The Republic of Letters: Arab Modernity? [Pt. II]

Muhsin al-Musawi
Columbia University

In this part, the implications of negativism are interrogated, especially as they lead to a deliberate negligence on the part of some nahḍah scholars to overlook significant and in fact groundbreaking contributions to the theories of translation as laid down by al-Jāḥiz, for example. Counter readings by other nahḍah scholars and translators balance and should have corrected the view of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, whose alignment with the Enlightenment prevented him from exploring even the most salient features of a past tradition. The medieval as a powerful dynamic in the makeup of historical understanding can be traced in writings by Mudawwar, Sulaymān Khaṭṭar al-Bustānī, and others, but these draw on a Golden past (the Abbasid) as an imaginary that sustains another lineage that takes translation from a Greco-Roman tradition as an invigorating enterprise in an otherwise lively Abbasid (750–978; and then until 1258) culture that was already triumphant. In other words this reclamation of the Golden past was not meant to disparage the Middle Ages, that is, the Mamluk period (1250–1517), but to obliquely criticize cultural dependency on Europe. Hence, prominent journals and publishers did not shy away from picking their designations and names from the Mamluk parlance and architectural sites. These two trends in lexical activity, translation, and historicization attest to a differentiated nahḍah space where the proclaimed epistemic discontinuity with the immediate past was balanced by the setup of a schema for translation as a schema for the nation, a premise that was also applied to the lexicon as a pan-Arab cauldron.

Keywords: textual ancestry, the Universalist text, *Sorrows of Werter*, epistemic discontinuity, Arabization, lexical revivalism, Greco-Roman, literate perpetuation, cultural dependency, al-Jāḥiz, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn.

Knowledge Treasury

If the first part of this critique articulates the reasons behind the need to exercise some rigorous interrogation of the internalization of the "Enlightenment" discourse among Arab intellectuals, and the consequent disparagement of the premodern

Muhsin al-Musawi is a professor of classical and modern Arabic and comparative studies at Columbia University. A leading Arab critic, his thirty books and more than sixty scholarly articles cover many fields and direct literary study along new paths. His next book is *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters: Arabic Knowledge Construction* (Notre Dame University Press, spring 2015).

period, this part addresses in more detail the medieval and premodern background that should have necessarily paved the way for any cultural growth in Egypt and the whole Arab world. Its neglect, or the seemingly oversight on the part of some *naḥḍah* proponents, explains in part why the "awakening" remained an unfinished project, open to manifestations of rift, estrangement from the masses, and inadequacy in coming to terms with the demands of social, economic, and political transformations. As the issue of language looms large in the makeup of identitarian politics, the engagement with the medieval lexical activity should necessarily come to the fore in nineteenth-century Arab culture, in Egypt, and the rest of the Arab nation. I start this part with Ismāʿīl Maẓhar's (1891–1962) *Nahḍah* Dictionary (*Awakening Lexicon*), which was a relative latecomer in the lengthy chain of lexicons. Its inside title page makes the following statement that may place us at the nexus of the Arab modernity problematic:

> This dictionary has been compiled after careful consideration of the immediate necessities of teachers and students of the secondary, higher schools and colleges, and with special attention to educational terminology approved and passed by the Egyptian Academy for Arabic in different branches of knowledge including: literature, philosophy, history, psychology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, zoology, astronomy, anatomy, medicine, mechanical engineering, aeronautics, bacteriology, geology, economics, commerce, wireless music, painting, printing, lithography, etc.[1]

The enumeration of fields and disciplines tells us a good deal about the emerging needs of the nation-state. Although most of these are subsumed under the same categories during the heyday of the Islamic empire or else are collapsed on to others, this focus on them signifies a public educational system designed to educate everyone in the new forms of knowledge as befitting a new society. Considering his own lexicon in view of a genealogical chain, Maẓhar reiterates his view that "these lexicons and whatever that relates to language are in fact the *complete register of the lives of nations* (my emphasis)." Problematized in this particular way, their neglect or absence in discussions and studies of cultural development speak of an educational failure. The textual archeological archive, visible at its clearest in its lexical component, is usually bypassed in modern academic discussions, not only inside the Arab world but also in Western academies that instead are exclusively focused on periodicals, narratives, and text-based disciplines. People tend to forget that the lexicographical presence presupposes not only grammatical and linguistic knowledge, but also a full-scale corpus of aural and literate culture.

It is a textually underpinned nation, institutionalizing and verbally framing a community within an intricate web of lexes. While substantiating and informing a communal/national presence, it lays the groundwork for literate perpetuation. It plays multiple roles as register, mirror, and generator. When seen and perused as a textually drawn Arabic lexical nationhood, it can be approached as a grid of intelligibility, more encompassing and rooted than any other material presence. As noticed by scholars, there were needs to classify language according to a variety of professions, lifestyles, names; and signs for plants and animals, descriptions of natural phenomena, weapons;

---

1 Ismāʿīl Maẓhar, *Nahḍah Dictionary*, or Awakening Lexicon, cited from the unpaginated preface.

and organization of war and battalions, topographies, the study of the Qur'ān and hadith, outreach to other cultures, and so forth. There was also the need for dictionaries in specific fields and philology in particular. Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī's (d. 429/1038) *Fiqh al-lugha* stands foremost among these earlier efforts where words and meanings are grouped in a semantic order, prefiguring Peter Roget's *Thesaurus* (1852).[2] From among the long list of dictionaries, one can cite only a few to get a sense of the direction that makes the middle period such a crucial stepping stone for the process of *nahḍah* (awakening). In other words, the encounter with Europe also incites a need for an identitarian politics and generates a counter-quest for a sustainable legacy of a large and pursuable scale and usage. Along with the placement of the pan-Arab flag in a knightly poetic tradition, and the significant reliance on medieval and premodern statecraft, lexicons step in to function as pan-Arab cauldrons and constellation sites.

The Problematic of a Golden Past

These intersectional spaces convey not only the relevance of the middle/premodern period, but also the symptoms of a haunting memory among modernists, a kind of traumatic condition of suspension between recognition of the scope of knowledge, inability to capture it, and denial of the valence of trends in both the Mamluk and premodern cultural environs. The bearing on the modernists' unconscious cannot be exaggerated as it shows in their sweeping labels for the period as one of backwardness and failure. But to lay the blame for this neglect on a psychic condition may not help our pursuit of knowledge constructions: it is reasonable to ask why advocates of modernity disparaged (or only occasionally mentioned) this relatively recent past but preferred instead to emphasize the earlier Abbasid era, which educational curricula in many Arab countries underscored. An obvious answer lies in the alignment and subservience of many such scholars to Enlightenment discourse and its paradigmatic disconnection with the Middle Ages, a point that can be traced even under the rubric of demands made by the transition process and the need to free people's minds from what was conceived as servile imitation and excessive immersion in exhausted devices of rhetoric.[3] Although *nahḍah* intellectuals needed a straw man to justify their call for transformation and discontinuity with this past, they could not bypass some of its landmarks—that being the case with lexicons, for example. Entrenched in between, they either come up with illogical proposals and selective categorizations or end up by indulging in a sweeping denial of any cultural significance in the cultural production of the past five centuries. Furthermore, such advocates of modernity did not constitute a homogeneous group: there were nationalists, liberals, Islamists, and so on. There were also other co-opted scholars who enjoyed the privilege of being part of the colonial or Ottoman administration. If the study of the Abbasid past produced significant readings and discussions, they were

---

2   G. Carter, "Arabic Lexicography," 106–117, in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbāsid Period*, eds. M.J.L. Young, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), at 107.

3   See Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's preface to Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt's translation of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Ālām Veirter* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1920).

primarily intended to problematize other questions, such as the ninth–tenth century translation movement from the Hellenistic tradition. In other words, the seeming *nahḍah* espousal of an Abbasid Golden Age (750–978), with its widely proclaimed indebtedness to Greek philosophy and science, partially duplicates a comparable proclaimed European filiation with a Greco-Latin tradition.

The Post-Ottoman Nation-State

My own reading of this problematic of modernity, however, seeks to engage with some specific signposts relating to the post-Ottoman nation-state. In other words, the hollow pan-Islamic rubric that had for a long time camouflaged the corrupt administration of the Ottomans could not hold longer. Neither could it function within the dynamics of the encounter with rising nationalist movements throughout the Arab and Islamic world; nor the increasing encroachment of European imperialism with its intriguing cultural appeal and colonial challenge. The study of the Abbasid period could only engender comparisons with Europe (as indeed it did), but not in terms of warranted exchange and credit/debit transactions and similar naive propositions and self-justifications, but rather as the materialization of rational thought that had in earlier centuries blossomed into an era of glorious material growth and cultural efflorescence. The presence of Greek philosophy and science in the basic structures of Abbasid knowledge was so well known and well established in the scholarship that advocates of modernity required no further proof to argue for a similar need in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For those modernity campaigners and moderate Islamic thinkers, the glories of the Abbasid past underscore a pressing need to make use of European knowledge. Stripped to its core, the rationale draws on the Abbasid era as a way of critiquing the recent past and thence invigorating the present. Even the Abbasid literary field is summoned to corroborate this paradigmatic binary of naturalness as opposed to artificiality. In the same article of 1930, the celebrated "doyen of Arabic literature" Ṭāhā Ḥusayn writes:

> When they [modern readers] read some literary texts that had originally appeared in the Abbasid era, they discovered a closeness to nature and a distance from artificiality; they discovered a role for feeling, sentiment, and intellect, and became aware of the distance between the lively literature they were now reading and the dead literature to which they had become accustomed.[4]

By subscribing to a mixed romantic and neoclassical European alternative of feeling, sentiment, and reason, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's binary inevitably deprives the premodern period of any of these qualifications, a point that does not resonate well with the actual production of the period under consideration. On the other hand, this very divide entails no simultaneous promise of political independence for the present state of affairs in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world—that being a crucial nexus that cannot easily be dismissed because it lies at a crucial crossroads where selfhood is implicated.

4 .Roger Allen, "The Post-Classical Period: Parameters and Preliminaries," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, eds. Roger Allen and D.S. Richards (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.

We can problematize this nexus even further. In 1888, the modernity advocate the Syro-Lebanese Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf's Al-Muqtaṭaf Press published Jamīl ibn Nakhlah al-Mudawwar's (1862–1907) *Ḥaḍārat al-Islām fī Dār al-Salām* (Islamic Civilization in the Abode of Peace; i.e., Baghdad).[5] The book compiles a narrative of the urban, social, political, and cultural growth of a city that was unparalleled elsewhere. It is recounted by the author as a first-person narrative of a young Persian prince writing to his father in Khurasan. It sounds so genuine and so close to established accounts and historiographical standards that the late scholar at Harvard University, Ilse Wichtenstader, decided to include John Damis's translation of an extract from that book in her introduction to *Classical Arabic Literature*, treating it as an authored text from the Abbasid era.[6] An expanded and updated version of the text was published in 1905 by no less than Al-Muʾayyad Press,[7] and still another appeared in 1932, 1935, 1936, and 1937. The writer explains in his revised edition of 1905 that he had benefitted from the advice he received from the editors of the press, which led to a "refined revision that entailed an even better reception among elite Muslims and their ʿulamāʾ." He admitted that in the first edition he was more concerned with factors that enabled Muslims to conquer and reign, overlooking the reasons behind their "negligence and decadence." When it comes to scientific achievements, he also admits: "Upon describing their sciences, I restricted myself to bare reporting without locating in their learning the traces of wisdom [philosophy] which they had borrowed from the Greeks."[8] A choice is being made here: to uplift morale through a reconstructed and partly fake past, one that is meant to convey signs of authenticity but that ultimately minimizes borrowing or indebtedness. In the revised edition of 1905, al-Mudawwar makes amends for some omissions; he includes more reliable historical sources and excludes "weak accounts." In other words, in these two editions of a book that based its first-person narrative on no less than eighty reference books written between the ninth and sixteenth centuries, almost half of them belonging to the middle period (pp. 298–302), the writer proceeds to disclose his unease at having to deal with a past that was once glorious. The present moment, by contrast, is laden with anxiety, a sense of moral responsibility, and a scholarly need to engage with history as it is. Torn between the preservation of an authentic "past" free from foreign cultural presence and the demands of objective analysis as befitting the engagement with a European "modernity," the writer found some solace in the advice offered by others. Relieved of the burden of personal or individual accountability, he can now admit that the Arabs were indebted to Greek philosophy. The responsibility for this recognition is laid at the door of his advisers; it is a collective decision, involving recognition of the role of non-Arabs or non-Muslims in the construction of a glorious past. This uneasy negotiation with the

---

5 Al-Muqtaṭaf Press was the one publishing its journal under the same name (1876–1952). The journal was the most advanced and encyclopedic among contemporary journals in Egypt and the Arab world, and was run by the Syro-Lebanese/Egyptian intellectual Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf (1852–1927) and Fāris Nimr (1857–1951). It was started in Beirut and moved to Cairo in 1885.
6 Ilse Wichtenstader, *Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 357–362.
7 The Press was the one publishing Shaykh ʿAlī Yūsuf's newspaper (1889) under the same name and speaking for Khedive ʿAbbās and the Muslim national opinion. Its writers moved to *al-Liwāʾ* (1900) to carve a straightforward nationalist discourse against the British.
8 Jamīl Nakhlah al-Mudawwar, *Ḥaḍārat al-Islām fī Dār al-Salām* (Islamic Civilization in the Abode of Peace; i.e., Baghdad; Cairo: Al-Amīriyah Press, 1937), iii–iv.

past is informed by the present moment, for the question in al-Mudawwar's mind could have been reformulated as: Is it possible now to admit the need to engage with European knowledge without at the same time impinging on the counter-need to uphold an "authentic" or pure Arab core, an embryonic sense of essence needed for a nationalist revival? The question cannot be dismissed easily, but instead remains as a conspicuous and troublesome presence to be located in a variety of forums and structures of contestation and dialogue. Al-Mudawwar was not alone. Ismāʿīl Maẓhar (1891–1962), a prominent scholar who was a member of the Egyptian Academy for Arabic, devotes a few pages in the preface to his *Qāmūs al-nahḍah* (The Awakening Lexicon) to reformulate the role of Hellenistic thought in Arabic culture as part of an economy of supply and demand that cannot go on forever. He bases the discussion on a firm belief that "language is an element of national identity; nay, it is the foremost element." Hence, he speaks of the Greek language as one "that is rich in philosophical and logical terms, but not so in the sciences." Although equating acculturalization with contagion on the lexical and argumentative or disputative levels, he explains the proliferation of foreign vocabulary in Arabic as inevitable in a growing culture that regularly assimilates and digests: "the Arabic language was also dominated by terms for literary and theoretical sciences, while its scientific vocabulary was thin at first."[9] Maẓhar was surely aware of what the ninth-century polymath al-Jāḥiẓ had written on this matter by way of accounting for this proliferation, which had been unknown to the Bedouin Arabs.[10] But we need to consider this recognition on Maẓhar's part, not only in the context of his own argument but also in line with a strong sense of national pride and anxiety that encapsulates the oscillation between past and present. He speaks of the movements of early Arab/Islamic expansion as a surprising and phenomenal occurrence: "[i]n less than a century in the life of the universe, the Arabic language was spreading in tandem with the expanding aspirations of the Arab nation and its vast horizons in literature, arts, poetry and science." He adds: "Then its progress continued as the needs of the situation demanded. But this phenomenon was the first of its kind in the life of the human race: a nation was able to impose on other peoples its religion, language and arts, not for a short while, but forever." He culminates the celebration with this exclamation: "May peace be upon that desert." With an eye on the present, he argues as follows: no matter what may be the need for European science and terminology at the present moment, we need to keep in mind that languages pass through cycles, and so do their lexes. He explains:

> In civilizations, the first stage involves words with literary meanings, to be superseded by ones that denote a scientific purpose, in a sequence of displacement and regeneration. Whenever there is a rise in literary language, then this indicates that the roots for scientific terms will sprout: hence we should not ignore any of these, for we are uncertain as yet when the need will arise for such lexis in order to be able to carry out some unknown mission for our civilization.[11]

9   Ismāʿīl Maẓhar, et al., *Qāmūs al-nahḍah* (Cairo: Al-Nahḍah Bookshop, n.d.), preface: n.p.
10   Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the "Abbāsid Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 16–17. In her translation, al-Jāḥiẓ says: "For the Mutakallimūn [speculative theologians] selected expressions for their concepts, deriving terminology for things for which the Arab language had no word. In doing so they have set the precedent in this for all who came after them and the model for all who follow."
11   Ismāʿīl Maẓhar, *Qāmūs al-nahḍah*, preface: n.p.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: Enlisting Goethe

As much as this relationship with a classical Arab past invokes pride, it also provokes uncertainty, hesitation, and thence a rupture, especially when the issue at hand is: From whom should the Arabs benefit now? It is more so when a *nahḍah* doyen like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, for example, downplays even the Abbasid source in order to highlight the European enlightenment discourse and its associated pseudo-autobiographical narrative. Although he may be excused for his indiscriminate critique of some nineteenth-century verbosity that sounds jarring enough to those acquainted with Abbasid and European-informed prose writing, there is little reason to justify his repression of the Abbasid source on translation. I would like to draw attention at this juncture to Ṭāhā Husayn's 1920 preface to the Arabic version of Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter*, translated from the French by the prominent littérateur, editor, and owner of the influential Cairo monthly *Al-Risālah* (The Message), Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt. Ṭāhā Husayn's early conceptualization of translation rests on an ardent belief in the cultural dependency of Egypt on a strong European tradition. Hence, translation is a replication of a powerful textual ancestry that brings life into a barren land. If there is any "post-maturation," it is only as a genetic outgrowth that is made possible through an exuberant intermediary harkening back to a shared origin already spelled out in the *Description of Egypt*.[12] With much laudation, Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter* is introduced to the Egyptian Arab reader as an essential pursuit in a *nahḍah* venture, which amounts to no less than transformation or even *metamorphosis* under the guidance of Europe. A one-sided claim to European ancestry takes place through specific codes that mark the early views of Ḥusayn, Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt, and a score of other writers.[13] Ḥusayn's six-page condensed preface is mediated along a European Enlightenment binary of old and new that probably takes from Goethe his disenchantment with the past. The latter's dismissive of the "straw coat of our old habits" is known. Ḥusayn is not fully engaged with the great "subversive" in this preface; his critique of insularity and counter espousal of the "family of ideas." Rather he is engaged with a pseudo-autobiography that he applauds as an exemplary humanist and universalist text.[14] Paradoxically, the prefatory syncretic thrust is argued—with no due acknowledgment, along an Islamic speculative discourse on translation. Hence, in its systematic exposé and parlance, it directs attention to the ongoing discussion of translation in Europe since the second half of the nineteenth century without a shred of reference to Arabic speculative and rationalist discourses. The upholding principle of newness that runs throughout the preface partially anticipates the regeneration/Lazarus motif in Arab literary modernity, especially its post–second war fruition. The twentieth–century modernity advent was flung on the cultural scene in an

---

12 *Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée* française (English: *Description of Egypt, or the Collection of Observations and Research which Were Made in Egypt during the Expedition of the French Army*).

13 For an opposite argument, see the following article in *Al-Hilāl*, 1939 by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Bishrī, in "Muhimu al-adīb fī al-Sharq an yakūna adīban Sharqiyyan" (How Disturbing for a Littérateur in the East to Be an Oriental Littérateur; the title can delude one to read it as the "mission of… to be… "); already cited.

14 Cited from Matthew Arnold, "The Literary Influence of the Academies" and "Heinrich Heine," Essays *in Criticism, 1st Series*, 47, 158, 159, in Muhsin al-Musawi, *Anglo-Orient* (Tunis: Centre de Publication Universitaire, 2000), 117, 143.

unequivocal faith in an Enlightenment of rationality and progress as the only way out of an undesirable past. In other words, the six-page preface tosses us headlong onto the explosive encounter of Arab modernity usually termed *nahḍah,* with its divided aims and disrupted proclivities. While repressing its interlocutor, it implicates us in a historiographic range of response to the past between an oedipal repudiation of literary father, a self-conciliatory stance heralding a rebirth, and a more assiduous commitment to unearthing the middle and premodern period legacy.[15]

Ḥusayn's *Nahḍah* Translation Project

Ḥusayn's systematic preface comes under his scholarly garb, as "professor doctor." The title endows the text with compelling legitimacy and hence authority to offer guidance and instruction to a community of *nahḍa* readers. The opening sentence strikes the reader with the authentication particle/word *la'lla*, perhaps, to justify al-Zayyāt's venture, not as a translation of any narrative but as testimony to the leading role of Goethe in the Enlightenment discourse. Thus reads the opening: "Perhaps our need for transference and translation has never before reached such intensity. We are in a transitional age marked by a thirst for knowledge and a desire for the new." Detracted from comparable frameworks that undermine the old/new paradigm, the thesis stands on its own. It celebrates Europe as the only locus for newness and invention.

Husayn divides his preface into three segments that deal respectively with: 1) the historicization of the period as one of ennui. This is significantly drawn in paradigmatic terms to negate the old as obsolete and somehow unbearable, voicing under the same paradigm the concerns of "people who are bored with what they were used to read, the scientific theories they were used to hear, and the works of art they were familiar with." The premise receives further instantiation when applied to al-Zayyāt's translation of *Werter.* The source text *Werter* in Ḥusayn's reading "represents the life of European arts in an age that closely resembles the age we live in, for when Goethe wrote *Werter* Europe was passing through a transitional age like ours, bored like us with everything old, and fascinated like us with the new."[16] Pursuing the analogy with Europe, Ḥusayn justifies his critique of the so-called outworn modes of thought and writing. Applying eighteenth-century differential schema among types and individualities, Ḥusayn presents Goethe's narrative as an epistemic discontinuity with the Middle Ages. *Werter* and its like in Ḥusayn's argument: "were composed to survive and enjoy eternal life." He adds:

> These books are eternal because they are not concerned with mortals but with the types that outlive everything else. Furthermore, this book [*Werter*] is credited with survival and immortality because it does not confine itself to the representation of the psychology of youth at a specific stage. It rather sets an exemplary humanist value for which everyone aspires.

15 See how this repudiation creeps in his *Tārīkh al-adab al-'Arabī* (1928), which is on the whole a well-balanced account of literary history. Jurjī Zaydān's criticism takes lead from social and political circumstance, specifically in the Arab East, as Egypt and Syria were engulfed by "backwardness and corruption." *Tārīkh   Ādāb al-lughah al-'Arabiyyah*, 4: 6, 11.

16 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's preface to Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt's translation of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Ālām Veirter.* page Iiii.

Applying the Enlightenment prioritization of human "nature," free from artificiality and servile imitation, Ḥusayn's preface theoretically cements its bond to the Enlightenment discourse. Universalizing the experience as such and claiming the narrative as the right choice for *nahḍah* youth, Ḥusayn sets a humanist paradigm for the age of transition.

2) the emphasis on the element of newness in the production of other peoples that share "the joys and pains of life." But, he cautions against "those who embark on transference and traduction" lest they confuse the need with random choice. In Ḥusayn's opinion translation is a guided endeavor that requires a sense of commitment to "reform, correct, and help towards progress and transition." 3) The urgency of familiarity, not only with the source and target languages, but also with the semantic field itself so as to be capable of arguing in that field whether scientific or philosophical. But, if translation is in the domains of arts and literature, the translator has to deploy "enough expertise and efficiency" to "replace the source author, feel like him/her, see things with the same eye, and describe things with the same language." At another place, Ḥusayn associates part of the ordeal of translation with what he sees as lack in Arabic language in terms of sensory description and philosophical views "because its people have not trodden this path."[17]

A Schema for Translation: A Schema for a Nation?

The latter premise leads Ḥusayn to a brief discussion of the meaning and method of literary and artistic translation. It is at this stage that Ḥusayn rubs shoulders with European counterparts while jumping over ninth–tenth century Arab theorists of speculative theology and translation. The questions that bothered Europeans, especially Matthew Arnold in a series of articles on translating Homer and others, relate to the premise of "knowing." Is it possible for a nineteenth-century European to claim knowledge of how Homer and Ovid used to interact with their audiences? Do words keep their signified? Are we sure that equivalence, not approximation, is achievable? Ḥusayn argues the case as follows: "Translation in arts and literature is not replacing one Arabic word by another, for words are extremely defective in describing feelings in the original; so how can they be effective in another language?" The insufficiency of words invites their displacement as a condition for a post-maturation that occurs with the pangs of new birth, as Walter Benjamin argues in his 1923 "The Task of Translator."[18] Ḥusayn assigns translation in these domains two different itineraries: "[t]he first is for the translator to identify with the author, and to claim the latter's sense, sentiment, and comprehension in matters of emotion and response. The second is to express this case with all its minutiae and secrets in the most representative and clear words." He sums up the point by saying: "In brief, the translator has to try the utmost not to convey the meanings of the author's words, but the latter's soul so clearly as to enable us to discern easily all its shades of feeling and sensibility." Obviously, Ḥusayn collapses the philological parlance and semiotic codes in order to make a lucid and effective argument as befitting a prominent scholar. The source text, its setting and codes, are

17 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's preface to Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt's translation of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Ālām Veirter*.
18 Walter Benjamin, "The Translator's Task," trans. Steven Rendall, 75–83. *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004).

presented to the target language as conditions for accommodation, a priori to fit into an age of transition. Reader response becomes the testing ground for a good translation, not because of equivalence or faithfulness as a philological imperative, but because of a humanist commitment to cultivate minds and hearts emotively and cognitively.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and His Contemporary Translators

Although imbricated within a humanist philological discourse, there is in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's critique an ambivalent stance toward the "fidelity" or faithfulness model, not only because verbal plasticity makes this impossible, but also because some lack is ascribed to Arabic. This unease conveys ennui on the part of Ḥusayn, an ennui that could turn into angst during a critical period in his own life. But it is evidently traceable in his reluctance to engage with classical Arabic theories of translation despite the fact that Sulaymān Khaṭṭār al-Bustānī produced in 1905 his erudite and lengthy preface to a verse Arabization of Homer's *Iliad* that surveys Arabic translational theory. In this theory there is a large portion that resonates with Ḥusayn's infatuation with Greek thought, but Khaṭṭār broaches the concept of *taʿrīb* (Arabization) as an inclusive term to go around the problems of translatibility. It adds annotation and explanation to cover the emerging distance between source and target.

To recapitulate, let us recollect that the first few words of Ḥusayn's opening paragraph conflates *naql* (traduction/conveyance/transference) with *tarjamah* (translation), without guiding us into the reasons behind this choice though Sulaymān Khaṭṭār introduces *taʿrīb* (Arabization) as an encapsulating/inclusive activity that includes translation, transference, and annotation. Although Abū ʿUthmān al-Jaḥiẓ (c.767–869) uses the term quite often, his idiomaticity specifically targets the amount of liberality taken in conjugation and deflection to account for terms with no immediate equivalents in Arabic. The matter is more problematic when we look upon Ḥusayn's classifications in terms of Arab Islamic theory of translation as exemplified by al-Jāḥiẓ, whom he calculatingly overlooked. In his ingenious discussion of the art of translation, al-Jāḥiẓ perceives the process of rendition into the target language production as necessarily transformative. Choice, intervention, interpretation, and conversion are a series of acts that belie the naiveté of the advocates of faithfulness. Al-Jāḥiẓ's criticism of the translation movement in his time rests on a rendition double-bind: the open possibilities of loss and gain in relation to the source material. In surveying the scene, he differentiates three ways of rendition from which Ḥusayn cites only transference (*naql*) and translation (*tarjamah*). Al-Jāḥiẓ argues: "The books of India have been transferred (*nuqilat*), and the Greek philosophies have been translated (*turjimat*), and the literature of the Persians has been converted (*ḥuwwilat*)." He adds: "[s]ome of these [works] have increased in excellence and some have lost a portion [of their original quality]."[19] Each of the phrases has its epistemological and etymological referentiality. Significantly, the term *ḥuwwila* (convert/transform) is skipped in Ḥusayn's idiomaticity, for its use was confined to conversion of words and beliefs that were time and theology bound as

19   Cited and translated from al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn, ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1996), I: 75–76; Hayrettin Yücesoy, "Translation as Self-Consciousness: Ancient Sciences, Antediluvian Wisdom, and the ʿAbbāsid Translation Movement," *Journal of World History* 2.4 (2009): 523–57.

explained in a number of treatises on the translation of theological and religious issues.[20] Ḥusayn's close reading and conspicuous approximation of al-Jāḥiẓ's perspective on methods of translation problematizes his unrestrained espousal of the Enlightenment discourse. Although al-Jāḥiẓ understands the impossibility of multidimensional exactitude in rendition, his unease with respect to his contemporaries' sense-for-sense or word-for-word methods,[21] he prioritizes the role of the translator as interpretant, sensitive scholar, and broker. What Ḥusayn specifies as knowledge of both languages, source and target texts and semantic fields, has already received rigorous treatment in al-Jāḥiẓ's few pages on the art and movement of translation. The latter takes cognizance of texts and contexts in this rendition for granted; for only with enough familiarity with both languages and cultures, their codes, signs, referents, and shades of meaning, can a translator match or surpass a source. Indeed, al-Jāḥiẓ's valorization of the task of the translator surpasses Ḥusayn's, whose deference to the Enlightenment turns his translator into a scaffolder. In one writer's commentary, al-Jāḥiẓ "sees the translator not as a simple scribe but effectively as an author who is able to use the sources of Arabic language to the fullest extent possible to replace the discursive and literary quality of the source text with another equally as or even more potent than the original for the benefit of the target culture."[22]

Grammarians and Translators as Contenders in a Cultural Script

Al-Jāḥiẓ paved the way for further discussions in the next century, especially when the grammarians found fault with translation as probable duplication of another culture. As reported by transmitters who sound more appreciative of Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī's (d. 979) line, Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 940) responds in total subservience to Greek thought and the peripatetic exercise of logic as a discursive rationalist methodology that resists temporality in its aspiration for the universal: "Although the Greeks have perished with their language, still the translation has preserved the intentions of the writers, giving their sense, and conveying the genuine truth."[23] Against this appeal to the universality of Greek thought and to logic as methodology, al-Sīrāfī reiterates the impossibility of equivalence as long as translation between two or more languages is involved. He states:

> If we grant that the translation is veracious and not fallacious, straight and not crooked, literal and not free, that it is neither confused nor inaccurate, has omitted nothing and added nothing, has not altered the order, has not marred the sense of the general and the special, or indeed of the most special and the most general, a thing which is impossible, which the nature of language and the character of ideas do not permit, your next point would appear to be that there is no evidence save the intellects of the Greeks, and no demonstration save what they invented, and no verity save what they brought to light.

20 For a brief discussion of views on this matter, see al-Kindī, ibn Maṭrān, and al-Jāḥiẓ. Ibid, p. 535.
21 For the popularity of these views during al- Jāḥiẓ's times, see Ṣalāḥ al-Ṣafadī in Rosenthal's translation, *Classical*, 17–18.
22 Hayrettin Yücesoy, 537.
23 D. S. Margoliouth, "The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Saʿid al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Jan. 1905): 79–129, 116, 117.

Al-Sīrāfī denies universality to Aristotle's thought. As long as we are speaking of a human living and interacting with a specific culture, we cannot impart universality to such thought or method. He adds that: "The author of logic is but one particular man, who took from his predecessors, just as his successors took from him; his authority is not over all mankind, nor over the great multitude, for indeed he has opponents both among his own people and others." He further stipulates that: "difference in opinion and sentiment, discussion, questioning, and answering are inborn and natural, so how can a man produce anything whereby an end can be just to this dissension, or whereby it could be rooted out of nature, or seriously affected? It cannot be: the thing is impossible." The argumentative bent found in this discussion is but one piece of evidence for the validity of logic as a way of thinking. In this systematic deconstruction of a Greek essence, al-Sīrāfī mobilizes his philological expertise. What is significant to this discussion of the Arab modernists' unease with the past is that there is a solid base for a theory of translation that could have made Ḥusayn and his colleagues more assured of their project in an epoch of transition.

A Double Neglect? Or a Nahḍah Malaise?

If the views of al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Kindī (d. 873), ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d.759), Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (d. 910), and later on al-Sīrāfī and Mattā ibn Yūnus are so well known, how can we explain Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's reluctance to engage with them even in passing? In matters of cultural affiliations that might have been a driving force in Ḥusayn's choices, al-Jāḥiẓ was no less receptive for rationalist reading and analysis. Indeed, he was so much aware of the Aristotelian discourse as to require translators to be fully acquainted with Greek culture, its rhetoric and philosophy along with a similar mastery of the target culture. He even goes further in suggesting another scale for translators that can be intimidating to them. Augmenting the presence of the source author, like Aristotle, al-Jāḥiẓ denies translators the power or competence to claim replication, a point that the grammarian and philologist al-Sīrāfī denies as an excessive celebration of a knowing subject. Hence, al-Jāḥiẓ was never sanguine with respect to a large number of prominent translators. He despairingly argues: "Since when have Ibn al-Biṭrīq, (may God have mercy on his soul), Ibn Naʿīma, Ibn Qurra, Ibn Fihrīz, and Theophilus, Ibn Wāhilī, or Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ been comparable to Aristotle?"[24] Emanating from a triumphalist culture that has the upper hand in selection, conversion, transformation, and assimilation, this rhetorical interlocution betrays no qualms of weakness, a position that was consolidated in a narrative tradition of the Caliph al-Ma mūn's dream.[25] The discussion of translation as central to imperial concerns moved a step further soon after, especially in the tenth century.

24 Ibid. p. 536.
25 See Rosenthal, *The Classical…*, 48–49. Citing al-Nadīm's (d. 995 or 998) narrative of the dream in his *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (a massive dictionary of books, trends, and authors), Rosenthal translates as follows: "He dreamed that he saw a man of reddish-white complexion with a high forehead, bushy eyebrows, bald head, dark blue eyes and handsome features sitting on his chair. Al-Ma'mūn gave the following account of his dream: I had the impression that I was standing respectfully in front of him. I asked him who he was. He replied: 'I am Aristotle.' I was happy to be with him and asked if I might address a question to him. He granted me permission, and I said: 'What is good?' He replied: 'Whatever is good according to reason.'

Conversely, in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's time, the West was taken for granted not only as the supreme power but also as the guide to and provider for knowledge. In more than one sense, Ḥusayn concurs with European translators at the heyday of the empire when Edward FitzGerald used to speak of his translation of Omar al-Khayyam in terms of possession, a view that was already there since Dryden's times. Thus writing to the scholar of Persian Edward Cowell, FitzGerald says: "I take old Omar rather more as my property than yours."[26] No wonder theories of translation as possession and the ones that address the original as, in De Man's critique and recapitulation on Walter Benjamin, driven "to the bottomless depths of language" happen to strike roots in the age of empire.[27] Unfortunately, cultural dependency entails surrender and ultimate resonation with sites of cultural power, for as FitzGerald adds: "It is amusement, to me, to take what liberties I like with these Persians, who (as I think) are not poets enough to frighten one from such excursions and who really do want a little Art to shape them."[28] Like the overriding imperial discourse, these and similar words find their way into the writings of the Arab elite in the formative *nahḍah* years. The 1920 preface introduces the translation of his colleague and friend who was no less celebratory of Western culture. Pitting it against Arabic literature that was in his view "brackish creek" of stagnant water since its inception, Western literature brings about fertilization troped here in terms of fresh water and "luscious fruits."[29] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was less adamant, but was unequivocal with respect to the dialectics of cultural politics informing his dependency on the Enlightenment humanism. One explanation for his reluctance to draw on a well-developed thesis in translation by such a rationalist thinker and polymath as al-Jāḥiẓ is academic: he needs to prove his thesis that the West leads the Enlightenment and hence the cultural dependency of Egypt. Another is a latent desire to repress sources of power in an Arab/Islamic cultural tradition in order to use the recent past, the Mamluk and premodern periods, as his straw man, to be beaten and dismissed as unwanted past, an awkward memory to be dumped forever in order to align consciousness with an enlightened Europe that has put its medieval past behind. As a leading figure in the *nahḍah* movement, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is the sum-up of anxieties, contradictions, and achievements that happen to be a translational interstice.

Repression betrays anxiety of influence, if we accept Harold Bloom's Freudian thesis.[30] It means that Ṭāhā Ḥusayn accepts the ʿAbbasid past so wholeheartedly that he negates whatever that comes after. Abbasid writing permeates his thought and style so thoroughly that he tries his best not to acknowledge specific sources with the exception of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (1057), whom he identifies with rather than struggles against. Annoyed at some late-nineteenth-century revivalists whom he accuses of mimicry and imitation of a "decadent" literature (the postclassical), he fails

---

I asked: 'what else?' He replied: 'whatever is good according to religious law.' And I asked: 'and what else?' He replied: 'Whatever society considers good.' I asked: 'What else?' And he replied: 'Nothing else.'"

26 Edward FitzGerald, *The Poetical and Prose Writings of Edward FitzGerald*, ed. George Bentham (1967; New York: Phaeton Press, 1902), I: 30; cited in *Anglo-Orient*, 313.

27 Paul De Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 84.

28 Cited from a letter of March 20, 1857, in Susan Basnett, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 1993), 18; see *Anglo-Orient*, 313.

29 Shaden M. Tageldin, "Proxidistant Reading," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 2.3 (Fall 2012): 240; and Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt, "Fī al-Adab al-ʿArabī," *al-Jadīd* 1.2 (6 February 1928): 19–20.

30 Harold Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

to exercise the avowed reasonableness of European neoclassicism. In epistemic terms, condemnation betrays holes in the reasoning ideal that he espouses. Nationhood can be reclaimed in times of fragmentation and challenge, not in times of glory and conquest. Many of his contemporaries fare better in this transaction.

The awakening Qāmūs movement described above, for example, connects to the modernizing project through a lexical revivalism that is predicated on a double-bind founded in a mythical structure of cyclic time: the reawakening of lexical roots corresponding to a phoenix like rising from ashes and a placement of present needs for science within a classical transaction out of which the Arabs were to emerge triumphant. Al-Mudawwar's preface points to a different paradigm, an anxiety of recognition. Both Maẓhar and al-Mudawwar engage the present as a period of trial, one which the past is unable to dispel. The very fact that al-Mudawwar's book was issued first by Ṣarrūf's *Muqtaṭaf* Press and then by al-Mu'ayyad carries with it some semiotic underpinnings that place al-Mudawwar's endeavor within this less disturbing recall of a recent past. Ṣarrūf's journal *al-Muqtaṭaf* (The Chosen) was no less encyclopedic and constellational than the compilations of the middle period, but the choice of its name resonates with a specific selectivity in secular knowledge that was a distinctive feature of the Arab *nahḍah* movement in particular. Its concern was with the present, not the past. On the other hand, the al-Mu'ayyad Press and newspaper were both named after a middle period mosque, established in Cairo as mosque, academy, and library by Sultan Mu'ayyad al-Shaykh (1412–1421), as a replacement for the flea- and lice-ridden prison where he was incarcerated during the reign of his predecessor, al-Faraj ibn Barqūq. Names and naming in Islamic thought are no ordinary matter, as Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (1297–1363) reminds us in his *Kitāb al-Ghayth al-musjam fī sharḥ Lāmiyyat al-'ajam* (The Book of the Smoothly Flowing/Life-Giving Rain in Explicating al-Ṭughrā`ī's 'Ajam Ode Rhyming in L).[31]

The middle period suffers no qualms with regard to a Greco-Latin connection. Indeed, the literature of the period significantly downplays the whole issue, as can be seen with al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333),[32] who noted that, for him, as for many others, Arabic writing had no need of such a heritage. His argument, based on the legacy of his forebears, samples of which he reproduced verbatim in many instances, builds on Arabic poetics and empirical scientific research, as will become clear in due course. Although not negating the value of Greek philosophy, writers of the Mamluk period were happier to assign greater credit to a broad cultural terrain that makes use of logic and disputation, but within a consensual framework (as we will note below). Although there is the occasional reference to this thought, such instances occur only as the thinnest of threads in an otherwise panoramic text-scape presided over by the learned scribe. Similarly, the European challenge is displaced for a moment in al-Mudawwar's book; and if it exists, it is as a mere ghost to validate a precolonial sovereignty that exists in textual form in a well-charted terrain of encyclopedias, companions,

---

31 Khalīl ibn Aybak Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Ghayth al-musjam fī sharḥ Lāmiyyat al-'ajam* (The Book of the Smoothly Flowing/Life-Giving Rain in Explicating al-Ṭughrā`ī's 'Ajam Ode Rhyming in L.). (Al-Dār al-Bayẓā': Dār al-Rashād, 1990), 2 vols. Vol. 1, 442–43. Al-Ṭughrā'ī was executed in 515 or 518/1121 or 1124.

32 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī (d. 1333), *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (The Ultimate Goal of the Learned).

compilations, and single works, all of them reflecting an extraordinary sphere of discussion where an autobiographical or biographical presence gives narrative a personalized touch. No wonder the late-eighteenth-century Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār's *maqāmat al-faransīs* (Maqama of the French), a work that has become a referent in postcolonial studies,[33] has its French Orientalist alternating the terms of transaction between the native and colonial, presenting the latter as a scholar who is still in a position to quote and master the popular Mantle Ode of al-Buṣīrī. Even French colonial authority was perceived as subscribing to a recent past that could easily adapt itself for inclusion in a liberatory discourse. A survey of the publications of the Būlāq's Press, established in the 1830s, would also tell us how many books from this recent past found their way to the reading public. Free of a pervasive Greco-Latin presence, the middle period was an authenticated totality, to be addressed, argued, and drawn upon without provoking allusions to the problematic of the encroaching encounter with Europe.

No wonder then that Sulaymān Khaṭṭār al-Bustānī publishes his verse translation in Arabic of Homer's *Iliad* in 1904, along with a historical and literary explanation [Ilyādhat *Hūmīrūs: muʿarrabah naẓman wa-ʿalayhā sharḥ tārīkhī adabī*; Miṣr: Al-Hilāl, 1904). The act of publication itself suggests that the Arabizer has mastered the text and replicated it in a recognizably Arabic poetic domain, showing enough of his own knowledge to be able to both explain and criticize. Although admittedly done to satisfy some readers' need, the translator as explicator and conductor of a poetic or versified Arabization pronounces himself as master of the situation. No matter how problematic this nexus is at the turn of the nineteenth century, the direct engagement with the Greco-Roman heritage itself is less thorny. Posing no threat to sovereignty, the ancients can be studied and translated in a balanced transaction, free from anxiety and more conducive to a comforting sense of mastery and equivalence. Unless we read this against Sulaymān al-Bustānī's other writings, especially *ʿIbratun wa-dhikrā* (A Lesson to Remember), concerning the much hated Ottoman rule, we miss the role of some families in the struggle for independence and nationhood. This factor merely dovetails conveniently with the preceding three intersectional propositions.

Reclaiming the Past!

The three exceptions to the commonly encountered disparagement of a so-called "decadent age" are closely bound to one another: that is because the rise of the nation-state, the combined effort in administration and rhetoric (troped as the sword and the pen), and the reclamation of Arabic lexis according to the reputed maxim "language is the nation"[34] are operating in unison with one another on the eve of a massive

---

33 Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (New York: Syracuse University Press), 76–91. For detailed reading in view of Gran, see Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 66–107. The original full text is as follows: *Hadhihī al-Maqāmāt al-Suyūṭiyah*, li-Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī. Mudhayyalah bi-Maqāmah li-Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (Cairo?: Ṣāliḥ al-Yāfī, 1859).

34 Maʿrūf ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ruṣāfī, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (The Arabic Language, issued in Istanbul and established by the Iraqi Aḥmad ʿIzzah al-Aẓamī, 1912), 7–9; cited in Muhsin al-Musawi, *Islam on the Street* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), xv, xxxi. The renowned poet and polemical fighter against the British after 1917 has the following to say on this point: "The language of each nation is irrefutably one of its historical glories. Hence: each language of a nation is part of its nationhood." Ibid.

movement aimed at spreading a sense of political and national awareness. If verna-cularization was regarded in Europe as the central mode of conglomeration in a move toward statehood, then an already vigorous and vital language like Arabic, as evidenced in the enormous lexical enterprise, evolves through its Qu'rānic and poetic connotations not only as the basic ingredient for nationhood, but also—and for that very reason—as religious *a priori*. The renowned Iraqi poet, al-Ruṣāfī (d. 1945), would conclude: "He who knows his homeland knows God."[35] In other words, the lexical initiatives discussed above as an aspect of modernity (i.e., since al-Zabīdī's voluminous *Tāj al-'Arūs* [Bride's Crown]) had as part of their ingredient factors the retrieval of street language and the revival of the classical corpus in a post-Jawharī turn (d.393/ 1008), all sustained as part of the middle period.[36] This retention, however, cannot be seen as a mere duplication of the processes of European vernacularization models as argued in Casanova's *World Republic of Letters*.[37] It is a historically established lexical turn initiated in the eleventh century, one that coincided also with the rise and proliferation of other Islamic languages, especially Persian.[38]

To pursue this line of analysis, there is a need to appreciate and understand the urgency in pursuing (and also initiating) new prospects with respect to the middle period in Islamic and Arab history. Confounding partial reliance on earlier textual production with servile imitation, and disillusioned with political disintegration in the Arab east and Andalusia, some *nahḍah* scholars failed to see the diversity and richness in these middle and premodern knowledge formations. Those from among Arabs and non-Arabs who fit into Adorno's[39] "antipodes" or "patriarchs of modernity" and who denigrated the cultural products of such a lengthy period find themselves incapable of connecting with the totality of the endeavor immediately before and after the fall of Baghdad in 1258. Shocked by the sheer magnitude of this production, many scholars have confused it with pedantry and mere imitation, features which, even when granting their partial existence, comprise only a byproduct in an otherwise variegated repository of enormous dimensions. Confounded with political upheaval and loss of an imaginary or real Arab-centered polity, this lengthy premodern era remains relatively understudied, especially in terms of what Messick associates with a "calligraphic state," that is, the shared discursive features taking the form of "authoritative expression" that finds its way into "the practices of a number of important institutions."[40] What is missing in recent histories of the period and current scholarly essays dealing with specific modes, genres, individual writers, or works amounts to no less than these shared characteristics that give the enormous production a power of its own as a "republic of letters.[41]

---

35 Ibid. xv.

36 *Al-Jāsūs 'alā al-Qāmūs*. Al-Jawharī made a point in his *Ṣiḥāḥ* of including what is *faṣīḥ* (pure, correct) and of an Arab root.

37 Joe Cleary, "The World Literary System: Atlas and Epitaph: *The World Republic of Letters* by Pascale Casanova," *Field Day Review*, Vol. 2 (2006), 196–219.

38 For a succinct reading of this rise, see Hamid Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism* (Boston: Harvard College Press, 2012).

39 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum/The Seabury Press, 1979), 53.

40 Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

41 Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, *A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 2, 15.