(p. 155). Why was this the case and what may this reveal about Stella's status in Egyptian society? There is then the matter of Stella's audience. Foda identifies multiple communities that came into contact with alcoholic beverages. The voices of these actors, though, receive relatively little attention. What did beer and Stella, specifically, mean to the *Islami*, *infitahi*, effendi, and urban worker, and did these views change over time? Lastly, in meticulously tracing Stella's ascent, Foda clearly demonstrates that alcoholic beverages, perhaps contrary to popular belief, played a prominent part in the past of at least one Muslim majority country. The exact relationship between Egypt's Islamic Revival and Stella's decline, however, is less evident. In a time of rising religiosity, how did Stella surface in contemporary debates and what work did public critiques of it perform for those intent on speaking in the name of Islam? Answers to such questions stand to shed valuable light on Stella in action and lend further support to Foda's claim that it was "an inseparable part of Egyptian culture" (p. 1).

Notwithstanding these questions, which merit further research, *Egypt's Beer* constitutes an important contribution to the study of Egypt, consumer goods, and the history of technology in and outside of the Middle East. Foda skillfully scrutinizes the transformation of a multifaceted industry and uncovers the story of an iconic commodity at its center. The resulting history weaves together a wide array of economic, political, and social phenomena integral to the making of modern Egypt. Foda's book, moreover, is well written. The monograph is approachable, engaging, and assumes little in the way of background knowledge, making it accessible to a broader audience, including graduate students and upper level undergraduates. At times, I wondered how chapters organized around particular themes, such as colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism, may have impacted Foda's exploration, but the book's chronological organization works in the end and is easy to follow. For all of these reasons, *Egypt's Beer* would make a wonderful addition to courses on consumer culture, Middle East history, and the history of technology and businesses. Ultimately, those who read this book will enjoy not only its content, but the inquiries inspired by it. How may the histories of other commercial ventures impact our understanding of the Middle East? In what ways may scholars operating in different historical contexts similarly intertwine the economic, social, and political in the spirit of crafting more panoramic narratives? And what insights may be gained by thinking creatively with, and critically about, objects we often take for granted?

doi:10.1017/S0020743821000696

Prophetic Translation: The Making of Modern Egyptian Literature.

Maya Kesrouany (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). Pp. 250. $24.95 paper. ISBN: 9781474474504

Reviewed by Maha AbdelMegeed, Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon (ma460@aub.edu.lb)

Prophetic Translation unfolds in the space between the genealogy of modern Arabic literature and the attempt to historicize literature as an ideological form, as well as a reading and writing praxis. The concern with the history of the emergence of modern Arabic literature haunts students of 19th and early 20th century Arabic literature, making it almost impossible to interpret these texts independently of the history of modernity in the region. Consequently, canonical texts from the period have been at the heart of contending visions and readings of modernity; from modernization narratives of the rise of a national-self from the shadow of European colonialism and the Ottoman Empire to post-colonial deconstructions of the former as self-Orientalizing projects. In recent years, there have been attempts to implode this cartographic imaginary and its reduction of literary history to an uneven dialogue among two unequal and distinctive cultural identities—i.e., Europe and its others. Michael Allen's recent work is particularly inspiring since it reframes the history of modern Egyptian literature from its focus on textuality, representation, and exchange amongst cultural identities to the globalization of a reading practice constitutive

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743821000556 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of literature as a modern disciplinary object. *Prophetic Translation* falls between these two trends, adopting some of the commitments of postcolonial deconstruction, while eschewing many of its conclusions and zeroing in on historicizing the literary as an ideological form, including both reading and writing, but relinquishing the focus on institutions towards an analysis of authorial voice. In weaving these two ambitions and scholarly trends, the book reveals the limits of envisioning a compromise between them, or their prophetic promise and necessary betrayal—to use two key terms from the book itself.

Maya Kesrouany's argument strings together translation—both its then contemporary theorization and practice—with rethinking the history of modern Arabic literature. Taking Egyptian literature as her specific case, Kesrouany tells the story of how translation forged the modern author as a discursive voice whose role is not so much the portrayal of social reality as it is its creation through prophecy. Prophecy denotes a distinct ideology of representation whereby literary texts do not represent the world, but they create it. Specifically, literature prophesizes the future of the nation, and in the process, creates it.

Each of the three main analytic chapters focuses on a cluster of translators, their conception and practice of translation, and a thematic node that emerges from the reading. The analysis starts with Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876–1927), ʿAbbas Mahmud al-ʿAqqad (1889–1964), and ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Mazini (1890–1949). Engaging in close reading of their translations and their own conception of their practice, the chapter reveals the fraught translation of divine inspiration into the literary imagination—as an alternative route to prophecy. The turn to Muhammad al-Sibaʿi (1881–1931) signals the shift from literary imagination as prophecy to its rendition into a discursive voice practiced *in* writing. The book concludes with Taha Husayn (1889–1973) and Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1881–1956). In this final analytic chapter, the argument comes full circle, revealing the position occupied by this prophetic authorial voice vis-à-vis the masses as both the object of the prophecy—the other against which literary subjectivity takes its form—and the biggest threat to this emergent voice. In *Prophetic Translation*, the story of the rise of modern Egyptian literature is the story of the emergence of this voice. The tumultuous relationship between author-cum-intellectual and the masses has already been the subject of a thought-provoking study by Ayman el-Desouky and, in a very different way, by Samah Selim in her study of the representation of the peasant as a national symbol. Yet, Kesrouany's book adds the question of "voice" as a unique lens for perceiving this relationship of the author and the people.

The analytic chapters are captivating, combining an attention to minute details with an ability to build broader arguments through them. The references and notes are thorough, contributing incredibly helpful reading suggestions in Arabic, English, and French to scholars and researchers. The book moves seamlessly between the scholarship in these three-languages—which reveals the ways in which they are underpinned by shared theoretical and methodological assumptions that are more significant than any ostensible geographic bifurcations. The book's attention to narratological and linguistic elements was also inspiring—particularly in Chapters 3 and 4. *Prophetic Translation* offers one of the few studies of voice, on a narratological level, in 19th and early 20th century Arabic. Despite the appeal to ideas of tradition and secularization in a lot of literary histories of modern Arabic literature, there is a noticeable scarcity in studies that analyze these issues on the level of language.

Yet, the book's furthest reaching contribution is one that is not explicitly framed as part of the book's central argument. *Prophetic Translation* offers us snippets of the relationship between authorial voice and realism broadly conceived. The issue has been central in the early waves of structuralist, and even post-structuralist, narrative theory. The differentiation between author, narrator, and character has been central for theorizing narrative forms, and in this book's final chapter we see elements of this as we follow the slippages between autobiography and biography; the oscillation between being the subject and object of narration. In turning to this implicit contribution, my aim is to think with *Prophetic Translation,* grappling with how its analytic reading suggests ways in which the framing of the problem may be rethought.

While the book's main analytic argument pertains to authorial voice, it is framed as a historiographic intervention. In this sense, it addresses two interrelated issues. The first pertains to the coextensiveness of realism and romanticism in Arabic narrative. The second seeks to elucidate the negotiation between local and incoming forms beyond narratives of emulation and imposition, imitation and self-Orientalizing. In the process, the notion that modern Arabic literature is prophetic rather than mimetic arises. It signals the ways in which cultural, specifically literary, production cannot be reduced to the intentions of the authors. In the same vein, translation is not a reproduction of an ostensible original since the context,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743821000556 Published online by Cambridge University Press

or the condition of possibility of the original, cannot be reproduced. Consequently, emulation, imitation, and even acknowledged self-Orientalizing tendencies cannot elucidate literary production which is necessarily in-excess of these geopolitical conditions. Put differently, *Prophetic Translation* concedes the facticity of the colonial situation, but resists the reduction of literary production to the imitation and reproduction of this condition. I use colonial situation to refer to the supposition that literary production can be studied as the exchange, or negotiation, between two cultural identities whereby one interrupted the organic flow of the other. Going back to the book's attempt to acknowledge these historical forces and to resist the common conclusions based on them, it might be worthwhile to rethink the scholarly historical problem in light of the positioning of authorial voice that Kesrouany analyzes so brilliantly.

Modern literary authorial voice speaks prophetically, at once tasked to lead the masses and plagued by them for it is their own waywardness that makes prophecy necessary. In this way, the author is prophet is translator; the one entrusted with navigating the labyrinths of local tradition and incoming modernity to ensure both progress and authenticity. It is useful here to remember that this is not solely the task of explicitly secular intellectuals, but is shared by early proponents of political Islam who envision the masses as engaged in imitation (*taqlīd*) against which they propose reform (*iṣlāḥ*) as an envisioned return to origins. In other words, the abjuring of imitation as the realm of the masses both in their relation to religion and to western civilization extends across contending political ideologies. Against the backdrop of this vision of the masses, and of the social plight of the nation, arises the author-cum-prophet as the leader out of this wilderness of imitation.

In one of his last essays, Hani Shukrallah points to this view as the effendi's world-view; his main point is that this view has stayed with us in metamorphosed ways, continuing to practice its ideological hegemony. It might have already become clear that what Shukrallah dubs as the effendi's world-view is intimately entwined with the central historiographic problematic shaping the horizon of our field. There have been avid, and incredibly instructive, critiques of nation-centric visions of literary histories and of the ways in which nationalist and colonialist literary histories partake in shared teleological narratives. Yet, it is less clear if we have been able to implode the facticity of this culturalist vision of the colonial situation. In other words, the slippages between the specificity of historical analysis and the claims to distinctiveness—if not exceptionality—continue to plague critical attempts to historicize modern narrative forms in Arabic.

We can think of *Prophetic Translation* as telling the story of how and why early examples of modern Arabic literature are necessarily not memetic, unlike European literature, due to its colonial situation. Alternatively, we can see the seeds of a story about realism as a narrative ideology, contributing to the theorization and historicization of realism as we know it so far. The choice is part of a move towards self-positioning; to inherit the effendi worldview and with it the translation of the social collective into the masses, or to accept that to historicize is to de-exceptionalize. Whatever one chooses, *Prophetic Translation* offers important leads into the study of modern literary subjectivity and of our heavy inheritance of this very subjectivity as it denies its own social positionality.

doi:10.1017/S0020743821000556

Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900. Kevin Schwartz (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). Pp. 246. $100 cloth. ISBN: 9781474450843

Reviewed by Shaahin Pishbin, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA (spishbin@uchicago.edu)

The idea that, in the 18th and 19th centuries, Iranian poets "returned" to the simpler styles of the classical masters and Persian poetry was thereby saved from centuries of deleterious foreign influence has been

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743821000556 Published online by Cambridge University Press