

# Commitment and Dissent in Arabic Literature since the 1950s

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Conference Reader

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## Abstracts

## Panel 1: Conceptual History of Literary Engagement

### Between Existentialism and Socialist-Realism: The Intellectual Revolt of the 1950s

Yoav Di-Capua

On the eve of WW II a leading class of intellectuals, or *Udaba*, hailing from Cairo advocated a cultural order that was predicated on the alleged universalism of colonial modernity. As late as 1938 the doyen of Arab letters, Taha Husayn, still argued that the primary association of modern Arab culture should be with Europe. Other key thinkers followed suit. A decade later, however, a new class of young intellectual, mostly from Lebanon and Iraq, began challenging the cultural assumptions of the *Udaba*. Instead of the free floating meaning of top-down “universal” Enlightenment they proposed submerging the act of thinking and writing in concrete social and political realities thus calling for culture for the sake of life and society rather than its own sake. This postcolonial proposition emerged in response to the trauma of colonialism; namely: physical subjugation, absence of social justice and a fractured cultural identity. Inspired by the intellectual example of Moscow and Paris, young Arab intellectuals creatively translated existentialism and Socialist Realism into Arabic and put these newly formulated ideas to work in the service of radical cultural change. While both camps prided themselves for being “committed,” their actual politics and notions were quite different from each other thus contrasting Sartrean and Marxist-Leninist categories of thought. Nonetheless, both the Sartrean and Marxist strands of commitment were instrumental in ushering the cultural revolution of the 1950s which was one of the most optimistic and vibrant decades in modern Arab history. This presentation seeks to revisit the cultural battles of the 1950s and assemble the story of how a post-colonial generation invented a culture of *iltizam* (commitment) to actively retired their mentors, successfully marginalize their notion of culture and thus ushering Arab thought into a new postcolonial phase.

## Panel 2: Manifestations of Commitment

### Political Commitment in Jabra and Munif: From Political Activism to Leaving Traces, Recollecting Presence, and Aesthetic Contemplation

Sonja Mejcher-Atassi

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1920-94) and Abd al-Rahman Munif (1933-2004) contributed significantly to the intellectual life, literature, and art *Sharq al-mutawassit* (East of the Mediterranean, 1977), as reads the title of one of Munif's seminal novels, a classic in prison literature. Both Jabra and Munif considered the novel a major means of expression – *the means of expression* – in the second half of the twentieth century. Whereas Jabra considered it “the meeting point of the creative arts known to man since earliest times“ (1994: 210), Munif described it as giving voice to “the history of those who do not have a history” (1994: 43). These two statements point to differences in the perception of political commitment as expressed in the novels of Jabra and Munif that this paper sets out to examine – differences within a spectrum of shared interests, concerns, and anxieties. The paper focuses on two novels: Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* (Beirut, 1978) and the first volume of Munif's *Mudun al-milh* (*Cities of Salt*, 1984–89) and their respective protagonists: Walid Masoud and Miteb al-Hathal.

Born in Bethlehem, Palestine, in 1919, Jabra found exile in Baghdad after the *nakba* of 1948. As a literary writer (of novels and poetry alike), translator (of Shakespeare, Faulkner, Beckett and others), academic (professor of English literature), art critic (together with the Iraqi artists Jewad Selim and Shakir Hasan Al Sa'id he was a founding member of the Baghdad Group for Modern Art), artist, and intellectual, he contributed profoundly to Baghdad's cultural life until his death in 1994. Familiar with both Arabic and Western culture, it was in literature and art that he saw the hope for a better world. Arabic culture was to participate in the civilization of today, not by imitation of Western culture but by addition to it. Embracing many ideas from the *nahda*, he firmly believed in the necessity to modernize Arabic culture, taking from the Arabic-Islamic heritage that which is alive and leaving aside what is dead (Elias Khoury's interview with Jabra 1978: 192). He ascribed a special role to intellectuals who feature prominently in his novels. According to him, they and, more broadly, the field of cultural production, played an important role in the Arab world as agents of change (ibid: 188).

Munif, known as Arab citizen *par excellence*, was more interested in politics than literature, when he first met Jabra in the mid 1950s in Baghdad and remained outspoken about his political ideas, even when he devoted himself entirely to writing. In his early novels Munif similar to Jabra with whom he co-authored *Alam bi-la khara'it* (Beirut 1982) centered his interest on the role of the intellectual in society. In his later novels, however, such as *Mudun*

*al-milh* and *Ard al-Sawad*, he focused not on the individual but on the community that is society, at large, bringing to the fore “the history of those who do not have history.” This might at times have overshadowed his experimental zeal in narrative techniques and reduced his novels to alternative visions of history, valued for their socio-political insights into an otherwise unwritten history, whereas Munif conceived of them as part of a project “to fashion a novel that is uniquely ‘Arab’ in its view of history as well as in its narrative style,” as Stefan G. Meyer says (2001: 76). The latter is often neglected, when looking at Munif’s literary works but part and parcel of his perception of commitment, as I argue in this paper. The two novels I focus on, Jabra’s *In Search of Walid Masoud* and Munif’s *Cities of Salt* could not be more different at first sight: one is set in the intellectual circles of Baghdadi society, the other in the small desert community of Wadi al-Uyoun. However, the novels share some key characteristics, such as the absence of the protagonist who comes to life through the narratives of others and appears almost like a legendary figure: the *fida’i*, who returns to his homeland, Occupied Palestine, in Jabra’s novel, and the rebel, who resists foreign interests and the transformation of his land and society triggered by the discovery of oil, in Munif’s novel.

## The End of Exile: Refiguring the Displaced Intellectual in Contemporary Arabic Literature and Film

Zeina G. Halabi

In his memoirs and novel *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra conceived of the Palestinian intellectual's exile as paradoxically tragic and empowering. The exilic intellectual in Jabra's writings is not a refugee in need of assistance, but an enlightened wanderer moving freely between different cultural and political spaces, inducing change, and bestowing knowledge upon his exilic society. In *Reflections on Exile* (2000), Edward Said reiterated Jabra's romanticization of exile and saw in the intellectual's liminality a liberating force that engenders creativity and induces change. In both perspectives, not only is exile instrumental to resisting hegemonic structures, but it is also the desired ethical position of displaced intellectuals. The concept of exile that Said and Jabra articulated in their writings has arguably framed the ways in which exilic Arab and particularly Palestinian intellectuals have been represented in literature of political commitment.

In this paper, I argue that the idealized notion of exile has been refigured and subverted in contemporary Arabic literature and film. I particularly examine the ways in which the novelists Rawi Hage and Rabih Jaber and the film director Elia Suleiman have made recourse to metafiction, irony, and play in order to rethink exile and destabilize political commitment as an overarching conceptual framework. In *Cockroach* (2008), Hage blurs the distinction between exile and asylum and represents the displaced Algerian intellectual as a burdensome and marginal asylum seeker with a disingenuous commitment to his cause. In *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), Suleiman returns to themes of commitment and nationhood by revealing the powerlessness of the self-exiled Palestinian as he faces the apathy of his audience and the banality of Israeli occupation. Jaber's *Ralph Rizqallah Through the Looking Glass* (1997) neutralizes the role of the intellectual by celebrating discursive silence and embracing self-exile from the Lebanese literary scene as it struggles to redraw the boundaries of political commitment. The comparative analysis of these three distinctive representations of the exilic intellectual allows us to understand how contemporary Arab authors question, subvert, and transform the representation of displacement, the nation, and the intellectual, all of which have informed notions of political commitment in literature and film.

## Post-Commitment Resistance: A Look at Ghassan Kanafani and Emile Habibi

Refqa Abu-Remaileh

Causing a stir when they first appeared in the Arab world, critics agreed that the “poets of resistance”, relatively unknown at the time, extolled in Ghassan Kanafani’s (1936-1972) studies on *adab al-muqamawa* in 1966 and 1968, were the shining example of true *iltizam* and a model for every writer in the Arab world.

However, as the notion of *iltizam* began disintegrating after the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, along with it went the ideals of pan-Arabism, Arab socialism, and secularism. In a lonely struggle for liberation, Palestinian revolutionary culture began to rise, and a transnational notion of *al-adab al-multazim* began to give way to a localised battle in *adab al-muqawama*. While the Arab world searched for the roots of the disaster entering a period of self-criticism (*al-naqd al-dhati*) and losing faith in the political role of the writer and effectiveness of the literary word in creating change, Palestinian literature took on these challenges simultaneously.

As a contemporary of Kanafani, albeit living parallel lives inside/outside Palestine, Emile Habibi (1932-1996) was cut off from the Arab world and debates raging on in its literary circles, formulating his own unique literary style and forms of aesthetic resistance. This paper-in-progress will experiment with reading aspects of Emile Habibi’s literary works through the lens of Kanafani’s notion of *adab al-muqawama*.



## Panel 3: Postmodernity and Beyond

Ghazali, Shidyaq, Said: Towards a New Genealogy of Dissent

Tarek El-Ariss

In *Kashf al-Mukhabba' an Funun Urubba* (henceforth: *Kashf*) (Revealing the hidden in European culture) (1863), Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq parodies the Arabists he meets in England in the 1840s and 1850s. Appropriating and recoding key concepts from the Arab-Islamic tradition (*kashf*, *tahāfut*, *taqlīd*, *fan/funūn*), he exposes the economy of Orientalist expertise at Cambridge and Oxford. He claims that British scholars make countless intentional and unintentional mistakes and epistemological errors as they teach and translate Arabic texts. He also considers both absurd and amusing the fact that they cover up their lack of knowledge by quoting one another and listing their exaggerated titles and fields on the covers of their various publications. He then compares this practice to what he observes in the marketplace with regard to food labels, mocking the superlatives used to describe items' provenance and distinguished pedigree. "The British do this," al-Shidyaq writes, "in order to show how civilized they are!" (*Al-marād indahum min al-tamaddun*).

Identifying the self-referential structure of epistemological production, al-Shidyaq echoes what Edward Said would later term "the restorative citation of antecedent authority," through which orientalist knowledge—and thus, the Orient itself—is imagined and reproduced. However, a close examination of al-Shidyaq's work reveals a scene of *kashf* that not only disproves (*ibtāl*) the Arabists' theses but also exposes their resounding collapse (*tahāfut*). Drawing on intellectual debates in Islamic tradition from al-Ghazali onward, al-Shidyaq strategically deploys a sensorium of sound and movement to confront the Arabists' incoherence, arrogance, and ultimate exclusion of the native's contribution to the canon of knowledge about his/her own culture. By the same token, al-Shidyaq's exposure of knowledge production and circulation in 19<sup>th</sup>-century England stages the collapse (*tahāfut*) of the discourse of Arab enlightenment, centering on education and the emulation of the West. In al-Shidyaq's text, the Nahda is always already contested, and contesting—from the outset—its closure as a teleological narrative of progress and civilization.

## *Avatar* and *ʿAzāzīl* – Western and Middle Eastern Patterns of Individual Revolt: An Essay in the Simultaneity of Ruptures

Stephan Guth

Given the high acclaims received from critics as well as the big success on the market, but also the hot debates they incited, both James Cameron's utopia *Avatar* (2009) and Yūsuf Zaydān's *ʿAzāzīl* (2008) can be considered to have hit the nerves of their time. Despite very different settings – mid-22<sup>nd</sup> century on a remote planet (*Avatar*) vs. Egypt and the Levant at the time of early ecclesiastic schisms (*ʿAzāzīl*) – and despite very different plots and protagonists, the two best-sellers nevertheless have a lot of traits and basic structures in common and may therefore be compared as more or less simultaneous representations of their authors' (and the reading resp. cinema publics') worldviews. Analyzing *ʿAzāzīl* a year after the Taḥrīr revolution, it is perhaps not much surprising to find in the prize-winning novel the germs of an uprising: cast in the form of a *Bildungsroman* it features a long and painful process of individual maturation that culminates in the decision to completely break with the prevailing system and instead focus on one's real self, guided by an intuitive knowledge about what is truly human and natural. It may however be more astonishing that a very similar development is enacted also in Cameron's *Avatar*. Given the similarities in a Western and Eastern cultural product, both narratives may be understood as expressions of a global tendency, among intellectuals (but also larger parts of the populations), to suggest rebellion against much dated politico-ideological and socio-economic orders and their moral codes.

## Emotion and Criticism –The *Kifaya*-Rhetoric in Pre-Revolutionary Egyptian Literature

Christian Junge

What is the relationship between criticism and emotion? How does critical literature affect the reader? And how do poetics constitute criticism? By addressing these questions, my paper will discuss the rhetoric of critique in pre-revolutionary Egyptian literature including Alaa al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* (2002), Khaled al-Khamissi's *Taxi* (2007), Khaled Tawfiq's *Utopia* (2008) and Magdy al-Shafee's *Metro* (2008). All these different texts deliver a 'total criticism' that is intrinsically tied to radical emotions and cannot be analysed without them. This kind of potent literature focuses on crucial moments in the life of the protagonist, who suffers injustice and is subsequently driven to feel that 'enough is enough', that things cannot go on like this; in short, that the situation *must* change. Concomitantly, this literature makes the reader feel that 'enough is enough'. In order to grasp this phenomenon terminologically, I adopt the popular Egyptian protest slogan of *kifaya* or "Enough". This concept, I argue, expresses the tight interaction of an emotional point of no return (i.e. "I cannot bear it any longer") and an intellectual demand for ultimate change (i.e. "We have to change things"). Thus, I contend that *kifaya*-rhetoric in pre-revolutionary Egyptian literature is a promising promontory from which to descry the literary horizon of emotion and affect.

In the first part of my paper, I want to situate the phenomenon of *kifaya*-rhetoric between other literary devices of pre-revolutionary literature in order to contextualize the emergence of total criticism and radical emotions. The anti-deconstructivist *kifaya*-literature forms a sharp contrast to the self-deconstructivist writing of the *riwaya jadida* or new novel that emerged in the literature of the 1990s (and later 2000s) in works by Mustafa Dhikri, Hamdy Abu Golayyil and Mansoura Izz ad-Din. While works classified under *al-riwaya al-jadida* carefully eschew and deconstruct collective representation, works of *kifaya*-rhetoric authors such as Aswany, Khamissi, Tawfiq and al-Shafee re-introduce collective representation, thereby facilitating total criticism and provoking radical emotions.

In the second part of my paper, I discuss different aspects of *kifaya*-rhetoric as exemplified in Alaa al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building*, Khaled al-Khamissi's *Taxi*, Khaled Tawfiq's *Utopia* and Magdy al-Shafee's *Metro*. By analysing similar and different structures and phenomena, the paper seeks to sketch the various interpretations of *kifaya*-rhetoric that may be analysed on two interdependent levels. The first level is the diegetic representation and staging of moments in life when a protagonist feels that "enough is enough". The second level of *kifaya*-rhetoric is the reader's intellectual and affective response to each novel. By so doing, this paper seeks to contribute to a growing scholarly interest in emotions and affects in modern Arabic literature as means of understanding – and feeling – the political and the critical.

## Panel 4: Locating the Political in Art and Literature

### *Panel Discussion*

#### Participants:

Randa Aboubakr  
Yazid Anani  
Sonja Mejcher-Atassi  
Iman Mersal  
Dina Ramadan

#### Moderation:

Hanan Toukan  
Yvonne Albers

The workshop's overarching topic (→ changes in the concept of commitment and the committed author in Arabic literature since the 1950s) will be expanded in the round table discussion by looking at contemporary art to gain a comparative interdisciplinary perspective. The invited speakers are scholars with a background in Arabic literary history specifically focusing on contemporary literature on the one hand as well as scholars studying contemporary art of the Middle East on the other. In addition, the theoretical outlook of the discussion will be broadened by some of the speaker's practical experiences e.g. as authors or curators.

Taking up and expanding the discussion from panel 3, practices of political writing in Arabic literature today will be compared to debates and trends taking place in the field of contemporary visual arts in the Middle East.

In recent years, the political in art and the meaning of political art respectively have been controversially discussed as part of a wider debate on the link between politics and aesthetics. In introductory statements, our speakers will present different aspects of and approaches to the ways in which the creative process and its manifestation in contemporary Arabic literature on the one hand and in visual arts on the other are regarded as "political".

Based on this, the discussion will focus on whether the presented literary and artistic positions and phenomena are (a) characterized by similar theoretical and conceptual concerns and whether this development has to be understood as part of a general shift in the

meaning of the political not only in art but also in literary discourse; or (b) part of autonomous debates that are best approached separately; or (c) neither entirely congruent nor completely separate from each other but rather interrelated in some respect and in need of differentiation in others.

In the context for this set of questions arises another, namely whether literature today remains to be the established leader of cultural production in Arabic culture or has been overtaken by other forms of artistic expression.

The topic can therefore be outlined by the following questions:

1. **Premises:** How is political literature defined in Arabic discourse today in comparison to political art? Is one of the areas – i.e. visual art and literary discourse – actually or more than the other involved in a debate of this question?
2. **Agents:** To what extent is the understanding of literary and therefore artistic 'engagement' connected to the role of the intellectual (as intended by Sartre's concept)? Did the roles of author and artist evolve in the same way or did they undergo an altogether different epistemological process?
3. **Market:** What role does the (national/regional/international) market play in branding works of art as political? Are there parallels to draw between the literary market and the ideological and economical correlations of contemporary art from the Middle East and the international art market? How do literary and/or visual art works get chosen for translation and globally circulated?

Short Bios

**Randa Aboubakr** is a professor of English and comparative literature at Cairo University, Egypt. She has published extensively on English Literature, Comparative Literature, Translation Studies, Cultural and Postcolonial Studies, Egyptian Colloquial Poetry, and sub-Saharan African Poetry. Author of *The Conflict of Voices in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus and Mahmud Darwish* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004). Her most recent publication is a chapter entitled: “The Role of New Media in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011: Visuality as an Agent of Change,” in *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Postcolonial Outlook* (New York, Routledge, 2013). Randa Aboubakr has been fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. She has also been visiting Professor at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, and the Jagiellonian University of Krakow, Poland. Currently, she is a visiting scholar at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) at Philipps-Universität Marburg.

**Refqa Abu-Remaileh** currently is a EUME Fellow at the Form Transregionale Studien in Berlin. Her academic research revolves around the intersections between modern Arabic literature and film. She received her PhD and MSt in modern Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Oxford (2010, 2004) and her BA in English Literature from the University of British Columbia (2002). Abu-Remaileh’s doctoral thesis examined the creative works of two Palestinian citizens of Israel: the novels of Emile Habibi (1922—1996) and the films of Elia Suleiman (1960—). After completing her PhD, Abu-Remaileh worked with the Oxford Research Group’s Middle East Programme, a conflict-resolution organization focusing on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. She created a new strategic thinking group involving Palestinian citizens of Israel. During her time in Berlin, Abu-Remaileh will work on a book project that will expand upon her doctoral dissertation. The book will take a comparative interdisciplinary perspective on understanding narrative entanglements within and between literature and film.

**Yvonne Albers** is a Research Associate in the department for Arabic Studies at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) at Marburg University and has attained a Master’s degree in Philosophy, Theater Studies, and Arabic Studies at Leipzig University. She completed her masters with a thesis on the role and importance of the spectator in contemporary Lebanese theatre and performance arts (published in 2011). Her current PhD research is concerned with the reception of European aesthetics in modern Arab thought. Yvonne is also member of the editorial board of *Middle East – Topics & Arguments*, an interdisciplinary academic online journal published at the CNMS, and editor-in-chief of its first issue on *The Intellectual* launched in May 2013.

**Yazid Anani** is an Assistant Professor in Architecture, Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture at Birzeit University, Ramallah and currently a EUME Fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin. He is the current head of the Academic Council of the International Academy of Art Palestine. His work and research interests focus on colonial and post-colonial spaces as well as themes in architecture, neoliberalism and power. Anani received his doctorate degree in Spatial Planning from the TU Dortmund, Germany in 2006. He is active in a number of collectives and projects, such as Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), RIWAQ Biennale and Ramallah Syndrome. He has curated and co-curated several projects, such as Palestinian Cities: Visual Contention, Ramallah—the fairest of them all?, Between Ebal and Gerzim, and has produced individual and collaborative critical projects mainly related to public space, such as Al-Riyadh and Urban Cafés. He's currently the curator of the 4th edition of Cities Exhibition of Birzeit University Museum, Jericho—beyond the celestial and terrestrial. Anani has lectured worldwide and has taken part in many conferences and seminars related to the issues of urban transformation and neocolonialism. As a EUME Fellow in Berlin, he will work on a project entitled: "Spatial Change and the Construction of Palestinian National Identity".

**Yoav Di-Capua** is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin, where he teaches modern Arab intellectual history. He is the author of *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (University of California Press, 2009). He is currently at work on a new book, tentatively titled *Transnational Arab Thought and the Global Culture of the 1960s*. His research is supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Texas Humanities Research Award.

**Tarek El-Ariss** is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at University of Texas at Austin, and is currently a EUME Fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin. He received a BA in Philosophy from the American University of Beirut and a PhD in Comparative Literature from Cornell University. His research and teaching interests include contemporary Arabic literature, visual culture, and new media; 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century French and Arabic philosophy and travel writing; and affect and poststructuralist theory. His research focuses on contemporary Arabic literature, visual and popular culture, and new media. He is the author of *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (2013), co-editor of *Queer Affects*, Special Issue of *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2013), and editor of *The Arab Renaissance: Anthology of Nahda Thought, Literature, and Media* (forthcoming 2014). He also edits a series on literature in translation for the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas Press entitled, *Emerging Voices from the Middle East*. His new book project examines new media's effects on Arabic artistic and political



practices by exploring the way modes of confrontation, circulation, and exhibitionism shape contemporary writing practices and critiques of power.

**Stephan Guth** studied „Islamwissenschaft“, Modern German Literature and Philosophy at the universities of Bonn and Tübingen and audited lectures at Cairo University. He received an MA in 1987 and a PhD in 1992 both from Bonn University. From 1996-2007 Guth was teaching and researching at the Institute for Islamic and Middle East Studies, University of Bern, where from 2003 onwards he was also PD (Privatdozent). Since 2009 he is a Professor at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages of the University of Oslo. In his teaching he focuses on Middle Eastern literatures, especially Arabic and Turkish of the modern period, languages of the ‘Islamic World’, and Conceptual History. Guth is the author of *Brückenschläge: Eine integrierte ‘turkoarabische’ Romangeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003) and *Die Hauptsprachen der Islamischen Welt* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012) as well as co-editor of works such as *From New Values to New Aesthetics: Turning Points in Modern Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011) and *Conscious Voices: Concepts of Writing in the Middle East* (Beirut: Orient-Institut & Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999).

**Zeina G. Halabi** is Assistant Professor of Arabic at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is currently a EUME Fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin. In her current book project, *Writing Melancholy: The Death of the Intellectual in Modern Arabic Literature*, Halabi engages the elegiac writings of modern and contemporary Arab novelists and poets and explores the ways in which Arab writers who identify with different literary and historical generations have mourned and commemorated the death of their peers. In dialogue with theoretical contributions from psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and gender studies, Halabi examines melancholia as a collective psychological and political experience of loss that has emerged at the wake 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Her publications include: “The Unbearable Heaviness of Being: The Suicide of the Intellectual in Rabih Jaber’s Ralph Rizkallah through the Looking Glass” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44 (2013).

**Christian Junge** studied Comparative Literature and Arabic Studies in Paris, Cairo and Berlin. He was Junior Lecturer at the Seminar für Semitistik und Arabistik at the Freie Universität Berlin. Recently, he is a fellow at the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies (FU), where he prepares his PhD on “Formations of Critique – Gender, Sexuality and Philology in Shidyaq’s *as-Saq ala s-saq*”. He is also research fellow of the project “Language, Philology, Culture–Arab Cultural Semantics in Transition” at the University of St Andrews and co-coordinator of the summer school “Arabische Philologien im Blickwechsel” ([www.arabic-philologies.de](http://www.arabic-philologies.de)) at the Cairo University 2013. His main research areas are 19<sup>th</sup> century and

postmodern Arabic literature, Egyptian literature, Gender and Postcolonial Studies and recently Emotion Theory. His latest publications include: „Lexicography as Cultural Criticism. Lexicographic Enumeration in al-Shidyaq’s *al-Saq ala l-saq* and its Aesthetical and Critical Intent”, in: *A Life in Praise of Words. Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq and the Nineteenth Century*, Eds. Nadia al-Bagdadi, Fawwaz Traboulsi, Barbara Winckler (forthcoming).

**Georges Khalil** works at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and is the Academic Coordinator of the Forum Transregionale Studien. He is also responsible for "Europe in the Middle East - The Middle East in Europe" (EUME), a research program that seeks to rethink keyconcepts and premises that link and divide Europe and the Middle East. He has been the Coordinator of the "Working Group Modernity and Islam" from 1998 to 2006 at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, and studied History and Islamic Studies in Hamburg and Cairo, as well as European Studies at the Europa-Kolleg Hamburg. He has been a 1995-1996 fellow of the College for International Affairs, Robert Bosch Foundation. He is the co-editor (with Catherine David and Bernd Scherer) of *Di/Visions. Kultur und Politik des Nahen Ostens* (Wallstein, 2009), and (with Benoit Junod, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf) *Islamic Art and the Museum. Approaches to Art and Archeology of the Muslim World in the 21st Century* (Saqi, London 2012).

**Elias Khoury** is a Lebanese novelist, playwright, critic, and a prominent public intellectual. He has published several novels, which have been translated into many languages, as well as several works of literary criticism. He has also written three plays. He was editor of *Shu'un Filastin* (Palestinian Affairs), collaborating with Mahmoud Darwish, and editorial director of *Al-Karmel*. From 1983 to 1990 he was editorial director of the cultural section of *Al-Safir* and later became editor of *Al-Mulhaq*, the cultural supplement of *Al-Nahar*. He has taught in Columbia University, New York, in the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese University, the Lebanese American University and New York University.

**Samia Mehrez** obtained her BA and MA degrees at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and completed her PH.D. at UCLA where her dissertation focused on the works of the Egyptian writer Gamal al-Ghitani. She taught at Cornell University before she came to AUC where she currently teaches modern Arabic literature in Arabic and in Translation as well as courses on Translation Studies and Theory in the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations. She is the founding director of the Center for Translation Studies at AUC. She has published numerous articles in the fields of modern Arabic literature, postcolonial literature, translation studies, gender studies, and cultural studies. She is the author of *Egyptian Writers between History and Fiction: Essays on Naguib Mahfouz, Sonallah Ibrahim*

and Gamal al-Ghitani, AUC Press, 1994 and 2005 and *Egypt's Culture Wars: Politics and Practice*, Routledge 2008, AUC Press 2010. She is the editor of *Translating Egypt's Revolution: The Language of Tahrir*, AUC Press 2012 and has recently completed the translation into English of Mona Prince's memoir of Egypt's January 2011 uprising entitled *Ismi Thawra* (Revolution is my name). She is currently working on a book-length manuscript tentatively entitled *The Making of Revolutionary Culture in Egypt*.

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