constitutionalism devotes a good deal of attention to ideas; Thompson discusses ideas but only through the individuals (many of them not intellectuals) who pursue them.

So this is a work that appears both idiosyncratic and brash. It would seem more likely to fail than succeed. Does it work when placed in her hands?

Yes, for three reasons.

First, the account is accessible enough to be read by a broad audience but novel enough in order to be helpful to specialists. Her overriding theme—of attempts to bring about something akin to constitutionalism (though in many different guises) that are real, deeply rooted, but generally frustrated—will help generalists make sense of a lot of material while still offering a helpful overarching idea to those who have approached these issues before.

Second, the decision to focus on individuals pays off in an unexpected way. Intellectual analyses often convey coherence and depth. But when ideas are attached to people, one sees them as they actually operate in the political world—they are confused, sometimes contradictory, and odd mongrels rather than codified or systematic.

Third, the approach allows Thompson to show—sometimes subtly and sometimes directly—both how specific ideas (the circle of justice, citizenship, political Islam, liberalism) arose over time and dominated specific periods and also how those ideas moved in evolutionary fashion, often blending into each other. More succinctly, she can show continuity and change in the same breath. The first is essential for her argument that constitutionalism is deeply rooted; the second is necessary for her to show the many diverse forms it has taken over time.

There are two costs to this approach. First, she is reliant not only on her own research and interpretations but also on the works of others; that requires very sound judgment to make good use of previous work. She seems sure footed in her use of past scholarship and adept at injecting her own considerable expertise.

Second, it is necessarily selective with the result that some very important figures and episodes (the Tunisian constitution and Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi) do not receive any treatment. Other figures not normally associated with constitutionalism (David Ben Gurion, Akram al-Hourani) receive extended treatment. She makes some odd choices, but they make much more sense when the reader remembers that what Thompson is working to provide is a tour of constitutionalist ideas and struggles, not a comprehensive history of all important documents and events. And in some ways, her focus is far broader than constitutionalism; she seems more concerned with justice, especially in the political sphere.

The result will not replace other scholarly accounts of the subject but help those other contributions be read in a new way. Future generations of scholars (and students as well, since the book is very accessible in its arguments and prose) will likely have a more nuanced understanding of constitutionalism and subsequent writings will be less likely to look past the broad intellectual and political milieu in which various efforts have been made.

MARGARET LITVIN, *Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011). Pp. 296. $35.00 cloth.

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In Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir's Egypt, political parties were crushed and dissident writers imprisoned, but theater productions were generously funded by the state. Under an arts policy that Richard Jacquemond terms "pluralism-under-surveillance," Egyptian theater thrived as an agora for

politicized intellectuals. Margaret Litvin's compelling theater history, *Hamlet's Arab Journey,* traces the changing adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy for staging Arab political debates since 1952. Litvin argues that the philosophical prince Hamlet became an alter ego for three generations of Arab dramatists, comparing their interpretations in order to map intellectual shifts after major historical epochs. An ambitious complement to literary studies focused on a single era, this work of political philosophy, intellectual history, and literary criticism argues that the yoking of Arab political and theatrical avant-gardes produced a style of courtly critique in state theaters that persisted long after Nasserism. The transformation of *Hamlet* in Arabic drama across the decades illuminates the role of literary theater in sustaining political narratives, and eventually, the iconoclastic force of radically reinterpreting a literary classic.

The "Arab Hero Hamlet" who emerged in Egyptian theater in the 1960s and 1970s, unlike his brooding Western counterpart, was a political animal. His philosophical debates about how to act politically mirrored those of Arab intellectuals employed in ministries of culture. But Litvin shows that *Hamlet* was common intellectual currency in a range of discourses on modern Arab citizenship. Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Edward Said cited Hamlet's dilemma to thematize Islamist and Palestinian identity respectively, invoking "to be or not to be" as a unifying "shorthand for an already understood moral imperative" (p. 23). Arab *Hamlet* adaptations staged political dialogue in the form of *al-adab,* or polite literature, claiming its literary elegance and its authority. The philosopher-prince protagonist embodied intellectual activity with political force. Meanwhile, dramatists transcended the limitations of political critique in polite language by drawing upon a transnational repertoire of styles for making Shakespeare contemporary.

In Chapter 3, "The Global Kaleidoscope," Litvin traces circuits of Shakespeare translation in Egypt from the Ottoman period to the time of ʿAbd al-Nasir's alliance with the Soviet Union. Analyzing Arabic texts translated from English, French, and Russian, Litvin shows how Egyptian dramatists borrowed global literary trends to interpret Hamlet as different kinds of modern hero. Departing from postcolonial theory, she argues that Egypt in the 1960s was "a global cultural crossroads precisely the opposite of Caliban's island" (p. 55), and its dramatists channeled foreign Shakespeare traditions to develop authoritative critique that could withstand state censorship. For instance, Litvin tells the eye-opening story of how Grigori Kozintsev's 1964 Russian film *Gamlet* played in Cairo, and inspired Egyptian dramatists to stage Hamlet as a fighter for social justice within an authoritarian state. But these would-be revolutionary dramatic characters remained haunted by the meta-protagonist ʿAbd al-Nasir and his narrative of revolution.

In the chapter "Nasser's Dramatic Imagination," Litvin brings performance analysis to political dramaturgy to investigate connections between political theater and authoritarian politics in ʿAbd al-Nasir's Egypt. Stagecraft was central to ʿAbd al-Nasir's post-1952 revolutionary project; Litvin reads the Egyptian leader's "profoundly literary" self-understanding in his speeches and rallies. Embodying the role of a man of the people who was also a visionary, ʿAbd al-Nasir inspired playwrights to write political allegories, and theater critics to interpret them as comments on his rule. Many Egyptian intellectuals today cite ʿAbd al-Nasir's rule as a golden age for cultural production, and Litvin suggests they evoke him as a ghost of incomplete revolution. It was in the post-ʿAbd al-Nasir era that *Hamlet* came into its own as an Arab play. Hamlet's quest to avenge his father's ghost, Litvin argues, then became "a requiem for Nasserism" (p. 51) and its unfulfilled promises of social justice.

Even during the ʿAbd al-Nasir era, however, *Hamlet* inspired psychological Arabic plays that transposed debates on governance from a political to an ethical register. Chapter 4 analyzes two Egyptian plays from the mid-1960s, Alfrid Faraj's *Sulayman of Aleppo* and Salah ʿAbd al-Sabbur's *The Tragedy of al-Hallaj*, each centering on a political dissident who weighs the ethics of his actions in Hamlet-like soliloquies. The psychological portraits of the

seminarian-turned-freedom-fighter and the Sufi poet, Litvin writes, offered "models of authentic Arab political action," while the poet al-Hallaj also provided a "metaphor of the artist in the modern state" (p. 104). It is worth noting, however, that these political allegorists formed a minor, though powerful, group. Several Egyptian playwrights of the late 1960s turned away from literary theater toward popular comedy or neo-folk drama, notably within the new Mass Culture organization. A limitation of the book's focus on a single classic play is that we get little historical context for the Hamlet-writers. In the mid-1960s, they were state-employed cultural elites who weighed the ethics of their participation in government, in contrast to peers who debated democratizing both theater institutions and dramatic genres.

With the crisis of pan-Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, Hamlet appeared in theaters as an isolated tragic hero defending a lost cause, where tragedy had widely given way to satire. The chapter "Time Out of Joint" traces the rejuvenation of political and cultural critique after the war, highlighting the innovations enabled when dramatists dispensed with nationalist ideology. The chapter deconstructs canonical narratives of decline in Arab theater after diminished state support since the 1970s, juxtaposing radical Syrian and Egyptian theater (such as Saadallah Wannus' *Party for June 5*) with critical poetry and political commentary to stage the furious vitality of intellectual culture in the era of military defeat. By contrast to new radical drama, the *Hamlet* plays in the chapter appear as nationalist martyrologies, with heroes from an earlier revolutionary era. Indeed, Litvin makes the crucial point that literary theater in Egypt and Syria became commodified in the 1970s, recycling old narratives of social change. Meanwhile, political commentary blossomed in popular culture, such as the songs of Shaykh Imam. The book does not discuss the growing divide between high and low culture, but its analysis of both conservative and critical literary theater usefully complements studies of Egyptian popular culture by Walter Armbrust, Virginia Danielson, and Joel Gordon.

The closing chapter, on six anti-heroic Arab *Hamlet* adaptations from 1976 to 2002, charts exciting new terrain in showing the emergence of independent Arab theater as a critical force. Foregrounding the play's gender politics, particularly the theme of impotence, these experimental rewritings deconstruct the figure of the heroic male intellectual. As a study of the iconoclastic turn in Arab literature, theater, and art since the 1990s, this final section is a welcome complement to recent literary and anthropological studies that analyze politics of culture in the contemporary Arab world. Taking up the fate of *Hamlet,* a relic of an earlier era, is an unconventional way into the conversation, but it proves an illuminating means of tracing generational shifts as well as continuities in cultural production. Amid rising interest in revolutionary transformations in Arab cultural production, the historical depth gained by analysis of a classic cultural genre is especially valuable. *Hamlet's Arab Journey* is an elegantly written, strongly argued book that would enrich courses in Arabic literature, cultural studies, and Middle East history.

HOLGER ALBRECHT, *Raging Against the Machine: Political Opposition under Authoritarianism in Egypt* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2013). Pp. 250. $39.95 cloth.

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The question that drives *Raging Against the Machine* compels attention: how can opposition to an authoritarian regime persist over decades without visible success in abolishing the regime or even diminishing its autocratic character? Holger Albrecht's answer is that the Egyptian