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Part III: Transitions: Continuity and rupture – New attitudes / genres in the making

Introduction

Scholarly interest in what is usually called the Arab(ic) Nahḍa is certainly not new. While it had long been treated as the period of transition from an 'age of decay (*inḥiṭāṭ*)' to that of enlightened, secular, western-style modernity – a transition seen teleologically as a process of 'maturation' after an initial 'infancy' – Postcolonial Studies in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) have triggered a revision and re-evaluation which continue to this day. They comprise a broadening of the textual basis on which historical research about the period is building as well as the addition of new aspects looked into and theoretical-methodological approaches applied to the material. Ever since the late twentieth century, the amount of new research has increased to the degree that one has by now come to speak of Nahḍa Studies as a field of research in its own right within studies of the modern Middle East. In their 'update' on Albert Hourani's seminal *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962), Jens Hanssen and Max Weiß rightly spoke of an emerging field that has gained new interest from many sides, both in its own right and as part of global intellectual history (Hanssen and Weiß 2016, xix). To summarise the state of affairs in this "dynamic burgeoning field" (Sheehi 2012, 269), it is as convenient as worthwhile to quote at some length the opening paragraphs of Dyala Hamza's fine chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Middle Eastern and North African History*, due to its conciseness and (near-)comprehensiveness:

> An Arab cultural movement born during the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire but with premodern roots, the Nahḍa[1] simultaneously flourished and was tethered under colonial and autocratic rule before being phased out, or appropriated, by diverse nation-state projects between the 1920s and 1950s. Brought forth by a dynamic prenational public sphere centered around Beirut, Alexandria, and Cairo, radiating out to other provincial capitals and city ports in the Mashriq and the Maghrib, the Nahḍa was traversed by competing narratives and ideologies that all shared the mantra of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) [*author's note:* A ubiquitous term, islah pervades the literature of the Nahḍa in ways technical and less so and with the definite incantational quality of a mantra.[2] (...)]. Through newspapers and journals, publishing houses and bookshops, cafés and salons, local and global societies and diasporic networks, the Nahḍa engineered a modern political sensibility that left the post-

1 Transliteration added throughout the quotation – S.G.

2 Reference to Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111350837-202

> Ottoman citizen with spaces of experience and horizons of expectation uneasily contained in the new world of nation-states.
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> This understanding of the Nahḍa is new. In the past fifteen years [i.e., since 2005], the Nahḍa as an object of study has morphed from a site of derivative and defensive modernity, into a complex process of cultural "rising" (the literal meaning of *n-h-ḍ*)—partly an engagement with late European imperialism but also partly "autogenetic" [*note:* The first to draw attention to an organic drive for reforms from within Nahḍa studies is Sheehi (2004), a critical field which he is credited to have launched. A much earlier attempt, one that saw "Islamic roots of capitalism", was Gran (1979), a path followed by only a handful of scholars (Voll 1983, 1999; Schulze 1990, 1996), probably on account of their espousal of the "Enlightenment" thesis—a thesis energetically disavowed (...)].[3] A new generation of social and intellectual historians of the Middle East and North Africa, steeped in Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, critiqued Albert Hourani's 1962 *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (1798–1939)*. Drawing on postcolonial studies, critical theory, social network analysis, comparative literature, translation studies, and discourse analysis [and one should probably add: conceptual history – S.G.], recent scholars ask new questions [...]. Adopting a creative approach to historical sources, they lead us away from the "coming of the West" paradigm and its attendant modernization theory and spatial and chronological framings. The gendering of the Nahḍa, an attention to the subaltern, as well as a return to political economy and material culture have shifted the focus toward the non-canonical, the "unschooled literates", the popular, the domestic, and even the "non-modern." This scholarship has highlighted the contradictions contained in the Nahḍawi public sphere, a site of hegemonic and dissenting discourses, publics and counter-publics. New work in Ottoman studies has also contributed to this shift.
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> (Hamzah 2020, 39–40)

Hamzah concludes his overview with a mapping of future tasks, stating that, "[t]hus we seem poised to reconsider the hegemonic reforms and discourses of the Nahḍa in light of its transnational magnitude, internal dynamics, and polyphonic scripts" and, given the huge amount of new research and findings, "there remains a discrepancy between the scholarly output concerned with 'religious' and 'secular' reformist discourse and practice. In addition, an integrated comparative analysis across these categories has yet to happen" (ibid., 41), and this

3 The full bibliographical data of the author-year references given here are: Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1979); John O. Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah", in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 32–47; id., "Foundations for Renewal and Reform: Islamic Movements in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford History of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 509–548; Reinhard Schulze, "Das islamische achtzehnte Jahrhundert: Versuch einer historiographischen Kritik", *Die Welt des Islams* 30 (1990): 140–159; and id.,"Was ist die islamische Aufklärung?" *Die Welt des Islams* 36.3 (1996): 276–325.

should include an attempt to "contemplate a counter-Nahḍa that would accommodate Nahḍa's 'others'" (ibid., 42). As also research on the seventeenth and eighteenth century has yielded new results, Hamzah further postulates to revise our view on the Nahḍa and the 'long nineteenth century' in the light of (a) "The Intellectual Flowering of the Seventeenth Century", (b) "Independent Reasoning (*ijtihād*), 'Nouveau Literacy,' and the Scripturalist Legacy of Wahhabism", (c) "Inflections Within the Islamic Sciences: Logic vs. *Ḥadīth*", and (d) "Changes in Pedagogy, Legal Practice, and Canon" (headings in Hamzah 2020, 47–49).

Despite the importance of the above lacunae, which Hamzah without doubt identified correctly and with full right, the present book makes no effort to address any of them because I think there is still enough to do with 'traditional' material. The present book therefore prefers to stay within the Nahḍa 'proper' and go more in-depth there, hoping to reach the deeper level of some very essentials instead by bundling philological approaches from several distinct directions under the heading of 'emerging subjectivity'. This will be achieved by adding some aspects that have been overlooked (or only marginally mentioned) by Hamzah. The reader will note six major features that characterises the book's way to approach the topic of 'emerging subjectivity':

– While much current research displays increased interest in material aspects (and 'materialistic' readings) of the Nahḍa, my approach remains largely philological (language and literature), seeking to prove the continued relevance and high potential of linguistic and narratological analysis for the discovery of deeper structures. These approaches may seem slightly 'old-fashioned' to some, but I hope to be able to build bridges between them (and this means also precious earlier philological research and findings, often available only in other languages than English) and the more recent and 'fashionable' ones (predominantly Anglophone). It is for this reason that I also included some of my own studies from the 1990s and earlier 2000s, some of them originally published in German, all drawing on older Nahḍa-related research, stemming from a time when Nahḍa Studies had not emerged as a field in its own right yet.
– This implies an attempt to strengthen the ties between literary and non-literary historical studies, as well as between linguistic, grammar-oriented approaches (cf. Chapter 3), conceptual history (cf. Chapters 4, 5, 7), and cultural epistemology (which we may well take as the ultimate goal of Nahḍa Studies in general and where my contribution is eager to emphasize the 'subjectivist turn', with its many facets).

- Moreover, the book seeks to make available earlier own fiction-based explorations into Nahḍa emotionalism (esp. Chapters 10, 11 and 15) for contemporary Nahḍa Studies, which have only recently (after Margrit Pernau's pioneering studies and the emergence of research fields like the History of Emotions) begun to become aware of the importance of the emotional dimensions of cultural change (although an interest in psychology and anthropological questions had, in principle, always been there since the postcolonial turn, which had highlighted, among many other aspects, also the impact of colonialism on the colonised's psyche).
- During the work on my postdoctoral thesis – a comparative history of the Arabic and Turkish novel (Guth2023b) – I learned to appreciate the heuristic benefit that can be drawn from juxtaposing the findings of one research field with those of another, both with their own peculiar approaches and research traditions. As I have the impression that there is still little dialogue between Nahḍa Studies and studies of the Tanẓīmāt and early Republican period although it is obvious (and acknowledged from both sides) that both have much in common, I included in this book a section on "Turkish Parallels" (Part VII) and several chapters in which I point to similar phenomena in Turkish.
- Ever since my studies of the Arabic and Turkish novel had alerted me to the existence of so many parallels between the Arabophone and Turcophone spheres I have also dealt with the question of how these parallels can be explained. During the nineteenth century, there was, of course, still much direct contact and exchange between intellectuals from both regions and language communities. However, each of them was also – and often independently from each other – under the influence of 'global' discourses of 'modernisation', 'reform', 'progress', etc. A method of literary analysis with which I became acquainted during the work on my thesis and which has been helpful ever since, is Component Analysis as developed by the late Walter Falk, a former professor of German literature at the University of Marburg, Germany. I will use this method every now and then in the present book (see esp. Chapters 2 and 18) because I think the approach can shed new light on many phenomena from the period and help to start developing an internal periodisation that general terms like 'modernity' are too unspecific to provide. Moreover, Falk's approach can contribute criteria that may be beneficial in addressing the question of the interplay between 'global' modernity and 'local' specifications, i.e., in dealing with the 'multilingualism' of modernity.

– Last but not least: In Part VI, the book widens the temporal perspective by going beyond the Nahḍa (and corresponding Turkish phenomena) and following up on the 'Nahḍa project' by looking into twentieth-century developments.

The contributions in the volume are arranged roughly chronologically (not by the time of their earlier publication but proceeding from the early Nahḍa to its later phases).

Parts I and II are of a general nature. While the former has a brief look at Arab-Ottoman relations (Chapter I-1) and the theoretical framing concerning periodisation (Chapter I-2), the latter deals with the more strictly linguistic phenomena (Chapter II-3). Parts III–VI form constitute the volume's main body. They focus, respectively, on the early beginnings (Part III, with an emphasis on genre transitions and, with these, on changes in the perception, 'processing,' and presentation of the world), the question of emerging subjectivity, especially of the new bourgeoisie or middle class, the *efendiyya* group (Part IV), and the Nahḍa at its enthusiastic height (Part V, on early optimistic nationalism). Part VI maintains the central section's chronological approach, but differs from the preceding three parts insofar as it tries to cover the period as a whole (or even go beyond it) rather than to deal with the issues peculiar to individual subperiods. The volume's last section (Part VII) consists of a brief excursion beyond the Arab setting into some Turkish key texts from the same period.

The whole volume takes a basic knowledge about the most general framing – political, economic, historical, colonial or quasi-colonial – as given. Therefore none of the chapters of Part I makes any endeavour to re-tell, for the umpteenth time, the story of increasing European influence, the advent of Napoleon, the beginnings of the Tanzimat and the reasons for the introduction of large-scale reforms under the Egyptian Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors, the study missions to Europe, the impact of the introduction of the printing press, the first 'civil war' in Lebanon, the British occupation of Egypt, growing nationalism in the provinces, the gradual collapse of the old Ottoman Empire, the First World War and, in its aftermath, the emergence of the first nation states, the turbulent interwar period which, however, was to bring a kind of 'culmination', but also a sobering-up or even disillusionment for the reformist-nationalist drive. For this type of background information, as also for the development of religious and political thought, the reader is kindly asked to refer to already extant seminal studies, like Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798 to 1939* (1962), or Stephen Sheehi's *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (2004), Jens Hanssen and Max Weiß's *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age* (ed., 2016), or Florian Zemmin's *Modernity in*

Islamic Tradition (2018), to mention only a few. As for general overviews of the literary history of the period, conform Roger Allen's and my own entries (on "Fiction, Arabic" and "Novel, Arabic", respectively) in the *Encyclopædia of Islam THREE*, the brief entry "Fiction, modern" (by Walid Hamarneh) in Paul Starkey's and Julie Scott Meisami's *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (1998) or, in more detail, Volume I of the French *Histoire de la littérature arabe moderne (1850–1945)*, edited by Boutros Hallaq and Heidi Toelle (2007), as well as, for fine analyses of the Arabs' encounter with the West as portrayed in belletristic texts, the two standard monographs on the topic: Rotraud Wielandt's extensive *Das Bild der Europäer in der arabischen Erzähl- und Theaterliteratur* (1982) and the somewhat broader, but also less in-depth *Arab Perspectives of the Occident* by Rasheed El-Enany (2006).

Instead of a repeated description of all these phenomena, Part I chooses to add two perspectives that, in our view, have not received due attention yet, although they no doubt substantially complement the picture. One of these perspectives (Chapter I-1) is concerned with the Arabs' relation to the Sublime Porte and its representatives in the Arab Ottoman provinces as an essential aspect of the political constellation that, like the other aspects mentioned above, framed the manifold processes going on in the period in question. The chapter shows the importance of the Ottomans as a third element, with several functions for the Arabs in their meeting with Europeans and European-style modernity. It also raises the question of internal periodisation of the Nahḍa, which subsequent chapters will come back to on several occasions, sometimes as a side aspect, but often with a special focus. The question is central to Chapter I-2, for instance, which seeks to contribute a meta-perspective that, even after the rise of Postcolonial Studies and its thorough questioning of Eurocentrism, still remains to be followed up: Instead of approaching Middle Eastern history, and with it the Nahḍa, as an 'Other' with its own temporality, insinuating a lagging behind of Middle Eastern ('Oriental') as compared to Western modernities, the chapter underlines the commonalities in Middle Eastern (here especially Arab) and European attitudes towards 'the world', commonalities that tend to be overlooked or neglected because of differences in appearance, though they certainly *were* there, as the world had since long become a 'globalized' world. Had it not been for such a fundamental agreement on the essential structures of 'meaning' in and of the world, communication and exchange across the 'modernities' would never have been possible.

Agreement on very basic structures of meaning notwithstanding, there *were*, however, of course, differences. And they were so big that it seems to be justified, on the other hand, to a certain degree and in some respects, to periodise Middle

Eastern cultural history also in a way that *is* quite different from contemporaneous western cultural history.

One – or perhaps *the* – keyword in this respect is certainly *subjectivity*, as a new factor governing human beings' attitude towards the world. The split, so characteristic of Modernity, between the human subject and the world as its object began to mark European civilisation from the era of the Renaissance onwards and found its major expressions in the philosophies of Descartes (in whose *cogito ergo sum* the perception of the world is made contingent on the human ego) or Kant (with his focus on the agency of human reason, the *Vernunft*, that, too, deals with the world as its object), as well as in Romanticism (where the centrality of the human subject culminated in, among other things, the cult of the genius or the virtuoso). The rise of new literary genres, first of all the novel, and the novel of formation of the self in particular, were other reflexes of the increased centrality of the human subject, as were also travel accounts, real or fictional, in which the new self-conscious and self-confident subjects cast their ideas about the world they explored as their object. Most of these and many other processes accompanying the emergence of a new subjectivity can certainly not be observed in the Middle East on a large-scale basis earlier than in the Nahḍa. A clear indicator of this is the language of the Nahḍa itself – the topic of our Part II = Chapter 3). Massive linguistic changes do not occur before the 19th century. While the lexical innovation and stylistic changes that led to the emergence of what we now are used to call Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) have been addressed already by several highly valuable studies,[4] little attention has been paid so far to the psychological-epistemological foundations of the morpho-semantics that were operative in the coining of modern terminology and the expression of the subject's agency in the world. Chapter II-3 tries to fill this gap by combining observations about the grammar of the modernising language with hypotheses about the origin of the described features in the language users' changed attitude towards the world. The chapter sees phenomena such as the increased occurrence of derivations showing the (self-referential) *t*-morpheme, the many abstract coinings in *-iyya* or the causative verb forms II (*FaʕʕaLa*) and IV (*ʔaFʕaLa*) as reflections of that emerging subjectivity.

4 Cf., among many others, especially Vincent Monteil's *L'Arabe moderne* (1960), Jaroslav Stetkevych's *The Modern Arabic Literary Language* (1970), Helga Rebhan's *Geschichte und Funktion einiger politischer Termini…* (1986), Ami Ayalon's *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East* (1987), Bernard Lewis's *The Political Language of Islam* (1988), Kees Versteegh's *The Arabic Language* (1997), Adrian Gully's "Arabic Linguistic Issues and Controversies…" (1997), M. Sawāʿī/Sawaie's *Azmat al-muṣṭalaḥ al-ʿarabī … = La crise de la terminologie arabe au XIXe siècle…* (1999), and Christian Junge's *Die Entblößung der Wörter* (2019a).

As a chapter concerned with language, the medium through which the whole era articulates itself in all its various fields and its multiple forms of expression, Chapter II-3 forms a section in its own right reflections of which will be felt in all of the following sections. This is particularly true for Part III with its focus on conceptual change and the processes at work during a period of transition from "old" (inherited, traditional) to "new", "modern". All four contributions in this part deal with the way in which the old concept of *adab* is integrated, gradually, into a changing worldview and how, in this process, new Western concepts, like "literature" (Chapter III-4), "novel" (Chapter III-7), or "nation" (Chapter III-5) in turn are '*adab*-ted', i.e., modified to fit into an autochthonous tradition, producing a specifically Arab/ic[5] type of modernity.

Chapter III-6 with its focus on the agents behind the introduction of new genres could have been placed as well in Part IV which seeks to highlight exactly the human beings who have just begun to gain self-awareness and the self-confidence as agents disposing of the power of dealing with the world as their object. However, while Chapter III-6 is more interested in the challenges of integrating key features of a new concept – the "plot" of a fictional narrative in this case – the chapters of Part IV mainly draw attention to major *external* 'markers' of the new types of narratives that express the Nahḍa worldview, like a strengthening of the narrative subject in the neo-*maqāma* (Chapter IV-8), the emotionalisation of the narrative discourse (Chapters IV-9 and IV-11) and its moralisation (Chapters IV-10 and IV-11), an aspect already dealt with in Chapter III-4 (under the perspective of '*adab*-tation' that time).

Emotionalisation, in particular, with excessive lachrymosity as a major characteristic especially of pre-WW I until the 1920s, points already to the next section, Part V, which deals with the period when the Nahḍa, at its zenith, has become almost synonymous with nation-building. Chapter V-12 analyzes an important manifesto of *adab qawmī*, "national literature". The text gives deep insight into the objectives of the movement and the ideas and ideologies it builds on. Chapter V-13 then presents the literary biography of one of the key exponents of this "national literature" as an exemplary life trajectory of one of the prominent adherents of the *adab qawmī* idea, Maḥmūd Taymūr, often called the 'father' of the Egyptian short story. It is meant to convey an idea of how the Nahḍa sensibility and worldview translated into the life and work of a highly prolific member of the *Madrasa ḥadītha*, the "Modernist School" who, at the "heyday" of the Nahḍa, were key promoters of *adab qawmī* ideology and, with it, "highbrow" Egyptian

5 The slash in the adjective "Arab/ic" is meant to give credit to the fact that the agents are, of course, *Arab*s while the language in which this modernity is expressed, is *Arabic*.

nationalism. Chapter V-14 reconnects to the question, raised in Chapter I-2, of the simultaneity of the (seemingly) non-simultaneous, juxtaposing an examplary short story by a representative of "national literature" with features of simultaneous non-Arab/ic worldviews, with the aim of highlighting comparability with simultaneous developments in Europe, and thus shared 'modernity', in a global perspective, despite very different appearances on the surface.

As mentioned above, Part VI takes a look at the Nahḍa and the concomitant 'upswing' of the subject-agent as a whole, attempting a summarising view of, roughly, a century of historical developments with the aim of highlighting the major threads. It does so in two sub-chapters. Chapter VI-16 follows the idea of the "independent self" from the mid-19th century (when it, to our best knowledge, was first mentioned as such in an Arabic novel of 1859), through many ups and downs, and via its deep crisis in the 1960s, until its (seeming) dissolution in Orhan Pamuk's postmodern novels and their idea of East and West as twins, or two faces of the same coin, or the "palimpsest" nature of any self, as well as the mutual reflexivity, interdependence and complementarity of what until then had formed a grand narrative of modernity, i.e., the essential difference of "Eastern" and "Western" cultural identities (and degrees of civilisation on the well-known teleological scale of modernist ideology, spanning from "underdevelopment" to "developedness", from "backwardness" to "progressiveness", etc.). In addition to that, Chapter VI-17 demonstrates that modernist thought in the Middle East, with its constant hope to be able to achieve a better future, has always had a utopian dimension and that the development of utopian thinking since the Nahḍa has followed the same steps and patterns that have been described for European utopias since the Renaissance and the beginning of "Modern Times" in the West. The observations made on the historical development of the genre in Europe help us to identify similar modes and patterns of individualisation, spatialisation and temporalisation in Middle Eastern modernity, a fact that provides useful additional categories of framing for our interpretation of the macro-timespan in question.

The last part (Part VII) is intended to serve as complementary – in two respects. As it deals all with *Turkish* literature, it provides Turkologists with material that they are used to treat in the context of Turkish literary history only, while its juxtaposition to studies on *Arabic* literature will, it is hoped, allow for a wider framing. And vice versa: the addition of Turkish parallels will make clear to the Arabist that the phenomena analyzed in the preceding chapters are not at all restricted to the Nahḍa and the emergence of *Arabic* subjectivity and the *Arab* subject's agency alone. Chapter VII-18 follows up on ideas of periodisation, global and regional simultaneity that have been addressed especially in chapters I-2 and

V-14, while Chapter VII-19 provides four micro-analyses of key texts from the period corresponding the Arab/ic Nahḍa, i.e., the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic.

Oslo, May 2023 / Tübingen, January 2024