Introduction:
Tracks and Traces of Literary Commitment—
On *Iltizām* as an Ongoing Intellectual Project

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If one day the people will to live
Then destiny must reply;
The darkness must disappear,
And bonds must break.[1]

These are the lines of the poem "The Will to Live" ("Irādat al-ḥayāh") written in 1933 by the Tunisian poet Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī (1909–1934) to which the rallying chant of the popular uprisings in the Arab world in 2011 responded: "The people want the fall of the regime/system" ("Al-shaʿb yurīd isqāṭ al-niẓām"). Regimes indeed fell and history is evolving. The euphoria sparked by the fall of authoritarian rulers in Tunisia and Egypt that year has now evaporated. Current developments in many countries of the region seem to be heading in different directions, towards greater fragmentation, sectarianism, and violence, witnessing a resurgence of the paradigms of the old order, such as the outworn dichotomy of authoritarianism versus religious extremism. While the temptation of authoritarianism may be strong now, and prove to be so in the years ahead, aspirations for a new era of democracy, human dignity and social justice in the Middle East and North Africa persist. The popular uprisings and ongoing struggles in the region are profoundly changing the political landscape. The category of society and the political itself have resurfaced, once more attracting public attention. The struggle for a new order challenges those traditional paradigms employed to understand the politics and culture in and about the region, burgeoning a new set of questions.

'Revolution,' as both a theoretical concept and a concrete practice, has facilitated the emergence of innovative modes of critique and allowed the reconfiguring of individual subjectivities and communal solidarities. 'Revolution' as a process is related to, shaped by, and expressed in new aesthetic and political practices as well as new channels of communication. Similar to other precedents evident in transitional moments in history, the imminent question of literature's contributory role in times of social change and upheaval is once again being subjected to reevaluation, both by writers themselves as well as in scholarly debate. At the heart of this endeavor lies the question as to the impact of literature on social reality and,

prior to that, how to understand the relationship between the literary text and reality as such.[2] In recent years, the nexus of aesthetics and politics has become a vividly and hotly debated topic among artists, intellectuals, and scholars in and outside the Arab-speaking world.

Reflecting the Political

Due both to a paradigm shift in political theory (for an overview see e.g. Bedorf and Röttgers; further Bleiker; Frost) as well as diverse experimental movements in literature and the visual arts in recent decades, introduced by way of the reception of poststructuralist, postcolonial and post-Marxist theory, the political in art (and therefore literature) is no longer mainly understood as a transmitter of a certain political ideology through the artistic medium but also as a kind of critique that primarily subverts established political and cultural orders. Herein, so the argument goes, art may provide a democratic space where the idea or the state of a community can be negotiated by its members (Rancière). This sort of critique involves different forms and strategies, for instance: corroding hegemonic orders by means of revealing and aggravating internal contradictions; re-narrating history from peripheral or non-hegemonic social or generational perspectives; and deconstructing particular elements of a given order (be it linguistic, pictorial, architectural, or performative) and uncovering the hidden mechanisms of power that constructed it. Under these aesthetic premises political art is conceived as ontologically addressed 'against' a given system (that is understood as a construct built by those who are 'in power'), so that the political in the aesthetic field is often referred to today by modes of 'dissent,' 'resistance,' and 'subversion.' That this conception is not easily applicable to the historical and contemporary aesthetic field in the Middle East becomes symptomatically evident in the complex situation of post-revolutionary Egypt—from the fall of the Mubārak regime to the Muslim Brotherhood government to the deposition of Mursī by the military in summer 2013 that eventually brought al-Sīsī to power—, a situation accompanied by violent turmoil and traumatic experiences, where a clear cut differentiation between positions supporting a given state ideology and resistance to those in power is not always discernible. From late summer 2013 onwards,[3] politics has split the public, so that observers of post-revolutionary Egypt, public intellectuals, writers, and publishers alike, have controversially debated the role authors and intellectuals are to play under such circumstances.

Taking this recent historical experience as its starting point, this book is about the relationship between literature—and to a lesser extent visual and performative art[4]—, society and politics in the Arabic-speaking parts of the Middle East and North Africa. It is an attempt—by revisiting and reconsidering the relationship of the two realms of art and politics in recent history—to come to terms with changing conceptualizations of the political in Arabic literature. The volume examines historical and contemporary conceptions of *iltizām* (literary commitment)[5] and, therein, how notions of 'writing for a cause' have been shaped, rejected, or re-actualized from the 1940s until today.

Recalling Andreas Pflitsch's comment that there has never been a depoliticized period in modern Arabic literary history, one could add that this is no less the case today: "The principal spark kindling controversy was the means of this commitment; at issue was not *whether* literature should be committed to social and political causes but *how* it was to undertake this mission" ("The End of Illusions" 29, emphasis in the original).

This book thus aims to widen the perspective on both the historical and contemporary discourses about how the political in literature is and has been understood, conceptualized,

perceived, and produced. It builds upon a number of seminal research volumes on the conceptual history of Arab literary commitment in English (Badawi; Harlow; Guth, Furrer, and Bürgel; Guth and Ramsay; Di-Capua),[6] but first and foremost Verena Klemm's pioneering and in-depth study on the issue, a work that opened up new arenas of thought by analyzing in meticulous detail the intellectual debate on *iltizām* in literary circles of the Mashriq from the 1940s until the post-*naksa* (post-1967) period, when "the fervent appeals to write *adab multazim* lost their persuasive power among the critical forces of leftist literary circles" ("Different Notions" 58). The present volume may be understood as an endeavor to further develop Klemm's seminal insights, focused mainly on the period between the 1940s and 1970s, by expanding the perspective to include more recent developments in Arabic literature and the arts since the 1990s.

Leading Questions and Concerns

Among the new questions that arose from the Arab uprisings is that of newness itself. What 'new' components can we detect in contemporary forms of artistic or literary commitment? In what way do they differ from Arabic literary practices since the late 1960s, when an affinity to what scholarship has described as 'postmodern' was first identifiable in trends like the New Sensibility? Furthermore, how easily can we conceptually dissociate these 'literatures of dissent' from literary commitment during the heydays of Arab Modernism between the 1940s and the 1960s, the literary paradigm so powerfully and deeply interwoven and coeval with political ideology and the era of decolonization? Should we dismiss the latter as a co-opted sphere that followed a politics of affirmation rather than one of critical dissent? Or did the discourses of *iltizām* in the 1950s and 1960s also carry notions of dissent and resistance that are still connected to contemporary conceptions, as the scores of references today to past writers and works would seem to suggest? To what extent do the premises of contemporary literary engagement and what has been termed the "new political" in Arabic literature (El-Ariss) differ from the premises on which mid-century historical engagement was based? And again, how does this compare to the political dimension of 'postmodern' approaches since the late 1960s, in so many ways a counter-reaction to the literature of engaged realism? None of these questions are easily answered, at least not unambiguously. There are no clearly defined lines between one historical conception and the next, but always a blurry fade-in/fade-out, as some elements are transferred while others are rejected and maybe rediscovered at another time depending on the specific relationship to the zeitgeist.

   This volume contributes to the study of literary commitment in the Arab-speaking world and aims—by taking a dual comparative and diachronic perspective—to create a critical framework that addresses the concept of political engagement in contemporary Arabic literary studies. This critical investigation will cover four stages in its 'circuitous' itinerary: Starting with the present day, it will look at literary practices during the 'Arab Spring,' then track back to the beginnings of literary politicization during the 1940s and 1950s, identifying its roots in terms of the history of ideas, subsequently cross the historical caesura of the late 1960s to consider competing and conflicting re-conceptualizations and rejections of literary engagement in the 1970s and 1980s, before finally returning to a more recent period, namely the 1990s through to 2011. This structure is in no way conceived as an all-explanatory tour de force through modern Arabic literary history; rather, the aim is to discern and trace some of the main ideas formulated within Arabic literature concerning its own politics and, therein, the sometimes thinner, sometimes thicker ribbon that entwines literature with social reality.

Hence, although chapters place stress on specific decades to focus on historical accumulations of ideas, the volume proposes a non-linear reading of ideas of the political in modern Arabic literary history by beginning its exploration in the present, then rereading the past, before concluding once again in the present. The value of this approach is that it offers a dual opportunity: To reconsider both our understanding of actual positions as well as our perception of allegedly outdated notions of the political in literature and how literature renders them. The controversy surrounding *iltizām* and its legacy will thus furnish a common thread throughout the volume. With each contribution focusing on its own subject, the volume reevaluates attempts at literary engagement and disengagement respectively, i.e. the claim for artistic autonomy from the 1940s to the present day on both a diachronic and synchronic level. Attempts at periodizing historical changes in literary engagement/politics are being reevaluated—from committed literature to a New Sensibility or Postmodernism, and finally to something we might temporarily call revolutionary commitment or the 'new political'—and challenged. As such, each chapter aims to approach the question of literary engagement both as a specific period in the history of modern Arabic literature and as an ongoing project in Arab intellectual history.

Origins of a Debate

What, then, are these historical accumulations that shaped and influenced shifts regarding notions of the political in modern Arabic literature?

Discourses on the moral (and herein political) cause of literature are part of Arab literature in general, as the Arabic word *adab* for literature indicates and a rich tradition confirms. When *adab* became literary—to borrow the title of an article Michael Allan wrote in 2012—the responsibility of the writer towards moral and social development was retranslated in the Arab 'project of modernity,' the *nahḍa*. Literary commitment became a crucial issue for many writers and intellectuals in the region throughout the 1940s and 1950s, decades marked by the rising impact of existentialist philosophy, socialist ideology and the paradigm of development during and after the struggle for independence of the Arab nation states. The translation of Jean-Paul Sartre's famous article "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?" in this highly politicized period had a tremendous impact on the intellectual and literary scene (→ Di-Capua[7]). First translated by Taha Husayn as *iltizām*, the term gained immense prominence, and thus the idea of the politically and socially engaged author as spokesperson of nations, political parties or ideologies became the all-embracing concept in the discourse of Arabic literary criticism in the mid-twentieth century (Klemm, *Literarisches Engagement*; "Different Notions"). Contributing to the fame of this concept on the level of society, were, following Edwar al-Kharrat (Idwār al-Kharrāt), "[f]actors such as the social unrest, the dislocation of the class relations ensuing upon the Second World War, the growing demands of a nationalist movement […], [and] the appalling conditions under which the poor, illiterate masses laboured" (180).

The Writer as Voice of Political Doctrines and Dissent

Over the course of these years, the social-realist approach of these engaged authors fitted well with the dominant political ideologies especially prevalent in Egypt, the Levant, and Iraq. Reciprocal interplay between *al-adab al-multazim* and the ideologies of communist, Baathist and nationalist movements and parties, themselves inspired by Marxist thought, matured and dominated the literary field in the late 1940s to the 1960s. In this context, literary

commitment—in its mainstream expressions—did not necessarily mean dissent; it was also employed to cover affirmative positions vis-à-vis hegemonic discourses and leading political doctrines.[8]

An example from Egypt standing for a different model and trajectory are the artists, poets and writers associated with the *Fann wa-Ḥurriyya* (Art and Freedom) group, later renamed *Khubs wa-Ḥurriyya* (Bread and Freedom), founded in the late 1930s around the Surrealist poet Georges Henein (Jūrj Ḥunayn) and figures such as Anwar Kamil (Anwar Kāmil) or Ramsis Younan (Ramsīs Yūnān). Henein called for an "Independent Revolutionary Art," independent from what they perceived as the reactionary cultural politics of state-regulated art and the censorship of dissenting visions, both at home as well as in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The group dissolved in 1945, Henein was forced into exile, a fate shared by several artists who refused to join the chorus of support for developmentalist and authoritarian regimes. Henein and his group—like other dissident writers such as the Egyptians Wagih Ghali (Wajīh Ghālī) or Albert Cosseiry (Albīr Quṣayrī) or the Iraqi poet Sargon Boulous (Sargūn Būlus)—remained marginal figures in the public culture of the Arab world until the 1980s; since their rediscovery in the 1990s however, they have become a major intellectual reference point for writers, artists and intellectuals all over the Arab world.[9]

Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s it became unthinkable to champion a concept of literature detached from current political and social realities. A poetic self-understanding as the teacher, guardian, or even savior of the nation became implicit. But at the same time a whole series of doubts arose—expressed more or less between the lines—as to the possibility of being able to actually exert influence on society. On the one hand, literati themselves were constantly victims of censorship, political attacks, exile, poverty, war, and eviction. Many intellectuals and writers experienced exile and marginalization and thus articulated in their writings a critique or even an ambivalence toward their own literary discourse and the role of the politically committed intellectual (→ Halabi). On the other hand, as the political situation became increasingly confusing, messy, and more or less hopeless, especially after the traumatic defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 Six-Day War against Israel and the rise of the oil-based economy in the 1970s, literati—either directly employed by the cultural apparatuses of the state or funded through journals and newspapers sponsored by the oil-rich countries—increasingly became the mouthpiece for certain ideologies or regimes, leaving them caught in an economy of exploitation where they found themselves worn down between the demands of opposing forces and eventually driven to squalor.

Post-Naksa Discourses and New Sensibility

After the 1967 war and the death of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir) in 1970, a period of disorientation and self-doubt followed, Arabic novels calling into question the idea of literature's explicitly political position and ideological partisanship (→ Khoury). Writers and literary critics struggled to describe the new prose experiments emerging in these years, which covered a diverse array of approaches, for instance the magical realism of Salim Barakat (Salīm Barakāt), Abdelrahman Munif's (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf) re-narration of history as a counter-hegemonic act (→ Mejcher-Atassi), or the fragmented narratives of an unreliable author as practiced by Elias Khoury (Ilyās Khūrī). What connected most of these new approaches was the profound questioning of literary realism, so long prevalent in the literary field, the authors guided by a general mistrust of modes of representation and motivated by an interest in minority perspectives. Strategies of fragmentation and decon-

struction emerged, and these were often defined, while not remaining uncriticized, as a 'post-modernist' shift in modern Arabic literature. Consequently, hijacked as it were to bolster the impression of a prosperous and just future, the notion of political commitment in literature—a direct articulation of political ideas—was reviewed or rejected by quite a few Arab writers at the time (→ Pannewick; → Halabi).

The aforementioned Egyptian writer and literary critic Edwar al-Kharrat named this experimental period, definitively crystallizing after 1967, *al-ḥassāsiyya al-jadīda*, the New Sensibility (→ Guth). At its core, the literature of *al-ḥassāsiyya al-jadīda* criticized the mimetic realism of the engaged novel that "took for granted, in whatever philosophical order it was conceived, that it was possible and even desirable to portray, or reflect, that is to represent, *the* reality in literature" (al-Kharrat 187, emphasis in the original). Reflecting the work of his generation, al-Kharrat instead pleaded for a modernist literature that was not attempting to depict reality but searching for its own poetic reality, understanding the quest of writing as "a constant questioning with no pretence to ready answers" (ibid.). He furthermore traced five currents, which he subsumed under this new literary phenomenon: A tendency towards alienation and estrangement; subjective introspection; a steering towards the mythical, the popular, and cultural heritage (*turāth*); fervent imagination and exaggeration transcending the borders of external reality; and that which is probably most close to *al-adab al-multazim*, a "neo-realist" current that adheres to the idea of literature as representation of social reality but employs new writing techniques. Beside the novels of Sunallah Ibrahim or Salwa Bakr (Salwā Bakr), with the term "neo-realism" al-Kharrat was also referring to the literary experiments of engaged Palestinian writers such as Ghassan Kanafani (Ghassān Kanafānī) (who called for a resistance literature, *adab al-muqāwama*, dedicated to the Palestinian cause as the fida'i's main weapon alongside the armed struggle) or Emile Habibi (Imīl Ḥabībī) (→ Abu-Remaileh).

Beyond Commitment—New Forms and Modes of Political Intervention

In his introductory chapter to *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, Andreas Pflitsch explains that even though the notion of reality and its representability had profoundly changed—one fact that allowed Arabic literature after 1967 and 1975, respectively, to be interpreted as "postmodern"—, two elements remained constant, the need to 'write with/for a cause' and an authorial self-perception of being a voice for the oppressed. As Munif, who did not consider himself as political or engaged in the sense of *iltizām*, emphasized in an interview in 1990:

> An Arab writer is a fida'i, a resistance fighter. In countries where freedom of opinion does not exist, parties are not allowed, where a constitution probably does exist, all those who are able to express themselves are obliged to put up resistance. Their function is to enlighten the people, to make them aware of justice and injustice, as long as legal and commonly accepted political institutions are lacking. (qtd. in Pflitsch, *Gegenwelten* 152; our translation)

Pflitsch further stresses that it was not the authors' claims to be political which vanished; rather, it was the forms and modes of political intervention which changed fundamentally. It was therefore of no surprise that authors like Rashid al-Da'if (Rashīd al-Ḍaʿīf) attacked the main medium of representation, namely language, which he saw as still ballasted with the political slogans of the 1960s and 1970s (Pflitsch, "The End of Illusions" 30).

Just the same, the fida'i-rhetoric in Munif's quote shows how certain terms and images were still vivid in the imaginative vocabulary of a generation who had witnessed and acutely

felt the defeat of 1967 and, for the Lebanese, the Civil War in the 1970s and 1980s. Literature by writers who witnessed these years still seems to feel connected to these post-*naksa* paradigms; but many of the literary experiments during the 1990s and 2000s (similar to what happened in theater and the visual arts) reveal another shift concerning the relationship between literature and the political. In post-war Lebanon, the absurdity of competing (confessional) ideologies and historiographies provoked a now harsh and explicit critique of aesthetic representation and literary mimicry (→ Albers; → Lang), and what was formerly claimed to be a universal and shared reality was now completely dismissed. As the Lebanese writer al-Da'if put it, there was no reality one could describe anymore. It was not only in Lebanon that the skeptical refusal towards any "closure of representation" (Derrida 250) was radicalized and the disbelief in an unfractured rendering of reality through artistic means took hold. The literary narratives of the "generations of the 1990s" in Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia and Morocco were also characterized by the deconstruction of the 'I' as a reliable instance or omniscient force. As Sabry Hafez remarks with regards to Egypt, the narratives of the 1990s "celebrate [the] erasure [of all established and solid things]" without being "motivated by any perception of alternative possibilities, but by a strong desire to strip reality from its legitimacy and solidity" (371). Hafez goes on to say that "heroic deliverance" is perceived by these writers as "a false hope resulting from the death of ideology, the loss of conviction and failure to re-examine the emptiness of the vocabulary of daily exchange" (ibid.). According to Hafez's interpretation, it has become difficult to find an engaged impetus in these recent literary experiments: The individual's feeling of being lost "leads him to wallow in nothingness, and to be condemned to a meaningless individualism which enhances its sense of orphanhood, marginality and insignificance" (380).

Kifāya-Rhetoric and the 'New Political'

However, this reading of contemporary literature as a "novel of the closed horizon" (also Hafez) has, by now, been revised and severely criticized. Tarek El-Ariss has pointed out that dismissing these new writings as merely individualistic and self-centered, which positions them far away from the concerns of *nahḍawī udabāʾ* or the 1950s and 1960s practitioners of *iltizām*, disregards their inherently confrontational dimension. Authors like Khaled al-Khamissi (Khālid al-Khamīsī) (*Taxi*) or Rajaa Alsanea (Rajāʾ al-Ṣāniʿ) (*Girls of Riadh*) transcend the divide between writing and activism through an aesthetic of crash, collapse and infiltration, exposing sites of vulnerability and instability in the (political/social/cultural) system, the literary text itself, and in the authorial function (→ El-Ariss). Similar to contemporaneous attempts in the field of visual and performative arts, this literature also reflects the conditions to which literary production is subjected, i.e. the book market and its mechanisms and regulations. Moreover, as Christian Junge argues in his contribution to this volume, these authors also ceased merely deconstructing community representation, reintroducing it into the literary text and thereby "facilitating total criticism and provoking radical emotions" (→ Junge).

This observable comeback of a confrontational, affective literature that dares to once again deal with the idea of a possible *communitas* can no longer be tackled solely under the 'nothing-else-to-lose' mentality of a disenfranchised, solipsistic generation. But neither is the kind of 'revolutionary' engagement which drives this new literature based on an ideology 'behind' the writings—it is, rather, located in the aesthetics itself. Therefore, it is worth considering the allegedly 'new' political in these still postmodern writings—at least regarding their predilec-

tion for figures and strategies of disruption, for transgressing genre boundaries, and for celebrating heterogeneity—and to read their notions of engagement, community, the public, and the relationship between text/artwork, author/artist, and social reality against equivalent concepts as manifested in the literatures of *iltizām* and beyond. Furthermore, since the 1990s and along with the increasing impact of a global art market on Middle Eastern cultural production, visual and performative arts have gained—after the longtime hegemony of the literary in Arabic culture—an important role in the search for the 'new political' and critical aesthetic practice, which allows for and demands a perspective that goes beyond the realm of the literary (→ Toukan, → Albers).

Of Poetics and Politics: Revolution and Literary Commitment

The first section introduces the volume's prime concern by presenting recent literary works and practices substantiating the actuality or even longevity of literary commitment. These include examples related to political activism in the course of the 'Arab Spring' as well as authorial self-conceptions of the engaged intellectual as activist. Thus, these contributions show to what extent literature has, once again, become an important tool for articulating political ideas and practicing social critique, focusing on revolutionary Egypt. Even though the political ideas and values transported by these literatures may differ from the ideologies of *al-adab al-multazim* propagated from the 1940s to the 1960s, these chapters give an impression of how the relationship between poetics and politics is redefined again and the extent to which this is actually opening a horizon both for new fields of literary intervention and intellectual identities. Through this, the examination of the leading question underlying this volume—i.e. to what degree is *iltizām* not only a specific period in Arab intellectual history but an ongoing intellectual/political program/concept—begins in the present day and reads these actual examples against their historical background in the subsequent chapters.

The first chapter by R a n d a A b o u b a k r ("The Egyptian Colloquial Poet as Popular Intellectual: A Differentiated Manifestation of Commitment") considers a figure that becomes central when reflecting on the political in the arts: The intellectual. Discussing notions of commitment in Egyptian colloquial poetry, she identifies alternative authorial self-conceptions of the engaged intellectual as an activist which reveal closer links to place and class than the ideal of the committed author proposed by Sartre. Aboubakr's chapter surveys the relationship between Egyptian colloquial poetry and European literary traditions, comparing colloquial to *fuṣḥā* (Modern Standard Arabic) poetry.

Be it poetry in the vernacular or in *fuṣḥā*, the aspects of resistance and dissent are at the core of current literary developments in revolutionary Egypt. An especially intriguing trend is how politically engaged poetry from the heyday of the Egyptian oppositional movement in the early and mid-twentieth century is reconfigured in poems after 2011. A t e f B o t r o s ("Rewriting Resistance: The Revival of Poetry of Dissent in Egypt after January 2011 (Surūr, Najm and Dunqul)") attempts to open up a discussion on cross-linking between motifs and forms within a tradition of dissent and resistance in modern Egyptian literature and art spanning more than a century. Some poems, lyrics and images from the first half of the twentieth century reappeared and circulated widely during the revolutionary events in Egypt and the Arab world. By focusing on three Egyptian writers from the 1960s generation, Najm, Dunqul and Surūr, the chapter argues that these writers are not only part of the tradition of cultural resistance in their own period of activity, but, in their reception and 'afterlife,' are also a part of contemporary revolutionary Egyptian art, particularly following the January 25 uprising.

The following chapter again focuses on recent literary developments in Egypt in the wake of 2011. Dina Heshmat ("Egyptian Narratives of the 2011 Revolution: Diary as a Medium of Reconciliation with the Political") analyzes two autobiographical narratives of the first eighteen days of Tahrir, written by two novelists of the 1990s generation, namely Ahmed Zaghloul al-Shiti (Aḥmad Zaghlūl al-Shītī) and Mona Prince (Munā Brins). Heshmat argues that these two texts represent a rupture with the themes otherwise associated with writers of this generation—themes of alienation in the public sphere and distrust of political narratives. Her chapter draws a parallel between the diary-like structure of these texts and giving expression to a "self in transition," which Heshmat argues is at stake in these narratives. Both authors document a similar process of transformation—that of someone deeply ambivalent about the political to someone who participates in the events they are describing. Thus, the format of the diary and the authors' use of intertextuality provide a means through which both writers convey not only their own personal reconciliation with the political, but also the broader renewal and reinvigoration of the political through the events of the revolution.

Routes towards a Discourse: Historical Concepts of Literary Commitment

The volume's second section focuses on the career of *iltizām* in the middle of the twentieth century. The contributions here highlight the conditions facilitating an enthusiastic and heterogeneous reception of social and political commitment across the Arab world. It furthermore identifies the socio-historical conditions and circumstances that shaped the reception and proliferation of this literary concept and presents the important pioneers and their influences, reconstructing their debates around literary commitment and identifying their key opponents. Emphasis is placed on the extent to which the discourse of *iltizām* is interrelated with the premises of the *nahḍa* as, to draw on Habermas' term, an "unfinished project" of cultural, social and political modernity/modernization.

Elias Khoury ("Beyond Commitment") rethinks the history of literary commitment in the Arab Mashriq from its heyday to its decline after the June War in 1967, tracking this development through authors and intellectuals who contributed essentially to the discourse of *iltizām* and what followed. The defeat of 1967 not only heralded the end of the nationalistic era in the Arab Mashriq. It also signaled the end of *iltizām* as a successful literary program which had promoted a compromise between contradictory schools of thought and later facilitated the transition from a populist Nasser regime towards naked dictatorship. But instead of abolishing the problematic and loaded term *iltizām* altogether, Khoury suggests conceiving the "new writings" that emerged out of the atmosphere of defeat and self-critique as a literature "beyond *iltizām*." This enables these post-1967 attempts to be read as not totally detached and disconnected from a longstanding and powerful discourse in modern Arabic literature, allowing *iltizām* to be conceived as an ongoing, historically contingent project, a project wherein literary commitment embraces a critical attitude towards the self, society, and history.

The next chapter remains within the early postcolonial period of the mid-twentieth century, as political commitment was a main issue in public debates, and shows how *iltizām*—used as an intellectual concept—served as an effective instrument for a new generation of writers, enabling them to set themselves apart from their precursors. Yoav Di-Capua ("The Intellectual Revolt of the 1950s and the 'Fall of the *Udabā*'") returns to the vivid debates of the 1950s and retraces the story of how a postcolonial generation created the idea and program of *iltizām*, eclipsing their mentors, successfully marginalizing their concept of culture and thus initiating a new postcolonial phase in Arab thought. For this generation, the

intellectual example of Moscow and Paris was the leading model. Creatively translating existentialism and Socialist Realism into Arabic, they used these newly formulated ideas to promote radical cultural change. While both camps conceived of themselves as being "committed," their actual politics and concepts were quite different, highlighting the contrast between Sartrean and Marxist-Leninist categories of thought.

By shifting the focus from the Levant to North Africa, R a c h i d   O u a i s s a subsequently leads us "On the Trail of Frantz Fanon," and thus to an intellectual who like no other took up and argued the cause of self-liberation. Ouaissa presents a political thinker who, with his opus magnum *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961 just a few days before his death, is often regarded as the prime example of the committed intellectual. However, although *The Wretched of the Earth* was translated into Arabic as early as 1963, this main work and other texts by Fanon attracted hardly any attention in the Arab world. The chapter argues that this marginalization might be a consequence of Fanon's warning that the "comprador bourgeoisie" would seize control in Algeria after independence, a critical warning that certainly did not fit in with the canon desired by those in power. Ouaissa closes his considerations by posing an intriguing question: Is it thus possible to characterize Fanon as a pioneering thinker of the 'Arab Spring' or indeed can it be argued that he actually foresaw these revolts?

Refiguring *Iltizām*: Literary Commitment after 1967

The volume's third section collects critical reckonings from both immediately after the heyday of *iltizām*, namely the late 1960s and 1970s, as well as the 1980s and onwards. It presents newly emerging positions of renaming, reframing, re-conceptualizing—like *adab al-muqāwama* (literature of resistance)—and of rejecting literary commitment which in several respects took issue with *iltizām*'s intellectual legacy and its principles. Through considering exemplary works, authors, and intellectuals, this section attempts to at least partially map the emergence of conceptions of the political in literature which scholarship used to consider 'postmodern.'

The opening chapter by S t e p h a n   G u t h ("Between Commitment and Marginalization: The 'Generation of the Sixties' in the Sadat Era") is an attempt to understand the notions of commitment propagated by Egyptian writers during the Sadat (Sādāt) era of the 1970s. After sketching the emergence of the New Sensibility movement after the June War of 1967, Guth analyzes a set of texts from the Sadat era, showing how quite a few writers used postmodern techniques without necessarily abandoning the ideal of commitment.

Different variations of commitment in the 1970s and 1980s are dealt with in S o n j a M e j c h e r - A t a s s i ' s chapter "The Arabic Novel between Aesthetic Concerns and the Causes of Man: Commitment in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and ʿAbd al-Rahman Munif." Both Jabra (Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā) and Munif, highly influential intellectuals, writers and artists, chose the genre of the novel as the major means of expression, an artistic practice offering the opportunity to express at once political dissent and the hope for a better future. Despite this similarity, the chapter shows how Jabra and Munif conceived of the novel quite differently, the former foregrounding its aesthetic characteristics, the latter its documentary qualities. These quite diverging depictions point to differences between the writers in their views on the complex relationship between aesthetics and politics, which Mejcher-Atassi investigates through the role of exile and notions of homelessness.

The following chapter by Z e i n a   G .   H a l a b i ("The Day the Wandering Dreamer Became a Fida'i: Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and the Fashioning of Political Commitment") traces the

multiple meanings of the concept of political commitment in the context of the altering ideological landscape of the Arab world from the 1920s to the 1970s, taking, like Mejcher-Atassi, Jabra and his novel *In Search of Walid Masoud* (1978) as an example for his highly complex understanding of *iltizām*. Halabi describes the shifting understanding of political commitment—from anti-colonial nationalistic rhetoric, to social realism, and ultimately resistance literature. Thanks to a close reading of the discursive turn that the novel itself stages, Halabi demonstrates how Jabra challenges such monolithic understandings of *iltizām* and reveals the concept's dynamic, adaptive, and pluralistic nature. Drawing on his essay "The Rebels, the Committed, and the Others" (1980), she delineates how the opposing poles of the rebellious and committed writer frame Jabra's notion of *iltizām*.

Refqa Abu-Remaileh ("The Afterlives of *Iltizām*: Emile Habibi through a Kanafaniesque Lens of Resistance Literature") adds another important term to the reflection on/of the political in modern Arabic literature. Discussing the notion of literary resistance with reference to the two well-known Palestinian writers Emile Habibi and Ghassan Kanafani, her chapter represents a new and valuable contribution to the glossary of *iltizām* at the height of a period of revolutionary fervor and anti-colonial struggle. Once the "poets of resistance" became known to the Arab audience outside the borders of Israel they immediately attracted enormous public attention. Kanafani's studies on *adab al-muqāwama* in 1966 and 1968 presented these at the time relatively unknown authors as the shining example of true *iltizām*. Abu-Remaileh depicts how in a somewhat isolated struggle for liberation, Palestinian revolutionary culture began to emerge after 1967, and a transnational notion of *al-adab al-multazim* began to give way to a localized battle in *adab al-muqāwama*. Abu-Remaileh's contribution reads aspects of Emile Habibi's literary work, especially his short stories, through the lens of this Palestinian model of resistance literature.

Not only *adab al-muqāwama*, but also the question of literary engagement in general foregrounds the commitment of the writer in relation to his or her addressing of a reading audience. Taking Mahmoud Darwish's (Maḥmūd Darwīsh) poem "al-Qurbān" (2001) as an example, Michael Allan shows how this connection might be complicated in cases when the audience in the room where the poet might recite this text is conflated with the address staged in the poem itself. In his chapter "You, the Sacrificial Reader: Poetics and Pronouns in Mahmoud Darwish's 'al-Qurbān'," Allan shifts the focus of analysis from committed writing to the poetics of reading and asks in what ways we should read, or hear, the poem to understand commitment. The question of communication becomes central: Must a poem communicate in a particular way to be committed? By shifting between poetic writing and registers of poetic reading, Allan persuasively shows how Darwish's poem is intriguingly situated at the intersection of politics and theology, aesthetics and ethics.

The next chapter "Molding the Clay: Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb's Concept of Colloquial Poetry as Art of Resistance" Leslie Tramontini by presents another highly committed poet whose name is nevertheless missing in most of the Arab anthologies and literary dictionaries. Highly appreciated among Iraqis and other Arabs, Nawwab mocks Arab rulers and attacks their politics, accusing them of failure and treachery. His poems and famous live performances have brought him immense recognition and popularity all over the Arab world and his sarcastic political criticism has made him the lyrical mouthpiece of the 'Arab Street.' Tramontini—like Aboubakr in the first section of this volume—focuses on the hierarchical gap between *fuṣḥā* and the vernacular, in order to explain why this committed writer was, despite his popularity in general society, disregarded in official literary history. As Tramontini argues, Nawwab broke the unwritten law of the use of Modern Standard Arabic in litera-

ture when composing poetry in the Iraqi vernacular, a *faux pas* in the ideologically charged heydays of Arab Nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s.

The following chapter by S i n a n   A n t o o n ("Sargūn Būluṣ's Commitment") deals with another Iraqi poet who is widely recognized as one of the most important and distinctive voices of modern Arabic poetry. Carefully reading some of Boulos' poems, Antoon argues against the mainstream reception promoting the view that Boulos distanced himself from political issues and was solely concerned with matters related to form and poetic innovation. Antoon shows the extent to which Boulos' poetry is viscerally invested in, and in conversation with, political questions of immediate and crucial consequence. The chapter claims that this Iraqi writer, by believing that poetry has a responsibility, especially in times of war, to address and engage with political events and matters, can and should be read as committed poet, but one who redefines and complicates commitment in his practice.

F r i e d e r i k e   P a n n e w i c k ("From the Politicization of Theatre to Individual Humanism: Towards a New Concept of Engagement in the Theater of Saadallah Wannous") focuses on a Syrian playwright who belonged to a generation of Arab intellectuals and artists whose political and artistic self-understanding was strongly molded by the Palestine conflict. Wannous' (Saʿdallāh Wannūs) initial works reveal an intense social engagement which he characterized as a "politicizing of theater." His critical rereading of Arab history was imbued from the outset with the dynamics of social and political crises and a seemingly inexorable decline. But his self-positioning as a committed artist did not remain unchanged throughout the later part of his life. From the mid-1990s onwards, Wannous bid farewell to the idea that had hitherto guided him: That the problems of the Arab world could be traced back to simple power relations in society. Thus, he eventually came to dismiss the idea of consciously simplifying representation to ignite political change and restructure power relations, turning instead to an approach geared towards generating insights into social problems. In her contribution Pannewick raises the question whether the significant aesthetic and conceptual turn in Wannous' work from the early 1990s onwards might go beyond the concerns of a specific individual artist and asks to what extent it might signify a broader intellectual shift concerning the meaning and connotation of artistic commitment in Arabic literature.

Commitment or Dissent? Contemporary Perspectives

The fourth and last section explores literary (and in two cases visual and performative) works since the 1990s and recent conceptions of artistic commitment. The contributions here rethink their subjects in distinction from and connection to former developments (discussed in section three) and, moreover, show to what extent they are connected with similar trends and debates on the political in art/literature and the politics of art/literature taking place in other parts of the world. In this section the authors try to grasp what El-Ariss has described as the "new political" in contemporary writing and reconnect their studies with the initial question introduced in section one: To what extent can the respective works be understood (or even to what extent they describe themselves) as a form of artistic commitment that is displayed for a specific cause, and how is this cause defined?

T a r i k   E l - A r i s s ("Fiction of Scandal") deals with this "new writing" which is, as he states, not confined to a certain class, gender, or political line and thus could not be classified as characteristic for a homogeneous group of individuals or a certain arrangement of similar aesthetic features. El-Ariss focuses on a set of hardships Arab writers face in the age of social media, political transformations, and the growing influence of commercial aspects on

literature. He looks for definitions of this new writing provided by the authors themselves and explores how authorial functions are produced through acts of hacking, manipulation, and marketing. Taking authors such as Youssef Rakha (Yusūf Rakhā), Abdo Khal (ʿAbduh Khāl), Ahmad Alaidy (Aḥmad al-ʿĀyidī), Rajaa Alsanea, and Khaled al-Khamissi as examples, this chapter argues that the author in these new writings could be described as scandalous, sensational, and vulgar. Refuting the historical, sociological, and formalistic approaches predominant in Arabic literary studies, El-Ariss investigates instead the political dimension of sensationalism and scandal, analyzing how literature is recorded, reimagined, and reaffirmed in cases of greed, confrontation, exhibitionism, and hacking.

Scandals and sensations trigger strong emotions: Christian Junge ("On Affect and Emotion as Dissent: The *Kifāya* Rhetoric in Pre-Revolutionary Egyptian Literature") enquires into the relationship between criticism and emotion and the way critical literature affects the reader in the subsequent chapter. He discusses the rhetoric of critique in pre-revolutionary Egyptian literature, including Alaa al-Aswany's (ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī) *The Yacoubian Building* (2002), Khaled al-Khamissi's *Taxi* (2007), Khaled Tawfiq's (Khālid Tawfīq) *Utopia* (2009) and Magdy al-Shafee's (Majdī al-Shāfiʿī) *Metro* (2008), all of which deliver a "total criticism" that is intrinsically tied to radical emotions. Junge argues that the anti-deconstructivist *kifāya*-literature forms a sharp contrast to the self-deconstructivist writing of the *riwāya jadīda*, the "new novel," that emerged in the literature of the 1990s (and later 2000s): While the latter carefully eschew and deconstruct collective representation, works of *kifāya*-rhetoric authors such as Aswany, Khamissi, Tawfiq and al-Shafee re-introduce collective representation, thereby facilitating total criticism and provoking radical emotions. Through the examination of emotions and affects as means of understanding the political and the critical in these recent writings, Junge suggests a starting point for re-reading criticism in literature not exclusively as an intellectual operation but also as an emotional endeavor.

Reflections of the political are not only discernible in public scandals, more than once linked to a certain set of emotions and affects, but also in questions regarding the human body. The body in its capacity as an icon of protest is thus the main topic in the following chapter by Charlotte Pardey, entitled "A Body of Dissenting Images: Kamāl al-Riyāhī's Novel *Al-Ghurillā* Read as an Example of Engaged Literature from Tunisia." Her chapter focuses on a novel written between 2007 and 2011 by Tunisian author Kamal al-Riyahi, a work whose main protagonist is said to resemble a gorilla because of his posture and the darkness of his skin. The grand finale of his life, when the gorilla climbs on top of the clock tower in Central Tunis in protest against the injustices that life has thrown at him and refuses to climb back down, forms the central motif of the novel. The contribution not only analyses this body as an icon of protest but also links the novel back to more canonical pieces of *iltizām* literature of the 1950s and 1960s. Ultimately, the question addressed is whether this novel can be regarded as an example of engaged literature from a new generation in Tunisia.

The events narrated in Riyahi's novel depict a spectacular culmination of traumatic experiences caused by social, economic and emotional marginalization and ostracism. The politics and aesthetics of violence and trauma is a major issue in quite a few novels from various Arab countries. Stephan Milich ("Narrating, Metaphorizing or Performing the Unforgettable? The Politics of Trauma in Contemporary Arabic Literature") focuses on several literary texts by younger Arabic authors from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq who consciously fuse documentation and fiction in their writings when dealing with traumatic events in quite different modes. Pivotal here is the relationship between coping with past injustices and representing, narrating and sorting deep-seated and painful experiences. These authors counter the de-

struction of meaning with a new language that, while responding to recent Arab history and the present day situation, creates not just a literary but also a political counter model. With this analysis Milich shows how writing about trauma, while coming close to eyewitness testimonies and reports, not only documents crimes and injustices and brings them to public attention, but moreover extends and renegotiates the boundaries and forms of the unspeakable.

Be it a traumatic experience, a romantic encounter, religious belief, or a criminal deed: The choice authors make regarding the subject of their literary works may be revelatory regarding one's position in their respective communities as well as on the international book market. Taking post-war Lebanese literature as an example, F e l i x   L a n g ("Redeemed from Politics: Notions of Literary Legitimacy in the Lebanese Literary Field") investigates the question of the positionality of the author. Comparing different notions of what constitutes 'real' literature in the authors' eyes, he argues that the relation of literature and the author to politics and the political is a central parameter in all definitions of literature across the whole literary spectrum. As authors eschew singular, unitary models for literary 'best practice' and freely move in between the two extremes of a pure art and a social-realist understanding of literature, politics and the political take on the character of a point of reference in relation to which literary value is determined.

Asking today about the political 'intention' of an artwork (or a literary text) inevitably leads to a crucial point: How can art put forward at all abstract ideas such as justice, freedom, and humanity without falling into the trap of formulating closed concepts that serve power politics? In her chapter Y v o n n e   A l b e r s ("The Empty Chair: On the Politics of Spectatorial Situatedness in the Performances of Rabih Mroué") reflects on this question by taking a closer look at the experimental work of Lebanese actor, director and visual artist Rabih Mroué (Rabīʿ Mrūwah). Although his theater clearly refuses to 'bring truth to the masses,' his performances re-actualize one of the core questions of literary engagement broached by Sartre in his writings on literature: "To whom does one write?" Mroué reflects on the specific role of the spectator in the moment of theater and in the context of an increasingly globalized art world. He thus provokes the question in how far it is still legitimate to assess artistic commitment on the basis of the artwork's references to a specific national context, and thus in relation to a specific local audience as the exclusive group to which the work of art is purportedly addressed. How this approach strikes a blow for an alternative artistic commitment is shown in a detailed consideration of his performance *Looking for a Missing Employee* (2003).

The different ways of how *iltizām* and historically related notions of commitment to a cause are revisited in Arab visual arts is also the main concern in the volume's last chapter. H a n a n   T o u k a n ("Whatever Happened to *Iltizām*? Words in Arab Art after the Cold War") scrutinizes how notions of the political are visualized, narrated, and adapted in contemporary artistic practice from the Middle East, and asks whether these attempts need to be considered also as a response to a longtime hegemony of the literary in Arabic culture and the heritage of *iltizām*. Taking as her point of departure the structural and global dynamics at play in Arab contemporary cultural production since the period of the 1990s, especially after the events of 9/11 and the Second Gulf War, as well as the revolutionary processes that began to unfold in December 2010, Toukan reflects on how we are to make sense of the ongoing commitment of cultural producers in the Arab region, specifically visual artists, to "speak truth to power." Her contribution shows how processes producing artistic notions of commitment/dissent are dependent first and foremost on prevalent discourses of the 'political' in art, basically perpetuated by a global art market and international funding institutions, which

structure the ways of how a work of art is conceived today as being 'political' in a specifically defined sense.

The contributions to this book revisit the notion of commitment in Arabic literature and, through a few selected examples, also in the performative and visual arts since the 1940s. The authors offer a variety of insights into the relationships between literature/art, society, and politics in the Arab world, critically reexamining current and historical notions of the political and the legacy of *iltizām* in its dual capacity as a conceptual term and agenda. They also shed light on some of the changes in the Arab literary and cultural field taking place since the 1990s, changes which very probably laid out the routes for a new revolutionary commitment that has burgeoned since 2011. We believe that the chapters assembled in this volume reveal a profound transformation of the literary and intellectual field, a transformation that entails a transgression of those previous forms and practices of engaged/committed literature which in the past were too often limited by ideological preoccupations. Something 'new' seems to have been evolving in the literatures of the Arab-speaking Middle East since the 1990s, a 'newness' that finds its expression in a variety of phenomena, for instance the 'new reading,' i.e. a significant growth of the literary field evident in the large number of novels published year after year—often by young authors—, novels written in a new language creatively mixing *fuṣḥā* and the colloquial, articulating new ways of relating individual subjectivities to life in the city, or innovatively rereading history (and pluralizing it) to move beyond the suffocating confines of previously dominant ideologies.

Several aspects of this literary trend, which goes beyond a notion of *iltizām* as it was propagated in the highly politicized and dogmatic period of early post-colonialism, are documented in this volume. As this book shows, what is at stake here and defines the notion of being committed to a cause is the respective notion of the political. Thus, the way commitment is framed by an artist or writer in a particular historical period is basically reliant on how the political is conceived and rendered in aesthetic practice itself. Reflecting on the political as much as looking for reflections of the political in Arabic literature, which is the main task of this book, will therefore act as our guide in the effort to track the reconfigurations of literary commitment since the 1940s.

It is thus our hope that the studies collected here broaden and enrich our understanding of literary commitment: Not solely as a (past) period in Arabic literary history but as a living idea, one that is forever shifting focus as it questions the roles literature/art and the author/artist can play in and for a society. Having said this, one could argue that rather than being entirely 'new,' these current literary trends going beyond the early understanding and practice of *iltizām* are rooted in a longer historical process and an expression of a "will to live/irādat al-ḥayāh." Maybe this is a source of hope that the "darkness" evoked by al-Shābbī's poem, quoted above, will eventually disappear some day.

Notes

1   The translation, slightly revised, is by R. Marston Speight (185). Speight, R. Marston. "A Modern Tunisian Poet: Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī (1909–1934)." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4.2 (1973): 178–89. Print.

2   These conceptual questions are dealt with in the research group *Figures of Thought | Turning Points. Cultural Practices and Social Change in the Arab World* based at Marburg University (Germany). Cf. *Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies*. 26 June 2015. Web. 18 July 2015. <http://www.uni-marburg.de/cnms/research/turning-points>.

3   Cf. the public statement, signed by more than 150 leading Egyptian authors and publishers of different generations, all known for their active support of the 25 January Revolution, among them Sunallah Ibrahim (Ṣunʿallāh Ibrāhīm), Bahaa Taher (Bahāʾ Ṭāhir), Miral al-Tahawi (Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī), Hamdi al-Gazzar (Ḥamdī al-Jazzār), and Yassir Abdallatif (Yāsir ʿAbd al-Laṭīf), issued on Facebook on 5 August 2013 (Elkersh, Saad. "Muthaqqafūn yuṭālibūn bi-iʿtibār jamāʿat al-ikhwān munaẓẓama irhābiyya…bayān maftūḥ." *Facebook*. 5 Aug. 2013. Web. 18 July 2015.); a part is translated in Colla, Elliot. "Revolution on Ice." *Jadaliyya*. 6 Jan. 2014. Web. 18 July 2015; cf. further the interview with Sunallah Ibrahim: Lindsey, Ursula. "A Voice of Dissent Joins the Nationalist Chorus: Sonallah Ibrahim Speaks About the Army, Egypt's 'War on Terrorism,' and the People." *Mada Masr*. 6 Oct. 2013. Web. 18 July 2015; Jaquemond, Richard. "Il y a une tradition d'osmose entre l'Etat et l'intelligentsia égyptienne." Interview by Christophe Ayad. *Monde Culture et Idées* 17 Oct. 2013. Web. 18 July 2015.

4   The main focus is on (re-)configurations of the concept of commitment in Arabic literature. Due to quite a few similar aspects and developments in the field of visual and performative arts, we included two articles (Albers; Toukan) reflecting on how notions of commitment are revised in contemporary artistic practice.

5   This Arabic term, first introduced by Egyptian critic Taha Husayn (Ṭāhā Ḥusayn) in his literary journal *al-Kātib al-Maṣrī*, is a direct adaption and translation of the idea of "littérature engagée" coined by Jean-Paul Sartre in a series of essays in *Les Temps Modernes* (February–July 1945) that were published a short time later by Gallimard under the title *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948). Cf. Klemm, *Literarisches Engagement*; "Different Notions."

6   Tarek El-Ariss' recently published monograph *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (2013) has been another crucial source of inspiration for the conception of this volume. It examines the creation of modern subjectivities through and within Arabic literature and conducts a conclusive and revealing analysis of how former notions of the relation between the literary and the political have changed, persisted, and been re-actualized down to the present day, although not dealing with the development of literary engagement from a historical perspective in any detail.

7   This sign indicates chapters in this volume.

8   Cf. Bardawil, Fadi A. "The Inward Turn and Its Vicissitudes: Culture, Society, and Politics in Post-1967 Arab Leftist Critiques." *Local Politics and Contemporary Transformations in the Arab World: Governance Beyond the Center*. Ed. Malika Bouziane, Cilja Harders, and Anja Hoffmann. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2013. 91–109. Print; Jacquemond, Richard. *Conscience of the Nation: Writers, State, and Society in Modern Egypt*. Trans. David Tresilian. Cairo: American U in Cairo P, 2008. Print.

9   In Egypt, the "Art and Freedom Group" was rediscovered and celebrated in the early 1990s. See for example the special edition of the independent literary journal *al-Kitāba al-Ukhrā*, *Al-kitāb al-thālith* (Dec. 1992).

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