

Acknowledgments

This volume is the outcome of an ongoing interest pursued by the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) at the Philipps-Universität Marburg and *Europe in the Middle East—The Middle East in Europe* (EUME), a research program at the Berlin-based *Forum Transregionale Studien*,¹ namely to investigate the interplay between aesthetical practices and politics in the Middle East. It draws in part on a conference entitled “Commitment and Dissent in Arabic Literature since the 1950s” convened at the CNMS in June 2013 and organized jointly by the research group *Figures of Thought | Turning Points: Cultural Practices and Social Change in the Arab World* at the CNMS and EUME.² The conference was a follow-up to a EUME summer academy devoted to the theme “Aesthetics and Politics: Counter-Narratives, New Publics, and the Role of Dissent in the Arab World” that was held in September 2012 at the American University in Cairo,³ in cooperation with its *Center for Translation Studies*, the Department of English Literature at Cairo University, and the CNMS.

Under the title “Aesthetics and Politics” the 2012 Cairo Summer Academy addressed the role of dissent, new publics and counter-narratives. “Aesthetics and Politics” and “Culture and Politics” were also the themes of the regular EUME Berliner Seminar in the winter term of 2012/13 and the summer term of 2013. Seminar sessions included presentations by EUME fellows such as Tarek El-Ariss on “Fiction of Scandal: Literature, New Media and Revolutionary Politics in the Arab World” or round-tables on “Culture, Class, Youth, Performativity and the Transformation of the Public Sphere in the Arab World,” where a group of scholars from the CNMS in Marburg presented their work to colleagues in Berlin. All of the contributors to this volume have been associated with these academies or involved in these events and debates. Many have been fellows of EUME or are part of the CNMS-based research group *Turning Points*.

The present volume is a part of this growing network based on common interests and shared commitment, not only to scholarship as such but to actively fostering greater inclusiveness, more freedom, and what the late Edward Said described as democratic humanism. We thus owe a heartfelt thankyou to all those without whom these encounters could not have taken place: Samia Mehrez and Randa Aboubakr, who hosted the Summer School in Cairo; the members of its steering committee, Samah Selim, Ayman El-Desouky, Elias Khoury, Michael Allan, and Rachid Ouaisa; the Summer school’s organizational team, Manuela Campos and Barbara Bishay (both EUME), and the organizational team of the Marburg workshop, Yvonne Albers, Charlotte Pardey, and Ali Sonay (all CNMS).

The editors would also like to thank all institutions that have supported EUME and the CNMS over the past years, the Forum Transregionale Studien, the Land of Berlin, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), and German Research Foundation (DFG). We are grateful to the DFG (DFG-Leibniz-Prize) for granting the generous financial support that has enabled the publication of this volume.

Our sincerest gratitude goes to all those directly involved in the realization of this volume.

First, we wish to express our gratitude to the contributors for their patience and perseverance during a two-year editorial process and their willingness to share their important work and thus support this publication project.

In particular, the editors wish to thank Michael Allan who has taken the time to read and comment critically on some chapters. His insights have helped shape and further sharpen quite a few of the arguments in these chapters.

We would also like to express our deep gratitude to the editorial assistants Ricarda Macco, Jessica Metz and Amina Nolte, whose meticulous work lies at the heart of this undertaking. This book would be much the poorer without their unstinting dedication and attentive diligence, which extended to even the smallest details of the style editing process.

A special thank goes to Abdellatif Aghsain and Hafid Zghouli who, despite a pressing deadline, nevertheless took on the task of checking the Arabic of the complete manuscript.

We are also indebted to Paul Bowman, who reviewed the chapters, and our typesetter Thomas Breier for their professionalism and perseverance over the last two years.

We have also greatly valued the kind support provided by the Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag as well as the attractive presentation of the volume, so too Sigrun Kotb's reliable assistance.

This book would not have been possible without Yvonne Albers, who has patiently and efficiently supervised the entire editing process and communicated throughout the whole production period with the authors. The co-editors would like to extend their sincere thanks and gratitude to her. She was not only a source of inspiration creatively and intellectually but her versatility and work ethic, qualities crucial for such a long-term project, were humbling.

* * *

The transliteration of Arabic names has been adapted according to the IJMES transliteration system. However, some common names and notions have been left in their commonly used spelling without further indication.

- 1 <http://www.eume-berlin.de/en/about-us/profile.html>; www.forum-transregionale-studien.de
- 2 The conference was funded by the Land of Berlin and the German Research Foundation (DFG). <http://www.eume-berlin.de/en/events/workshops/workshops-since-2006/commitment-and-dissent.html>; <https://www.uni-marburg.de/cnms/forschung/denkfiguren-wendepunkte/aktivitaeten/konferenzen-workshops/conference-commitment-dissent>
- 3 <http://www.eume-berlin.de/en/events/summer-academies/eume-summer-academies/2012-aesthetics-and-politics.html>