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Cultural and Clinical Dialogues

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# 1

## 'THE UNITY IN HUMAN SUFFERINGS'

### Cultural translatability in the context of Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique

*Eva Tepest*

The literature on psychoanalysis and the Arabic-speaking Islamicate,<sup>1</sup> or the Arabo-Islamicate world is marked by the 'assumption of an alleged incommensurability between psychoanalysis and Islam' (El Shakry 2014, 90). Hence, on the one hand, writers such as the scholar of modern Arab politics and intellectual history Joseph Massad (2009) have criticised the neo-colonial nature of psychoanalysis and its incorporation by – mostly French-based – Arab psychoanalysts (2009, 195). On the other hand, Arab psychoanalysts themselves have put forward a *resistance hypothesis*. Accordingly, Arabs (due to Islam, or the patriarchal nature of their communities) are inherently less responsive to the benefits of psychoanalysis than others (El Khayat 1993; Osseiran 2010). Ultimately, both of these arguments represent one side of the same coin: They claim the untranslatability of Islam and psychoanalysis. This assumption, far from being incidental, is based on views according to which modern notions of subjectivity are specifically and uniquely Western (El Shakry 2014, 94). Elsewhere, it has been argued that these views are often bound up with the presupposition of a secular psychoanalytic subject (Toscano 2009, 112) as opposed to the inherently religious non-Western subject in general, and the Muslim subject in particular.

In contrast, this chapter, by looking at the translatability of psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate in Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique, aligns itself with those endeavours that, presuming the universality of the unconscious (El Shakry 2014, 94–95; Gorelick 2009, 2015; Hartnack 1990, 2001; Hodayounpour 2012; Kapila 2007; Khanna 2003), consider cultural translation as a reciprocal, multi-layered process 'through which both psychoanalysis and Islam will be forced to confront the distinct challenges that each poses to the other' (Gorelick 2009, 189). Specifically, I will suggest to what extent the study of Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique through the lens of cultural translatability will not only nuance our understanding of the status of 'culture', 'Islam' and 'psychoanalysis', but also

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generate knowledge on the distinctions and transgressions between couplets such as psychoanalysis/religion, religion/the secular, religion/culture.

In order to accomplish this, I will begin by tracing the emergence of Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique from within Arab contemporary thought. Second, I will discuss *cultural translatability* from the interdisciplinary perspective of the social sciences, the humanities and psychoanalysis. In the main part of this chapter, I will discuss the reciprocal epistemological resonances of studying Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique through the lens of cultural translatability by considering the multiple ramifications at the conceptual field defined by the conjunction of religion, culture, science and psychoanalysis and pointing towards the crucial importance of considering cultural translation as always embedded in the concrete social reality of power. I will argue that focusing on the collapse of distinctions (identity) as well as the persistence of boundaries (difference) is essential for any study of 'Islamic psychoanalysis/psychoanalytic Islam'. Hence, I will offer some methodological guidelines for studying psychoanalysis in the context of the Arabo-Islamicate.

### **'All of its culture became Salafist': Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique post-1967**

Arab cultural critique, according to Lebanese philosopher Elizabeth Kassab in her seminal work *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (2010) is deeply marked by the paradigm shift of the 1967 Arab defeat by Israel, in the wake of which she attests to a shift of focus from a united front against colonialism to self-reflexivity and criticism (2010, 73).<sup>2</sup> This shift – brought about by the apparent failure of the pan-Arab nationalistic project and the ensuing demise of the Arab left – led to a focus on questions of cultural identity. According to Kassab, these concepts are often embedded in a nostalgic and essentialising framing of identity, 'eclipsing to a great extent the political aspect of the malaise and privileging identity issues over questions of critique' (2010, 115). Against this authenticist turn of Arab thought in the 1970s and 1980s, which she identifies with the rise of the Islamist movements,<sup>3</sup> Kassab makes a case for those radical thinkers who urge a 'radicalization of critique' (Kassab 2010, 2; see also Ajami 1992) by employing a historicising, contextualising framing of identity. Among them is the Syrian translator and intellectual Georges Tarabishi. His cultural critique, being distinctly psychoanalytic, differs from most of his contemporaries in that it addresses the reactions to 1967 not merely in terms of the evolution of political thought, but rather in terms of its psychological effects. He argues that Gamal 'Abd al-Nassers defeat in 1967 and his death in 1970 inflicted a 'terrible narcissistic wound upon the Arab world' (*blessure narcissique terrible du monde arabe*) (Zoueïn and De Rochegonde 2004, 93). This represented the second stage in the 'neurosis of the Arab world' (*névrose du monde arabe*), the first being the shock of colonialism (2004, 93). As a result, Arabs – particularly male intellectuals – turned to the consolation

promised by Islamic ideologies of tradition (*turāṭ*) and authenticity (Tarabishi 1991).<sup>4</sup> It was like the “fall of the Father”, a symbolic Father. [...] The Arab world, the Arab way, was completely dismantled, and all of its culture became Salafist’ (*C’était comme la «chute du Père», d’un Père symbolique [...] Le monde arabe, la rue arabe, a été totalement défait et toute la culture devint salafiste*) (Zoueïn and De Rochegonde 2004, 93).

According to Tarabishi’s diagnosis, regression replaced the work of mourning<sup>5</sup> as the formation of the Arab subject became deeply compromised by neurosis.<sup>6</sup>

Tarabishi and his contemporaries continued the earlier project of Arab secular critique by addressing Islam not as a faith, but as a cultural formation and socio-political project.<sup>7</sup> It is against the backdrop of the history of Arab thought and practice post-1967 that not only Tarabishi’s works, but the remainder of the texts that constitute Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique need to be understood. In the following, I identify these by the following characteristics (1) an engagement with Arabo-Islamic culture *as one’s own*, (2) an embeddedness within a psychoanalytic epistemology, (3) an analysis that takes phenomena such as identity or religion as historically, socially and culturally bound.

Houria Abdelouahed is a French-Moroccan psychoanalyst, translator and philosopher. She is currently an associated professor at Université Paris Diderot, and has, in addition to several other works, among them translations of works by the Syrian poet Adonis, published two monographs on questions of femininity in Islam, *Figures du Féminin en Islam* (2012), and *Les Femmes du Prophète* (2016).

Fethi Benslama likewise is a professor at Université Paris Diderot, where he directs the psychoanalytic studies programme. Born and raised in Tunis, he moved to France in 1972 where he has been practising psychoanalysis ever since 1987. He has published extensively on questions of what he termed the ‘clinique of the exile’, culturalism, Islam, violence and gender. Among his recent monographs are *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam*, first published in French in 2002, and *Un Furieux Désir de Sacrifice: Le Surmusulman* (2016).

Rafah Nached has spent most of her life in Syria, where she became the first practising psychoanalyst and established a psychoanalytic training programme. After being incarcerated by the Syrian regime in 2011, she emigrated to France shortly after. Nached reads Lacan’s *jouissance* against ideas of Sufi mysticism. To the best of my knowledge, only a small collection of her essays have been published in the French volume *La Psychanalyse en Syrie* (2012).

Georges Tarabishi was a Syrian translator and intellectual. He has translated more than 200 books, among them most of the Freudian oeuvre, into Arabic. This is how he spent most of the Lebanese civil war before eventually emigrating to France, where he passed away in 2016. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, he published a range of Arabic monographs in psychoanalytic literary criticism (e.g. 1981, 1983). Throughout, he investigates the question of masculinity, ideology and the status of the intellectual in Arab cultural life and literary production.

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### Between identity and difference: conceptualising cultural translatability

In epistemological terms, this research takes the discussion of *cultural translation* as a point of departure. Extensively discussed in fields such as translation studies, the social sciences (particularly migration studies), postcolonial studies, anthropology and the study of culture,<sup>8</sup> cultural scientist and literary scholar Doris Bachmann-Medick (2016) defines *cultural translation* firstly as ‘the translation of cultures as well as translation between cultures’ (2016, 175). Furthermore, she goes on to demonstrate how scholars have transcended this extension of the object field to inter- and intra-cultural processes by assessing the ‘translatory character’ of cultural objects themselves (2016, 180): ‘Culture is no longer viewed as a special “original” life-world, but as an impure, blended, “hybrid” stratification of meaning and experience’ (2016, 182). From this follows

a non-dichotomous model of translation that no longer assumes fixed poles but stresses the reciprocity of transfers as well as the state of always having been translated [. . .]. Conceived in this way, translation resists the seeming purity of concepts such as culture, identity, tradition and religion and shows all claims of identity to be deceptive because identity is always infused with the other.

(2016, 181)

Cultural objects are inherently ambiguous. They are *reciprocally constitutive*, while at the same time remaining *insurmountably distinct*. Through the workings of distinctions, differences between semantically inter-dependent cultural objects are established. Inevitably, these acts of distinction (drawing a boundary) bring miscomprehension (irritation/collision/friction) and conflation (transgression) in its wake (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2016, 181).<sup>9</sup> This understanding of the translatory character of cultural objects is grounded in the paradigm of *cultural translatability*. Developed as a counter-concept to the alleged *untranslatability* of cultures (cf. Samuel Huntington’s proverbial ‘clash of civilizations’ hypothesis), it claims the ‘mutuality’ governing cross-cultural relations (cf. Iser 1994, 8). According to Bachmann-Medick (2016), this paradigm can be based on the deconstructivist vantage point of the ‘differential character of [all] language’ (2016, 181) or studied from the action-analytical perspective of ‘the practical manner in which interdependencies and reciprocal influences are dealt with’ (2016, 181).

I argue that engaging with Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique allows for an important complication of cultural translatability as conceived in the social sciences and humanities. In *Figures du Feminine*, French-Moroccan psychoanalyst Houria Abdelouahed, starting with the question of the *Text* in Muslim culture, that is, the Quran and Hadith and classical interpretations thereof, goes on to meditate upon the question of translation. Briefly speaking, she operates with the idea of a real experience, which, once lived through, is irretrievably lost. Any

subsequent act of signification, then, is separated from this brute experience, nevertheless bearing its trace. 'Signification happens in the aftermath that transforms the brute experience into a signifying experience' (*Car ca ce signifie dans ce temps de l'après-coup qui transforme l'expérience brute en expérience signifiante*) (Abdelouahed 2015, 163). The subject can only address the subconscious in a language that is socially, culturally and historically bound, that is imperfect. Translation, on a subconscious, textual or collective level, manifests the desire to bridge the insurmountable gap between the contingent frame of reference and 'that residue of the human experience that sticks to the margins' (Gorelick 2015, 4). Any translation, while indispensable for semiotic exchange, is bound to fail.

According to Abdelouahed, the translation of finite texts is related to translations within cultural communities and translation as individual, subconscious process: 'No trace, no writing, without the trace of the sexual' (*Nulle trace, nulle écriture sans la trace de sexuel*) (164). These dimensions, in her work, are not mere facets of the same metaphor, but equivalents of a similar structuring momentum, and variously intertwined. Notably, her analysis hinges on psychoanalytic writings as well as Arabic textual tradition. Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism* (1955 (1939)), describes psychic life as dialectically related to the development of the religious community. It is the individual's denial, suppression, renunciation, or repression of the erotic and aggressive instincts – their translation – that shapes the culture at large and vice versa.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in Arabic, the word *tarğama*, a loanword from Aramaic, is equally fluid and points out various 'acts of interpretation in which the self, as interpreter, is heavily implicated' (Mehrez 2012, 7). Specifically, *tarğama* not only signifies translating 'from one language to the other [...], but also to write the other (as in biography: *tarjama*), and to write one's self (as in autobiography: *tarjama dhatiya*)' (2012, 7). Abdelouahed's discussion of translation suggests the complication of cultural translation through psychoanalytic cultural critique by indicating not only the translatory character of cultural objects (their always having been translated), but their being bound up with the translatory character of humans and therefore, infused with desire and pain.

As a consequence, cultural translatability, in this article, is understood as the analytic focus on the hybridity and complexity of cultural agents, practices, concepts and institutions. What may the discussion of the status of psychoanalysis, culture and religion in psychoanalytic cultural critique tell us about their translatability? Which defining processes of distinction, irritation and conflation are thrown into relief? What methodological implications for the study of psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate follow?

### **'The unity in human sufferings': the cultural translatability of psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate, part 1**

The notion of establishing religion as a cultural formation so prevalent among Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique resonates with the central works of psychoanalytic cultural critique, specifically Sigmund Freud's writings on religion (1928 (1927);

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1955 (1939); 1962 (1930)).<sup>11</sup> These mirror his ambiguous stance towards religion, which he addresses in its importance for the formation of culture. Charged with ‘the task of solving the riddles of the universe and of reconciling us to the sufferings of life’ (1928 (1927), 15), religious belief is but a fantasy that is supposed to shelter us from civilisation and its discontents, namely the unpleasure released due to the cultural control of our aggressive and erotic drives (Freud 1962 (1930)). On the other hand, as Freud grew increasingly sceptic towards human nature and modern progress, he stood more and more in awe of the achievements of religion in general and his native Judaism in particular. This is especially at the core of *Moses and Monotheism* (1955 (1939)), Freud’s very last monograph before his death in his London exile, and ‘his most enigmatic book’ (Benslama and Nancy 2009, 76). In this somewhat erratic and meandering collection of essays, his affection for the cultural manifestations and achievements of monotheism is obvious. For instance, he claims that Judaism, for its success in maintaining culture’s repressive workings by upholding a rigid monotheism, has achieved the highest cultural refinement.

As has been demonstrated, according to Freud, religion has always had a psychological function in the cultural formation of human civilisation (1955 (1939)). In an interesting twist, while he acknowledged its importance, he hopes that humanity, with the advance of scientific progress and reasoning, would eventually dispose of religion (Freud 1928 (1927), 22). In hindsight and against the backdrop of the critique of secularisation theories (Asad 2003; Casanova 2011), it seems safe to say, especially in today’s world, that religious sentiment still constitutes cultural organisation and allegedly secular public culture remains, structurally speaking, soaked in religious sentiment. In *The Triumph of Religion* (2013), a talk given by Jacques Lacan to Italian journalists in 1974, mirroring Freud’s argument, he argues that religion, since it can give meaning to science’s introduction of ‘all kinds of distressing things into each person’s life’ (2013, 64) expands in proportion to the growth of science. Historically, ‘in spite of appearing to be bound up with atheism, far from secularising the world, the advent of modernity will certainly entail in the future a new triumph of religion’ (Chiesa 2015, 59). This is a specific psychoanalytic reading of religion vis-à-vis the secular challenges which tend to relegate religious belief to the private sphere and assume neutrality of the public domain (science, politics, etc.). However, it is in one important regard that Lacan shies away from his own argument: Like Freud, he radically opposed psychoanalysis to religion (Chiesa 2015; Gorelick 2015).<sup>12</sup>

Against the theoretical backdrop of cultural translation developed above, I argue that this distinction, much like any modern distinction, necessarily produces a set of contradictions that are of interest to this present endeavour: If everything has always been translated, this surely must hold true for psychoanalysis vis-à-vis religion, here Islam.<sup>13</sup> In the context of Arabo-Islamic societies, Islamic knowledge production has been used alongside psychoanalytic concepts and practices to meet individual needs or societal shortcomings (Pandolfo 2009, 2017). In practice, the insistence on the analyst (or patient, for that matter) being neutral (read: secular) not only seems like analytical fraud (since the status

of neutrality is never a given, but rather an immensely powerful act) but detrimental to the therapeutic progress. This is exemplified by the professional experiences of a Britain-based therapist who describes herself as unanimously identified as religious because of her headscarf. She explains how, in one case, she was convinced that this identification seemed necessary for gaining the trust of a fellow Muslim patient and thus, the success of the whole therapeutic endeavour. In contrast, in another instant, while she was treating a homosexual man who had been forced to flee from his native Iran, she feared him to be particularly reluctant towards her or even re-traumatised upon being faced with the religious garment. In any case, delegating religious belief to the private realm in the context of psychoanalysis creates a blind spot that obfuscates important elements of the therapeutic condition.

On a more abstract level, Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique aims for a synthesis of psychoanalysis and Islamic knowledge: Syrian psychoanalyst Rafah Nached (2012) insists that Muslim mysticism, irreducible to neither pure ecstasy nor Al-Qaida (2012, 25), was not founded on 'dogmatic law' (*l'ordre du dogme*) (2012, 25) but on a type of 'philosophical reasoning that engulfed the human experience in its pure subjectivity' (*la pensée philosophique que envelope l'expérience humaine dans sa pure subjectivité*) (2012, 25). Hence, by studying the Sufi poet al-Hallağ, 'the Muslim mystic who was crucified in the name of truth' (*ce mystique musulman crucifié au nom de la vérité*) (2012, 34), she demonstrates how both psychoanalysis and Sufism aim at assisting the subject to find her personal, truthful path: 'That is the victory of life over death' (*C'est la victoire de la vie sur la mort*) (2012, 35). Likewise, Abdelouahed, at times in tandem with Nached and others, engages with Sufi mystic Ibn 'Arabī (2012, 34) to counter-balance what Nached describes as a refusal in Arab society to respect any deviation from the law of the collective (2012, 35). In writing, Nached and Abdelouahed question the usefulness of the distinction between psychoanalysis and religion, that is: their untranslatability. In these instances, Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique unsettles the 'dovetailing of psychoanalysis with secular ideologies' (Kabesh 2017) and encourages a rethinking of psychoanalytic practice and thought as inevitably bound up with religious meaning and belief.

It is from the vantage point of Freud's ground-breaking studies of religion as a cultural phenomenon that more important impulses for Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique emanate: this time regarding the translatability of distinct religious formations, with a particular focus on Islam. Psychoanalytically speaking, it seems that a given culture A, or religious formation, may differ considerably from a given culture B in the way that religion – this symptom of the psycho-cultural – is configured. However, at second glance, this difference – leading to the initial incomprehensibility within the translation process – emanates from the same human needs and organising principles.

There is a unity in human sufferings. What differs from one subject to the other is the specific expression of that pain, a language that is marked by

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culture according to her geographic situation, historic experience and the heritage of her roots (*Il existe une unité dans les souffrances humaines, et ce qui diffère d'un sujet à l'autre s'incarne à travers l'expression de cette douleur, une langue qui se colore de tons culturels et civilisationnels divers allant de pair avec sa situation géographique, son expérience historique et l'héritage de ses racines*).

(Nached 2012, 28)

Ultimately, even belief systems that prominently claim their untranslatability are very similar on a structural level. This is what Jean-Luc Nancy and Fethi Benslama in their exchange on 'Translations of Monotheism' seem to claim when they point to the similarities between the three monotheisms: 'Judeo-Christianity, and then Islam, did not fall from the sky [...] but were products, called for or enabled by a general state of the culture' (Benslama and Nancy 2009, 77). This state of the culture, in Nancy's reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* is a melancholic one: 'A great sadness seems to have taken hold of the people of the Mediterranean' (2009, 78).

The discussion of the status of psychoanalysis, culture and religion in contemporary Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique from the perspective of Freud and Lacan's classic psychoanalytic cultural critique, as well as cultural translatability, has demonstrated that psychoanalysis, far from being religion's secular, neutral antagonist, is infused with religion, and vice versa. On this basis, the productive potential of Islamicising (or: de-colonising) psychoanalysis and psychoanalysing religion has been suggested. Furthermore, I have claimed the translatability of Islam vis-à-vis other religions or different symptomatic manifestations of the modern psycho-cultural. In more abstract terms, I have established similarity rather than distinction with regards to the cultural translation in question. Which consequences does this privileging of identity over difference entail? And how can we re-enter difference into our psychoanalysis/Islam equation?

### **The politics of difference: the cultural translatability of psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate, part 2**

The ethical consequences of vouching for the cultural translatability of psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate are immense. Indeed, conceiving of a type of Islamicate psychoanalysis counteracts the deeply Islamophobic notion of the incomprehensibility of Islam. By defying disparateness and embracing analogy, looking at the collapse of distinctions is not only analytically but also politically indispensable.

Inversely, the negligence of the differential character of any signifying experience, as argued above, is not only analytically objectionable. Rather, as scholars of translation studies have pointed out, the paradigm of 'transnational translationalism' (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 183) with its 'claims of identity, standardization tendencies and essential determinations' (2016, 184) often fosters the interests of the economically powerful while being to the detriment of those who are already

exposed and vulnerable. In contrast, as put forward by Homi Bhabha, '[a]ny transnational cultural study must "translate", each time locally and specifically, what decentres and subverts this transnational globality, so that it does not become enthralled by the new global technologies of ideological transmission and cultural consumption' (Bhabha 1994, 241). In the case of the Islamicate, collapsing the myriad and often disparate signifying experiences that are constitutive into one establishes Islam as a globalised brand (cf. Roy 2006). Thereby nullifying cultural, economic, ethnic and religious differences, 'Islam inc'. not only buys into the necessity of commensurability grounded in the needs of corporate transnational capitalism (Teegen and Teegen 2000), but also obfuscates the ideological project of players such as the Saudi Arabian regime, which pursues its own interest in globally promoting its specific brand of a pure (neutral) but effectively Saudi (and Arabic) Islam.

For these two reasons, any study of cultural translation always needs to acknowledge that which remains untranslatable, unwieldy and impenetrable, 'that residue of the human experience' (Gorelick 2015, 4) *and* the textual: to lay bare the discontinuity of translation, to embrace the politics of difference. Whether to privilege the reciprocally constitutive character of cultural objects, or their status as insurmountably distinct, needs to be aligned with the nexus of power that any translational act is embedded in. Here, again, debates on cultural translation have proven useful. Not the least due to their origin in postcolonial critique, these debates are often concerned with 'remapping and critically recharting the center and the periphery' (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 241) *vis-à-vis* the 'unequal power relations of world society' (2016, 182). Hence, deliberations that emanate from the postcolonial condition of any act of cultural translation allow me to account for the actualisation of translatability in the modern setting of power and culture. Hence, the methodological specification of cultural translation, in this research, requires 'sustained efforts of contextualisation' (Ramstedt 2017, 50).

By relating the textual level to the structural level – that is, questions of power, social norms, institutionalisation, and subjection – any analysis of psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate must address the following set of sub-questions: What are the socio-political events prompting the transposition of psychoanalytic practices, institutions and concepts? What are the history and connotations of the terms and practices to which they are transposed? Who authors and controls the translation of psychoanalysis, what socio-political interests are involved? What are the parallel and/or overlapping translation chains – not the least within the Global South – and their possible interaction? What is lost and what is gained in the translation process?<sup>14</sup> How am I myself as a researcher (intellectually, emotionally, socio-economically) implicated in the translation of psychoanalysis?

In this way, an equal and mindful conversation between psychoanalysis and the Arabo-Islamicate may be facilitated, a conversation that will challenge and enrich both, and confound comfortable attributions while being mindful of either one's respective inaccessibility. Here, as elsewhere, enduring contradiction – in this case, the indissoluble tension between identity and difference – this deeply

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ethical position, will confront the interrogating subject with a trace of her own truth, a glimpse of the other and the commonality of desire and pain, '[t]he unity in human sufferings' (Nached 2012, 28), in the process.

## Notes

- 1 The term *Islamicate*, first introduced by Marshall Hodgson (1974), designates the penetration of regions by the 'social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims' (1974, 59), without necessarily referring to Islam as faith or religious doctrine. Hence, in the following, it designates a distinct cultural formation.
- 2 Scholars unanimously agree on the paramount significance of the 1967 defeat for Arab societies and its intellectual production. As a consequence, all of the surveys on contemporary Arab thought take 1967 as their starting point. See Abu-Rabi' (2004); Ajami (1992); Binder (1988); Hatina and Schumann (2015); Issa (1990).
- 3 For a similar perspective, see e.g. Ajami (1992); Binder (1988); Salem (1996).
- 4 Among Tarabishi's oeuvre, his 1991 study on the relation of Arab intellectuals to *turāṭ* ('heritage') in the wake of 1967 is his most explicit account of the consequences of Arab defeat on Arab culture. However, all of his lifelong intellectual work – concerned with the ideologies that hinder the development of Arab culture, among them patriarchy and Islamism – has been deeply informed by the events of 1967 (Zouein and De Rochemonde 2004, 93).
- 5 In psychoanalysis, mourning is the healthy psychic reaction of the ego to the loss of a loved object during which that object is released and replaced. In contrast, melancholia is a process during which the ego pathologically identifies with the lost object (Freud 1922).
- 6 Tarabishi's analysis bears a resemblance to what Sadik Al-Azm, in his polemic 1968 monograph *Self-Criticism After the Defeat*, describes as 'the logic of exoneration and the evasion of responsibility and accountability' in reaction to the psychological trauma of 1967 (2011, 40). Notably, Al-Azm tackles the anti-semitic structure and content that characterises 'the exaggeration of [Zionism's] power and influence, to the extent of ascribing it overwhelming mythical powers that make it the mistress of capitalism, socialism, and the course of history at the same time' (61).
- 7 This modern, secular critique was first developed during the so-called Arab 'renaissance' (*nahḍa*) from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. For the continuities (and discontinuities) between (pre-1930s) Arab 'liberal' thought and the post-1967 period see the contributions in Hanssen (2016) and Hatina and Schumann (2015). See on the problematics of translating *nahḍa* as 'renaissance' specifically Recker's contribution to the latter.
- 8 For a concise overview, see Ramstedt (2017). Otherwise, Bachmann-Medick's work is indispensable (2006, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2016). Notably, paradigms associated with cultural translation are often closely linked with what has been termed the 'translational turn' in the social sciences and the study of culture (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 175).
- 9 This resonates with what Hussein Agrama (2012), conceptualising the distinctions that are put into place by secularism and their concomitant contradictions, has termed *secular power*.
- 10 On the one hand, in the Freudian understanding, culture necessitates a suppression of the erotic and aggressive instincts that effects the translation of the individual from the state of the child to that of the adult. This process results in the release of psychic unpleasure. In those cases in which the psyche rejects the release of unpleasure, the 'failure of translation' results in neurosis (Young 2014, 377). It is in much of his clinical work that Freud wanted to release his patients from neurosis and other symptoms resulting from a repression of the instincts. Psychoanalysis is thus an emancipatory project that tries to re-write the individual's truth and release it from

'civilization and its discontent'. On the other hand, culture, even though causing unpleasure and, in extreme cases, neurosis, seems necessary in order to provide for the stability of human societies, cultural development, and the human psyche. 'Culture is a process [. . .] for the individual where each one learns to control and/or displace their erotic and aggressive drives'.

- 11 These works are frequent points of reference for Arab psychoanalytic cultural critique.
- 12 To be sure, in Lacan's view, psychoanalysis, like religion, is 'a historical product of science, a symptomatic discontent of scientific civilization' (Chiesa 2015, 59). As such, he was aware of this danger of psychoanalysis becoming 'against his will, a form of meaningful religion' (2015, 60). However, by confronting the individual with the truth of her (and the world's) insufficiency ('the real'), in contrast to the neurotic illusion religion has to offer, is religion's antagonist (Lacan 2013, 65–67).
- 13 Note that likewise, Western scholars have described psychoanalysis' religious connotations. For an example, see Foucault's famous critique of confession, which is central to the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978): Accordingly, psychoanalysis, as *science sexualis* 'caused the rituals of confession to function within the norms of scientific regularity' (65).
- 14 Cf. Ramstedt (2017).

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