistan's engagement with constitutional Islam deepened in the 1962 and 1973 constitutions. Part of Pakistan's story is the separation of Bangladesh in 1971 and its initial rejection of the establishment clause.

The Constitution of the Federation of Malaya (later renamed the Federation of Malaysia), adopted at the time of its independence from Britain in 1957, marks the next key development of constitutional Islam. The Malayan Constitution was drafted by a British-led committee composed of two Britons, an Australian, an Indian and a Pakistani – there were no local official participants. The fact that the states that formed the Federation each had their own constitutions, with establishment clauses, was influential in the process. The Sultans of those states initially fought the establishment clause in the new federal constitution because they were concerned that control over matters relating to Islam would be taken away from them and assigned to new bureaucracies on the federal level.

During the drafting process in Malaya, the examples of India and Pakistan loomed large as models of a "secular" and an "Islamic

state," respectively, and these models were embodied by the Indian and Pakistani members of the drafting commission. In fact, it was the persistence of the Pakistani member, Justice Abdul Hamid, that resulted in the final-hour inclusion of the establishment clause. For Justice Hamid, the insistence on the clause seems to have been related at least in part to his own experiences with the Pakistani Constitution. For local Malays, however, it was more about ensuring their constitutional privileges than it was about religion in a narrow sense of the word. At that time, ethnic Malays were only about 50 percent of the population, and were deeply concerned about becoming minorities in their "own" country. Since Malays were defined in the constitution as Muslims, any privileging of Islam was seen to be tantamount to strengthening the position of Malays as well.

When Egyptian President Anwar Sadat turned to the task of drafting a new constitution not long after he assumed office following Gamal Nasser's death, the retention of the establishment clause was hardly questioned. The real issue was whether some additional source of law clause would be included as part of Sadat's efforts to show that he was more dedicated to the role of Islam in the state than Nasser had been, and to garner support among Islamists whom Nasser had persecuted. The 1971 Egyptian Constitution thus marks the rising prominence of the source of law clause.

At that time, other countries that had or were considering source of law clauses were relevant in the drafting process, as was language that was adopted for the constitution of the short-lived Federation of Arab Republics. "Town hall" meetings held throughout Egypt as part of the 1971 drafting process reveal a wide range of views about the desirability of a source of law clause, including remarkably frank comments from Christians asking what place they would have in a country enshrining Islamic law in its constitution. Many Muslims who offered their comments supported the addition of a source of law clause and often said that it was necessary because merely having the establishment clause in the Nasser-era constitutional documents was not enough to prevent his authoritarian excesses; in this sense, constitutional Islam was seen as connected to the rule of law.

The next significant stage was the 1979 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a landmark document that dramatically reframed the concept of an Islamic state and its associated constitutional language in a way that affected the entire Muslim world. For example, when the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood issued a "Draft Platform of the Political Party" in 2007, it included the proposal for a council of religious scholars whose approval would be required in certain cases before legislation could be adopted. The task of the scholars would be to ensure that the legislation was compliant with some notion of Islamic law. Criticism of this proposal was widespread in Egypt, and a frequent complaint was that it sought to install a system in Egypt similar to that of the Iranian Council of Guardians.[3]

The constitutions that followed the US invasions of Afghanistan (the 2004 constitution) and Iraq (the 2005 constitution) form the next crucial phase of constitutional Islam. The debates over the clauses of constitutional Islam in Afghanistan and Iraq were further charged by the American presence in those countries during the drafting processes, as well as by the intense international involvement that sought guarantees of human rights and equality among citizens and expressed concerns over the deeper presence of constitutional Islam. Finally, the historical arc ends, as of 2012, with constitutional Islam in the new constitutions of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and possibly Syria.

This comparative historical study of constitutional Islam makes several significant contributions. First, it provides an account of the movement of constitutional language and ideas, an area of particular interest and concern in the field of comparative constitutional law. In addition to observing that the clauses do move from one context to the next, this study pays careful attention to how and why the movement takes place. It considers whether the dynamics are different depending not only on time and place, but also on the type of clause. Does the adoption of the establishment clause in a new context, for example, represent the movement of an idea, or is it just pliable formulaic language that can take on any meaning that might be given to it? Does the adoption of the repugnancy clause represent the migration of a particular idea about the role of Islamic law vis-à-vis other laws in the legal system? How do countries make slight adjustments in the language adopted to signal a differentiation from other jurisdictions?

Second, this project questions the idea that constitutional Islam is only about narrowly defined religion or religious law. When clauses dealing with Islam are isolated and treated independently of other constitutional clauses, it suggests that the impetus for their inclusion is the desire to achieve some particular vision for Islam in the state (or even some kind of standard and divinely prescribed state structure) or a particular substantive doctrinal result, because no other constitutional variables are seen to be part of the equation. This research will show that these clauses are part of larger debates and power struggles, and decisions about their inclusion are often intertwined with legal, political, economic, social and cultural issues such as federalism, the location of the power to decide religious questions, nationalism, notions of the rule of law, anti-colonial sentiment, monarchical privilege, national security, ethnic privileging and other context-specific concerns. The clauses of constitutional Islam function as available language that can be harnessed in favor of the particular needs and goals of drafters. They can stand in for, or reinforce, other language and ideas, including those that are too politically sensitive to be explicitly expressed. By invoking religion, proponents of the clauses are able to raise the rhetorical stakes and put an additional burden on their opponents.

Building on the first two, the third contribution this study makes is to show that a phenomenon that appears to be obvious and self-evident is not only far more complicated, but also that current assumptions create distortions that matter in significant ways. When presented in terms of textual language, constitutional Islam appears homogenous. To say that more than 20 nations have the establishment clause in their constitutions, and that as a result 602.5 million Muslims live in countries that have adopted some particular understanding about the relationship between religion and the state, suggests not only uniformity, but also that meaningful knowledge about a state's relationship to Islam can be derived from observing the mere existence of the clause. Under the heading of this contribution, the book will serve to supplement – or perhaps correct – assumptions made in the large-scale studies of constitutions that are now prevalent among political scientists in particular. The textual language is only the first step of analysis. For example, the lowest common Islamic legal denominator in terms of substantive law between two countries with the establishment clause, Tunisia and Morocco, might only be inheritance law, and Turkey's control of the content of Islam through its Presidency of Religious Affairs, or *Diyanet*, makes it look as "Islamic" as some countries with the establishment clause. The language of constitutional Islam does speak loudly about the state, and distinct global patterns do emerge, but only when the clauses are investigated beyond the textual level and studied in a historical and comparative context.

Notes

1 For a textual assessment as of 2005, see United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *The Religion-State Relationship and the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Comparative Textual Analysis of the Constitutions of Predominantly Muslim Countries*.

2 See Nathan J. Brown, *Constitutions in a Nonconstitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and the Prospects for Accountable Government* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Ran Hirschl, *Constitutional Theocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Brown addresses the emergence of constitutions in the Arab world in the twentieth century. While there is some attention to the religion clauses, Brown mainly seeks to explain, from a political science perspective, why rulers promulgated constitutions when they did not intend to be bound by them, and asks whether these documents might nonetheless serve to develop a sense of constitutionalism. Hirschl develops a definition of a "constitutional theocracy," which is based in part on constitutional language, and then discusses in one lengthy chapter how constitutional courts have "contained" religion in several of these countries (which includes Israel, in addition to six Muslim-majority countries). The treatment of each Muslim-world country focuses on contemporary jurisprudence and judicial politics; a separate long chapter deals with courts in the "non-theocratic world."

3 See Kristen Stilt, "'Islam is the Solution': Constitutional Visions of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *Texas International Law Journal* 46.1 (Fall 2010), 103.

Contributors

Brian T. Edwards is an associate professor of English and comparative literary studies and director of the Program in Middle East and North African Studies at Northwestern. He is the author of *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express* (Duke University Press, 2005), which combines cultural history and literary criticism to show how Americans represented North Africa from World War II to the Vietnam era, and how contemporary Maghrebi writers and filmmakers have responded. Edwards is co-editor of *Globalizing American Studies* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), a collection that provides global perspectives on US history and culture. He has lectured extensively, including in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, India and Europe, and been visiting faculty at the University of Tehran, EHESS (Paris) and University College Dublin. He has won fellowships from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Fulbright grants to Morocco, Egypt and Italy. Edwards is completing a book entitled "After the American Century: Ends of Circulation in Cairo, Casablanca, and Tehran." He received his PhD from Yale University.

Katherine E. Hoffman is an associate professor of anthropology at Northwestern. She specializes in the relationship between expressive culture, ethnicity, law and political economy in historical and contemporary North Africa, where she has conducted research for almost 20 years. She is the author of *We Share Walls: Language, Land, and Gender in Berber Morocco* (Blackwell–Wiley, 2008) and co-editor (with Susan G. Miller) of *Berbers and Others: Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghrib* (Indiana University Press, 2010). Hoffman is completing a book on legal pluralism in Berber customary courts under the French Protectorate of Morocco, called "Mirror of the Soul: Language, Islam, and Law in French Native Policy of Morocco (1912-1956)," and is drafting another from her recent field research in Tunisia on the displacement of Libyans during their civil war, called "Revolution's Refugees." She received her PhD from Columbia University.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd is an associate professor of political science and director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science at Northwestern. She teaches and writes on religion and politics, law and religion, the history of US foreign relations, and the international relations of the Middle East. Hurd is the author of *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 2008), which won the APSA's Hubert Morken Award for the Best Book in Religion and

Politics (2008-2010), and co-editor of *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). She is a co-organizer of a three-year collaborative research project funded by the Luce Foundation, "The Politics of Religious Freedom: Contested Norms and Local Practices." In 2012 – 13, Hurd participated in the Northwestern Public Voices Thought Leadership fellowship program. She received her PhD from Johns Hopkins University.

Rebecca C. Johnson is an assistant professor in the Department of English and the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities at Northwestern, where she teaches and writes about the history and theory of the novel in Arabic and English, the literature of the 19th-century period known as the *Nahda*, literary cosmopolitanism, and the theory and politics of translation. She is currently working on a book manuscript, "A History of the Novel in Translation," which brings many of these strands together to understand translation as a lens through which to understand the form and function of the genre. Johnson received her PhD in comparative literature from Yale University in 2010. She has been a fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, the Council for Library and Information Resources, the Center for Arabic Studies Abroad, and the Fulbright Foundation. Johnson has also published translations of Arabic literature, including the poems of Iraqi modernist Nazik al-Mala'ika and Sinan Antoon's novel, *I'jaam: An Iraqi Rhapsody*.

Joe F. Khalil is an associate professor of communication in residence at Northwestern University in Qatar and a visiting research fellow at the London School of Economics. An expert on Arab television production and programming, Khalil has more than fifteen years of professional television experience as director, executive producer and consultant with major Arab satellite channels, and has conducted workshops on behalf of USAID, USIP, IREX and the University of Pennsylvania. Khalil's scholarly interests revolve specifically around Arab youth, alternative media and global media industries. Khalil has authored a policy monograph on Arab satellite entertainment television and public diplomacy, and is also co-author of *Arab Television Industries* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, with Marwan Kraidy). He is currently working on a book project based on his dissertation, "Youth-Generated Media in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia," which examines alternative media cases in both countries. He received his PhD from Southern Illinois University.

Henri Lauzière is an assistant professor of history at Northwestern. He received his PhD from Georgetown University in 2008 and was a postdoctoral fellow at Princeton University's Department of Near Eastern Studies in 2008–2009. His main area of research focuses on modern Islamic intellectual history in the Middle East and North Africa, with a particular interest in the ways in which historians process and produce knowledge about ideas. He has published twice in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and also served as contributor to the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa* and *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*. He is currently completing a book manuscript, tentatively entitled "The Making of Salafism and the Evolution of Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century," which uses the intellectual journey of a Moroccan reformer and globetrotter named Taqi al-Din al-Hilali (1894 – 1987) to trace the gradual construction of Salafism as a category for asserting claims about Islamic thought and activism.

Sonali Pahwa was a lecturer in liberal arts at Northwestern University in Qatar at the time of this writing. Currently, she is an assistant professor in the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities. She received her PhD in cultural anthropology from Columbia University and held a postdoctoral fellowship at University of California, Los Angeles. She is completing a book manuscript titled "Theatres of Citizenship: Youth, Performance, and Identity in Egypt."

Wendy Pearlman is the Crown Junior Chair in Middle East Studies and an assistant professor of political science at Northwestern. She is the author of *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), which was named *Foreign Policy*'s runner-up for best book on the Middle East in 2011. Her first book, *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada* (Nation Books, 2003), was a *Boston Globe* and *Washington Post* bestseller. Wendy has published academic articles in *International Security*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *Politics & Society*, *Security Studies*, and *Studies in Comparative International Development*, and commentaries in various media outlets. Wendy graduated magna cum laude from Brown University and earned her PhD in Government at Harvard University. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Spain and has held fellowships sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She has studied or conducted research in Spain, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Kristen Stilt is a professor of law at Northwestern University School of Law and an affiliated faculty member in the History Department. She received her law degree from The University of Texas School of Law and her PhD in History and Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University. Her research interests include the historical development of Islamic law and its contemporary manifestations. One of her current projects, for which she was named a Carnegie Scholar, studies the constitutional establishment of Islam as the state religion across the Muslim world. She is the author of *Islamic Law in Action: Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (Oxford University Press, 2011) and the co-editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*.

Jessica Winegar is an associate professor of anthropology at Northwestern. Her areas of expertise include: material and visual culture, nationalism, religion, social class, youth, and gender. She is the author of numerous articles on arts and culture in the Middle East, with a number of recent writings on Egypt's uprising. She is also the author of the book *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford University Press, 2006). This book won the Albert Hourani Book Award for Best book in Middle East studies and the Arnold Rubin Outstanding Publication Award from the African Studies Association. She is also a co-author, with Lara Deeb, of a forthcoming book entitled *Anthropology's Politics: Discipline and Region through the Lens of the Middle East* (Stanford University Press). She served as interim director of the Northwestern MENA Program in 2012 – 13. She received her PhD from New York University.

Northwestern University in Qatar was founded in 2008 by parent organization Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, USA in partnership with the Qatar Foundation. NU-Q draws on Northwestern University's distinguished schools of journalism, communication and liberal arts to educate students for leadership positions in the rapidly evolving global media industry. As part of its active role in the development of a 21st-century, knowledge-based economy in Qatar, NU-Q engages in research, thought leadership and service relevant to Qatar, the Middle East and the global community.

NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY
IN QATAR

Cover photo: Pedestrians and traffic around Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, 2009, Ramin Talaie, Corbis

On the ground

New directions in Middle East and North African studies

In the midst of a period of significant change in the Middle East and North Africa, scholars from multiple academic fields convened at Northwestern University in Qatar to present their work in progress on topics relevant to the region and its past, present and future. Together, their work suggests new directions in the study of the Middle East and North Africa and the ways an interdisciplinary conversation opens up a more dynamic sense of a complex and varied place.

The scholars in this collection explore questions of political and cultural identity, widening inequalities, and increasing political and economic oppression. They challenge the received wisdom of the region and its people, history and relationship to the rest of the world.

The scholarship presented here is the work of 10 faculty members in the field of Middle East and North African studies, based at two Northwestern campuses and crossing academic fields and national boundaries. It will be of interest to students and researchers in a number of disciplines, as well as anyone interested in this dynamic region.

NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY
IN QATAR

ISBN 978-9948-22-001-5