

## ARAB SELF-CRITICISM AFTER 1967 REVISITED: THE NORMATIVE TURN IN MARXIST THOUGHT AND ITS HEURISTIC FALLACIES

By Manfred Sing

In the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, many Arab intellectuals engaged in a new wave of social criticism. Such a dynamic was particularly intense among Arab leftist intellectuals, who publicly critiqued what they viewed as a variety of shortcomings in politics and society. This so-called “self-criticism” was both important and controversial for the development of the post-1967 Arab intellectual field.<sup>1</sup> A key characteristic of the new wave of social criticism was the recurrent deployment of words such as *takhalluf* (“underdevelopment”) and *ta’akhhur* (“backwardness”). An effect of the scientization of a concept of “underdevelopment,” such deployment reflected a normative shift in Marxist thought among many Arab intellectuals. As argued below, this turn featured a move away from a critique of capitalist society and instead theorized the absence or failure of revolutionary mass movements. Consequently, the premise for using terms such as *takhalluf* and *ta’akhhur* was not restricted to Arab Marxists, but rather was a worldwide phenomenon within the political left during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>2</sup>

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When facing a fundamental crisis, disappointed intellectuals can principally choose between tautological or paradoxical options to explain failure.<sup>3</sup> In the first instance, they try to see society “as it is,” while in the second they hold fast onto change by envisioning society “as it might be.”<sup>4</sup> Arab self-criticism after 1967 combined both options by tautologically looking at Arab political culture as “backward” (i.e., “as it is”) while paradoxically calling for a radical change of society “as it should be.” The analysis herein demonstrates the functioning of this simultaneity in the works of Sadiq Jalal al-‘Azm, Yasin al-Hafiz, Mustafa Hijazi, Nawal El Saadawi, and Hisham Sharabi. These five authors represent some of the most prominent thinkers and writers of the post-1967 Arab self-criticism intellectual movement. Through a critical re-reading of their main theses, the article takes seriously the cognitive assumption undergirding the sociological observations and descriptions of these authors. The argument therefore fully follows neither the admirers who laud Arab self-criticism for its insights, nor the counter-critics who condemn Arab self-criticism on the grounds that it aired dirty laundry and had “self-Orientalizing” effects. Such polarized reactions to Arab self-criticism as it unfolded after 1967 reveal how vital and painful those reading the works of Arab self-criticism perceived the issues at stake to be.

The analysis focuses on the works of al-‘Azm, al-Hafiz, Hijazi, El Saadawi, and Sharabi because of their recognition as public intellectuals and the variety of their approaches. On the one hand, they were leftists who became more critical of communism, Nasserism, and/or Ba’thism after 1967. On the other hand, they deployed the notions of *takhalluf* and *ta’akhhur* in different—political, ideological, psychological, and sociological—ways to address the shortcomings of Arab societies that they perceived. The Syrian philosopher Sadiq al-‘Azm (1934-2017) put forward a critical social reading in *al-Naqd al-dhati ba’d al-hazima* (Self-Criticism After the Defeat). It was this book’s publication in 1968 that popularized the term Arab “self-criticism,” meaning Arab intellectuals’ criticism of Arab society.<sup>5</sup> Al-‘Azm argued that the problem at hand was one of superficial modernity. He located the cause of this problem in the Egyptian *fahlawi* (fumbler) personality, which he claimed had destructive effects on society and politics. Syrian political activist and intellectual Yasin al-Hafiz (1930–1978) published a series of articles, later compiled in *al-La-‘aqlaniyya fi al-siyasa al-‘arabiyya* (Irrationality in Arab Politics) and *al-Hazima wa-l-idiyulujyia al-mahzuma* (The Defeat and the

Defeated Ideology)—published in 1975 and 1976, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Therein, he explained the Arab defeat with recourse to an alleged irrationality of Arab politics and ideology. Al-Hafiz's early reckoning with Nasserism and the 1967 defeat influenced al-'Azm.<sup>7</sup> Yet his writings also served as required reading for opponents of the Syrian Ba'th Party down to the present day. The Lebanese psychologist Mustafa Hijazi (b. 1937) emphasized what he viewed as the psychological dimensions of *takhalluf*. Since its first publication in 1976, his book *al-Takhalluf al-ijtima'i: madkhal ila sikulujjiyyat al-insan al-maqhur* (Social Underdevelopment: Introduction to the Sociology of the Oppressed Man) has been reprinted at least nine times.<sup>8</sup> Hijazi argues that underdevelopment is a social and political structure, one that oppresses human beings, who in turn react with various destructive behaviors that reproduce the structure. According to this view, all top-down development strategies are doomed to fail because they are part of social structures that do not empower human beings. Egyptian feminist activist Nawal El Saadawi (b. 1931) exposed the misogynistic structures in family and society, as well as the fields of education, medicine, and psychology, through several works—many of which have been translated into English.<sup>9</sup> According to El Saadawi, Arab women suffer from a slave-like status that is not exceptional to the Arab world. Finally, the American-Palestinian sociologist Hisham Sharabi (1927–2005) built on the structures and deficiencies the other four authors outlined. He summarizes them and advances his own theory in *Neopatriarchy*, published in 1988—but whose main ideas he foreshadowed in several articles he published in Arabic in 1974–75.<sup>10</sup>

The self-criticism works of these five authors share the assumption that Arab societies were somehow stuck between tradition and modernity, which was reflected in incoherent patterns of personal behavior and a contradictory system of values that shaped—and was shaped by—familial, psychic, social, and political life. Thus, at the time, the authors explained the underdevelopment of Arab societies not only by relating it to exogenous factors like neo-imperialism and global capitalism. They also insisted that endogenous factors played a central role. Their analyses sought to unmask the deeper and underlying reasons for the sociopolitical crisis of the Arab world. This criticism served as a fundamental attack on the existing regimes and their ideologies, popular culture, the intellectual field, and what the five authors viewed as traditional society.

Superficially, these authors' works evoked images similar to Orientalist tropes of backward, violent, irrational, and patriarchal Arabs. A number of other scholars therefore harshly criticized them. Perhaps the most influential such critique is to be found in the last chapter of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Therein, Said argued that Arab nationalist and Marxist authors were self-Orientalizing themselves by adopting Orientalist concepts like "the Arab mind" to describe Arab societies.<sup>11</sup> Joseph A. Massad further develops this approach to Arab self-criticism and the Arab intellectual field more generally. His survey and analysis of the major trajectories of Arab and Muslim intellectual production since the times of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) is underpinned within the framework of their imitating Western discourses about Muslim "backwardness" and "decline."<sup>12</sup> In a slightly different vein, Fadi A. Bardawil argues that the self-critical works of the 1970s represent "a gaze inwards to subject Arab culture to scathing critique blaming it for all ills that befall Arabs," thus creating "culturalist mythologies."<sup>13</sup> Bardawil, writing in 2011, points to the protests of the Arab uprisings as proving these mythologies wrong. Yet the Arab uprisings certainly did not bring an end to reflections on the political culture(s) of the Arab world. The subject remains both a conundrum and a contentious field. For example, some scholars have turned to political culture to explain why the field of Middle East studies failed to predict the wave of popular movements.<sup>14</sup> Individuals who helped constitute the self-criticism movement also contributed to the discussion, by pointing to Western as well as Arab misconceptions of the inner life of Arab societies.<sup>15</sup>

Viewing Arab self-criticism after 1967 merely as a self-Orientalizing discourse is a reductionist reading that avoids addressing more intricate, practical, and theoretical problems. First, this counter-critique is content with debunking the alleged verbal Orientalist imagery, without taking seriously the underlying arguments about cultural "roots" for political crisis. In other words, the counter-critique delegitimizes self-criticism merely because it uses unfavorable words (like "ignorant" or "backward") to describe Arab societies. Second, the fact that intellectuals of Arab self-criticism highlighted "culture" (defined broadly) in the Arab world and analyzed society in terms of "backwardness" should not collapse the causes and workings of these terms with the manner in which Orientalists have deployed them. What such a view misses is that "unmasking" the concept of underdevel-

opment as part of an Orientalist, bourgeois, unscientific, culturalist, or Enlightenment-centric discourse is itself a normative gesture that does not render the phenomenon obsolete or invalid. In the words of Egyptian Marxist Ghali Shukri (1935–1998), *takhalluf* “is a structural phenomenon that has a history, geography, economy, society, and also a sociology.”<sup>16</sup>

The analysis that follows takes off from this starting point. The article first explores the genealogy of the terms “self-criticism,” “underdevelopment,” and “backward society” in Soviet and Western Marxism as well as in modernization theory. Doing so makes possible the mapping of the five authors’ positions within this broader intellectual field. Second, the article analyzes the author’s specific criticisms of the crisis they outline, namely the structural workings of political and social repression and how cultural forms of the reproduction of “backwardness” manifest in such workings. Third, the article traces the debate of Arab self-criticism and its partial reconciliation with counter-criticism in the following decades. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of the cognitive biases inherent within Arab self-criticism. Doing so sheds light on the workings of allegedly self-Orientalizing tropes.

### **Theoretical Background: Self-Criticism and Backward Society**

The 1967 war and its outcome produced a shock for many Arab intellectuals. It shattered their worldviews and upended their revolutionary hopes, most of which the 1960s had nurtured.<sup>17</sup> After the war, “Arab self-criticism” as represented by the works of al-‘Azm, al-Hafiz, Hijazi, El Saadawi, and Sharabi would develop into a dominant intellectual position and approach. Since 1927, “criticism and self-criticism” had become a long-standing communist practice, advanced in part by Joseph Stalin’s use of the concept as an instrument of power.<sup>18</sup> In the Soviet Union, as well as in many communist parties elsewhere, self-criticism became a form of ritualized speech act in which party members pledged themselves to the party line, confessed errors, retracted former views, or labeled themselves as “backward,” especially when they came from the “East.”<sup>19</sup> Yet, in the case of the five Arab intellectuals under consideration, Arab self-criticism embodied a critique of this ritual in that it challenged both the forms of confession and the notion of a party

line. Their kind of unorthodox Marxism was not only critical of the Soviet Union, its ideology, and practical politics, but also went hand in hand with the call for a (further) Arabization of Marxism beyond the practices of communist parties.<sup>20</sup>

The self-critical authors belonged to the emerging Arab new left of the 1960s. Yet they also formed a distinct school of thought that sought to interrogate the responsibility of Arabs (in general) in the trajectory and outcomes of the 1967 war.<sup>21</sup> This group distinguished itself from other parts of the Arab new left. In the case of the latter, the term “self-criticism” meant the recognition that the left had delegated the making of the revolution to a small clique of activist politicians (e.g., the Free Officers). For this contingent of the Arab new left, the masses had to be mobilized for the coming, real war against Zionism, which also had to become a “total war” against the United States, the source of neo-imperialism.<sup>22</sup> In many ways, this camp selectively drew on the experiences of the Cuban Revolution and the Vietnam War. It also sought to salvage some elements of the pre-1967 hopefulness, claiming that Egypt’s Gamal Abdul Nasser had not necessarily made any mistakes in the conduct of the war and that the Arabs had not suffered a real “defeat,” but only a “relapse” (*naksa*). It was these word choices and their underlying assumptions about the Arabs that many intellectuals of the Arab self-criticism movement would take as their point of department.<sup>23</sup>

On a theoretical level, authors like al-‘Azm, al-Hafiz, and Sharabi dismissed explanations that saw the 1967 defeat as a singular event, a tactical error, or an imperialist and Zionist conspiracy.<sup>24</sup> For them, the defeat was the result of a failed transition to modernity, for which “the supposedly progressive, socialist regimes of the Arab national liberation movement, spearheaded by Nasser’s Egypt”<sup>25</sup> were also responsible. In order to explain the deadlock the outcome of the war represented for the Arab anti-colonial movement, these self-critics collectively focused on “the upper structures of thought, values, and culture.”<sup>26</sup> As al-‘Azm articulated in the 1990s, “what al-Hafez brought out for me was the importance of critically confronting the superstructures of thought, culture, heritage, and religion, which were impeding the economic, social, and political accomplishments of the Arab liberation movement.”<sup>27</sup> Yet the arguments of the self-criticism movement also took aim at Arab communist parties’ adoption of the Soviet strategy of privileging diplomacy as well as the Palestinian and pro-Palestinian

investment in guerilla warfare—despite their more accommodating stance toward the latter.<sup>28</sup>

The self-criticism authors' understanding of *takhalluf* crystallized in relation to several different, overlapping contexts. The complex genealogy of the concept not only incorporates Soviet and Arab communists' discussions on underdevelopment and backwardness. The self-criticism authors also picked up on tropes and debates among proponents of modernization theory as well as the cultural turn in Western Marxism and Western academia.

Orthodox communists mainly explained the problems of Third World countries through exploitation in general and the political economy of underdevelopment in particular. Many leaders and members of the Arab communist parties subscribed to the idea that, in accordance with their reading of Marx, the “Asiatic mode of production” held out little hope for progress.<sup>29</sup> Toward the end of the 1960s, there emerged a leftist consensus that development in the Third World countries had failed in spite of political independence. This failure was understood as proof of the failure of (liberal) modernization theories and helped lay the groundwork for the spread of dependency theory and concepts like neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism.<sup>30</sup> Although the positions inside the broader Arab left varied to a considerable degree, the general assumption was that external factors primarily determined the course of internal affairs. For the orthodox leftists, it was a small group of local profiteers (e.g., the petit bourgeoisie and/or the compradors) who helped imperial powers exploit Third World countries, thus creating underdevelopment.<sup>31</sup>

The notion of “traditional society” was an integral element of Soviet communism. According to Soviet terminology, backward mentalities, which were remnants of the old society and thus doomed to vanish in the course of social development, could linger for some time even in socialist countries like the Soviet Union. As militant atheism was central to Soviet ideology, the communists fought the Christian churches in Russia and Eastern Europe as well as Islamic institutions in central Asia.<sup>32</sup> Yet in the nationalist development strategies of Muslim-majority countries, especially in the Arab world, the term social backwardness related more to traditional society defined in such a manner as to not necessarily include Islam. Nationalist leaders often drew on Islamic idioms and examples to legitimize their development strategies and mobilize the masses behind them. In the 1960s, Nasserist and Ba'thist

intellectuals tried to legitimize “Arab socialism” and Soviet-backed “anti-capitalist development” by projecting the struggle between the political left and right back onto early Islamic history.<sup>33</sup> Anti-colonial, nationalist, or leftist intellectuals—from al-Afghani (d. 1897) to ‘Ali Shari‘ati (d. 1978)—referred to Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (d. 652/3), a companion of Prophet Muhammad, as the first “revolutionary” and “socialist” in Islamic history.<sup>34</sup> According to this logic, al-Ghifari was said to have demanded the prohibition of private fortunes and the distribution of wealth among the poor. To be sure, not all scholars embraced this narrative—especially those who understood themselves in Islamist terms and in opposition to the left. For example, the head of al-Azhar (shaykh al-Azhar), ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmud (d. 1978), and other conservative scholars condemned this reading of al-Ghifari, pejoratively referring to it as a “bolshevization of Islam.”<sup>35</sup> Islamist writers rarely used a term like *takhalluf* because it evoked a negatively connoted comparison with non-Muslim societies and undermined their premise of looking back to the first Muslim community as the ideal community. When Islamists of various types did use the term—such as Qasim Amin (d. 1908) at the turn of the twentieth century, Shakib Arslan (d. 1946) in the 1930s, and Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1996)—it mainly pointed at the Muslim world’s decline vis-à-vis the rest of the world, as well as its disunity and deviation from the right path—all of which caused Muslims to fall prey to Western colonialism and domination.<sup>36</sup> That many leftist and Islamist writers shared and propagated a notion of a glorious Arab past, despite their differences, prompted self-criticism authors after 1967 to attack the religious undergirding of Arab politics with new vigor.

The notion of a “backward society” itself goes back to US political scientist Edward C. Banfield’s 1958 account of a fictitious Italian village. Therein he explains “the extreme poverty and backwardness . . . largely (but not entirely) by the inability of the villagers to work together for their common good or, indeed, for any end transcending the immediate, material interest of the nuclear family.”<sup>37</sup> This inability “arises from an ethos—‘amoral familism,’”<sup>38</sup> and is what explains distrust, envy, and suspicion among the villagers. The Jewish-Hungarian ethnographer Raphael Patai explicitly applied this concept to “Arab society” in the early 1970s, arguing that “familism” rather than individualism is the value orientation in the Arab world. For Patai, “the centrality of the family in social organization,



its primacy in the loyalty scale and its supremacy over individual life<sup>39</sup> is deeply embedded in the Arab consciousness. Between Banfield and Patai, there was an already growing literature in the 1960s on the characteristics of the Arab self and national psychology.<sup>40</sup> Since then, “the ethnographic literature on the Arab world is almost unanimous in pointing out that the family, rather than the individual, is the fundamental unit of production and social organization.”<sup>41</sup>

Arab self-criticism after 1967 also intersected with the cultural turn within the global academic left, which marked an important shift among some segments of the left away from materialist analysis to cultural analysis. The new sensitivity to cultural issues within the Arab left can be traced back to several Western Marxist influences. In *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950),<sup>42</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and his co-authors detailed nine psychological traits closely related to family and cultural conditioning. These include fear of parental disapproval and the suppression of homosexuality. In this work, the authors sought to explain the formation of submissive-oppressive characters susceptible to European fascism. The underlying, though certainly questionable,<sup>43</sup> research method was popularized and applied to study the alleged prevalence of authoritarian leaders and personalities in other “cultures” in the 1950s and 1960s, among them the Arab world and people from there.<sup>44</sup> As a concept, “the authoritarian personality” (often translated as *al-shakhsiyya al-sultawiyya* or *al-tasallutiyya*) also entered Arabic-language psychological studies and textbooks.<sup>45</sup> In this sense, Sharabi’s wording about “the authoritarian family in the authoritarian society” (*al-‘a’ila al-sultawiyya fi al-mujtama’ al-sultawi*)<sup>46</sup> is neither surprising nor merely coincidental. At about the same time, a range of other Marxists debated the role of ideas, ideology, and culture in the construction and/or reproduction of political, economy, and social systems. These include structural Marxist Louis Althusser<sup>47</sup> as well as British Marxists E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams.<sup>48</sup> In this wider context, it was no accident that Arab self-criticism had a strong psycho-social dimension.<sup>49</sup> The intellectuals who gave shape to this approach defined underdevelopment as neither a purely economic nor a purely cultural phenomenon, tracing it back to both external and internal factors. Their ambitious aspiration was to combine cultural and economic factors, thus attempting to avoid cultural as well as economic reductionism.<sup>50</sup>

The Arab self-criticism authors can be credited for attempting to explain “political culture by reference to particular histories, social formations, tribal survivalism, or colonial bureaucracy.”<sup>51</sup> Rex Brynen calls the self-criticism authors “contextualists,” and distinguishes them from “essentialists” (e.g., Bernard Lewis) and “critics” (e.g., Edward Said).<sup>52</sup> In a more specific schema, Arab self-criticism can be distinguished from six other theoretical positions.




<b>Culture</b>   <b>Economy</b>	<b>Orientalist Scholarship</b> (Bernard Lewis)	<b>Deformation Thesis</b> (Jalal Al-e Ahmad)	<b>Orientalism Thesis</b> (Edward Said)
	<b>Arab Marxist Self-Criticism of takhalluf</b>		
	<b>Modernization Theory</b> (Edward Banfield)	<b>Dependency Theory</b> (Samir Amin)	<b>Theories of Imperialism</b> (Lenin)
	<b>Internal Factors</b>		<b>External Factors</b>

Figure 1: Arab self-criticism’s approach to underdevelopment in relation to six other schools of thought.

Whereas Orientalism would lay the blame for underdevelopment mainly on an essential and unchanging Arab or Islamic culture,<sup>53</sup> modernization theory would assume that internal obstacles—such as economic or socio-cultural deficits—were the source.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, theories of imperialism (e.g., that of Vladimir Lenin) and cultural imperialism would argue that Arab underdevelopment was a foreign “construction” related to either Western political-economic or cultural dominance. Furthermore, economic or cultural dependency theories would argue that foreign influences transformed and deformed Arab economy and culture, keeping them in an adjunct position vis-à-vis Western modernity or capitalism, even if with the help of Arab elites.<sup>55</sup> The self-criticism authors came closest to the last two intermediate positions, although with a positive view of leftist Western cultural criticism, which they thought would help Arab societies find an independent way beyond imitation or rejection of Western culture.<sup>56</sup> The general goal of positioning Arab self-criticism in this context is not to underscore its truth claim but to demonstrate how it directly or indirectly negotiated its ideas vis-à-vis other theoretical positions.

## Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm: The Fahlawi Personality

With the defeat of the 1967 war, al-'Azm became convinced that Arab society was predominantly ruled by traditions and religious or superstitious convictions—as opposed to rational thought—that made society incapable of coping with the rapid transition to modernity. His discourse does not give a very prominent place to the terms *takhalluf* or *ta'akhhur*. Yet in the central chapter of *al-Naqd al-dhati ba'd al-hazima*, he traces the defeat of 1967 back to the *fahlawi* personality that he claims dominates “the traditional Arab social structure and is not separate from the characteristics of the social personality that the inherited Arab environment inculcates and develops in each one of us.”<sup>57</sup> The term *fahlawi* denotes a sly dog—a streetwise and clever person.<sup>58</sup> Al-'Azm draws on a 1954 study by Hamid 'Ammar, where the latter uses the term to describe the rapid and improvised adoption by Egypt's rural population of imported modern technology, perhaps without fully grasping its inner secrets.<sup>59</sup>

Al-'Azm deploys the term pejoratively, claiming that the *fahlawi* is a fumbler who routinely embraces shortcuts and avoids painstaking work; he does not strive for the perfect result but tries mainly to dispel the impression that he is incapable of doing something.<sup>60</sup> The *fahlawi* student, for example, is content with superficial knowledge; for a nation, according to al-'Azm, it is a catastrophe when such people gain higher-ranking positions in society.<sup>61</sup> Another characteristic is the sudden turn from initial enthusiasm and underestimation of obstacles to lethargy as soon as a *fahlawi* person discovers that a certain task requires systematic work.<sup>62</sup> A civil servant works six hours a day, enjoys his nap after lunch, and then plays cards and backgammon, talks about politics in his favorite café, watches TV, or enjoys life in the evening, before returning to the same routine the next day. When he is obliged to work longer and harder to build up the country, he looks for ways to avoid completing his tasks.<sup>63</sup> The task of changing society is not limited to the creation of consciousness but requires a change of “the backward (*mutakhallif*) *fahlawi* lifestyle.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the main challenge for revolutionary Arabs is to avoid revolution that is restricted to the political level, because such a revolution “does not exceed the super-structural frames and does not practically and effectively affect the traditional social texture that shapes the backward and slow character of the political field.”<sup>65</sup>

Al-'Azm frames his analysis of the *fahlawi* with two chapters in which Arab society is compared to Japan and Vietnam. His book opens by reminding his readers how "a small Asian country," Japan, defeated Russia, the biggest continental country and sea power in 1904. In doing so, he compares the Russian defeat to the Arab defeat of 1967.<sup>66</sup> The main Arabic terms used here are *qusur* and '*ajz* (incapability, impotency), which also have a sexual and gendered connotation (impotence). Al-'Azm claims the key difference is that whereas the Arabs try to evade responsibility for their defeat, the Russian defeat led to the 1905 revolution, which in turn resulted in the Bolshevik revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union.

Talk of an "Arab Vietnam" had become ubiquitous among the Arab left in the early 1970s. Al-'Azm, however, criticizes the comparison of the *fahlawi*-type revolutions in the Arab world to Vietnam. He argues that Vietnam, although a seemingly poor, "backward" (*mutakhallif*), and isolated country, heroically resisted French and US imperialism. For al-'Azm, "Vietnam has to a great extent succeeded in overcoming the *takhalluf* in its traditional, slow and irresponsible forms of behavior which always form the reality of *takhalluf* in any country."<sup>67</sup> Al-'Azm warns that the model of a people's war of liberation, which the Vietnamese waged from the very beginning to the end, cannot be easily transferred to the Arab confrontation with Israel simply because of the failure of conventional warfare.

In his 1969 *Naqd al-fikr al-dini* (Critique of Religious Thought) al-'Azm criticizes the religious imprint of traditional Egyptian (read Arab) society.<sup>68</sup> For al-'Azm, the religious worldview is in decline in Arab countries "because we are undergoing a phase of an important renaissance (*nahda*) through a total cultural-scientific upheaval and a radical socialist-industrial transformation because we have been extremely influenced by two books published in the last century, 'Capital' and 'On the Origins of Species.'"<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, and because religion was allegedly allied with feudalism in Europe, religious institutions are opponents of development in general, and especially in most of the underdeveloped countries (*al-bilad al-mutakhallifa*), including the Arab world. For al-'Azm, Islam has become "the official ideology of the reactionary, backward forces (*al-quwat al-raji'a al-mutakhallifa*) in the Arab world (e.g., Saudi Arabia) and outside of it (e.g., Indonesia and Pakistan) and is openly and directly connected to neo-imperialism, which is guided by the United States."<sup>70</sup> He further complains that, even among progressive Arab

writers, the critique of the superstructure (i.e., thought, culture, law, and metaphysical ideology) remains weak, especially concerning “the religious mentality” (*al-dhihniyya al-diniyya*).<sup>71</sup> Al-‘Azm draws attention to the fact that not only did Arab regimes try to use the religious “weapon” after 1967, but so too did the revolutionary and progressive forces.<sup>72</sup> He refers in this instance to the alleged miraculous incident of the Virgin Mary’s appearance in a Coptic church in Egypt. The nominally socialist state media widely covered the affair all the while claiming that the virgin’s appearance in Egypt was a promise that Jerusalem would soon return to the Arabs.<sup>73</sup> It is in this described context that al-‘Azm criticizes the Arab liberation movement for not being wholly engaged in a criticism of backward mentalities while also avoiding direct criticism of religion.

### Yasin al-Hafiz: Superficial Modernization

The terms *takhalluf* and *ta’akhhur* have a rather prominent place in al-Hafiz’s post-1967 writings. He does not use them in a mainly technological or cultural sense but, instead, in a political sense. Al-Hafiz argues that books on cultural and technological *takhalluf* flourished after 1967, “but nobody talked, and this is not surprising, about political *ta’akhhur*.”<sup>74</sup> For him, the focus on technological and economic backwardness misidentifies the real nature of *ta’akhhur*. Al-Hafiz calls this attitude “economism” (*iqtisadawiyya*). From the perspective of general levels of industrialization, Egypt is more progressive than North Vietnam, and in some specific levels, such as the industrial share of the gross national product, Egypt is more progressive than Israel.<sup>75</sup> He is critical of the economic assumption that Arabs have to build a modern economic basis for progress, and that the sequence of progress would lead from technological to economic, and from there to social and finally political progress. Such an assumption, for al-Hafiz, does not take into consideration the fact that the Industrial Revolution in the West was preceded by four centuries of cultural, social, and political development. The modernization of Russian society, according to him, was also the result of a political revolution that was made possible by the victory of Marxism within the Russian intelligentsia. Therefore, al-Hafiz argues, the historical path to progress, both old and modern, in both capitalism and socialism, moves from the ideological and political to the technological and economic,

and not the other way around.<sup>76</sup> Al-Hafiz argues that Arab intellectuals have not really understood the catastrophe of Palestine and the reality of the Zionist project in spite of the thousands of articles, poems, short stories, and novels that have been published about the treasonous Arab reaction in 1948 and since. He concludes that “no serious studies which take a dominant place in the Arab intelligentsia catch the hidden roots of the defeat inside the socio-ideological-political structure of our society.”<sup>77</sup>

Elsewhere, al-Hafiz argues that the reason for the Arab defeat was not because of Israeli superiority, but resulted, first and foremost, from the weakness and paralysis of the structure of Arab society.<sup>78</sup> Key in this respect is its alleged incapacity to mobilize the energies of the nation in order to defend itself: “This paralysis represents a fundamental reality: *takhalluf*.”<sup>79</sup> Here he also draws on the example of communist China to argue that there is a difference between *takhalluf* and poverty, because China has managed to break down the walls of *takhalluf* while still remaining a poor country.<sup>80</sup>

Al-Hafiz draws attention to the fact that “the industrialized world (the capitalist as well as the socialist)” has realized more progress, “whereas the Third World has become poorer and more underdeveloped.”<sup>81</sup> In this context, the question of a socialist revolution is of pre-eminent importance: “There is either a total radical revolution or no revolution at all.”<sup>82</sup> According to al-Hafiz, in spite of some success the Nasserist system was unable to produce such a social revolution and destroy traditional social structures. He therefore pleads for the literal destruction of traditional society—not through theoretical considerations but “with a crowbar.”<sup>83</sup> For al-Hafiz, this is the only solution to the problem of *takhalluf*, and he draws it directly from the experiences of what he understands to be Asian scientific socialism. To demonstrate that Arab countries are stuck in the middle between tradition and modernity, whether in socialist or capitalist terms, he coins the terms *ta’akhhurakiyya* and *ta’akhhuraliyya*. In the first instance, he plays on the words “*ta’akhhur*” and “*ishtirakiyya*” (socialism) to capture what he views as Arab republics’ mere adoption of a socialist rhetoric or façade. In the second instance, he plays on the words “*ta’akhhur*” and “*ra’s maliyya*” (capitalism) to describe economic development in the Arab Gulf monarchies as merely affecting the surface of society.<sup>84</sup>

In an autobiographical text, al-Hafiz explains why and how he came to use the key concepts of “*takhalluf*,” “petit bourgeoisie,” and “partition”

to explain the reasons for the 1967 defeat.<sup>85</sup> The term *takhalluf* opened the door for him to criticize traditional Arab society as well as the intellectuals' neglect of democracy, a critique that was considered a "taboo" among Arab progressives (*taqaddumiyyun*).<sup>86</sup> Comparing Western and Arab conditions, he asserted: "There the individual is a rooster, here he is a worm."<sup>87</sup> For al-Hafiz, this comparison allowed him to argue that in the Arab world "from his first years or maybe from his first months, the individual suffers from alternating, uncountable forms of fear," turning life into a permanent fight and death into redemption.<sup>88</sup> Al-Hafiz considers his own political understanding of *takhalluf* a new kind of critique aimed at improving radical social critique, which for him superficially draws on economy or class. He views the Arab Marxism of Soviet origin as having avoided addressing the political, social, and ideological reasons for the 1967 defeat, substituting for these factors talk of "the successful imperialist-Israeli conspiracy," "the innocence of the defeated," or "the historical necessity of the defeat."<sup>89</sup> Thus, according to al-Hafiz, the traditional as well as the "non-rational revolutionary" intelligentsia avoided "studying the deep and original reasons for the defeat," assuming that it had not much to do with the shape of Arab society.<sup>90</sup> Al-Hafiz, however, thinks that *takhalluf* had become *ta'akhhur*, revealing the general development of society as well as its place on the ladder of human evolution.<sup>91</sup> Based on this understanding, he further developed his critique of what he viewed as Arab society's problems. As al-Hafiz put it, "this made me openly renounce any spirit of reconciliation with reality and strive to more radicalism, what gave me, at the same time, a long wind for political work, so that I am no longer an impatient revolutionary nor crazy for success, which usually leads either to adventurism or to opportunism."<sup>92</sup>

### **Mustafa Hijazi: Underdevelopment as a Vicious Circle**

Hijazi explains that his practical psychological experiences in the Arab world drove him to write a book on *takhalluf*. For him, psychological theories derived from industrial countries were methodologically helpful but not applicable to the situation in an underdeveloped society.<sup>93</sup> Hijazi notes that in spite of all the political, economic, and social, and political studies on underdeveloped societies, there were no psychological studies that reflected a human being's lived experience in that society.<sup>94</sup> He justified his study of

such experiences and their context by claiming that human reactions to *takhalluf* pose a danger to all efforts at development, and any fundamental change requires addressing this fact.<sup>95</sup> Hijazi qualifies his work, explaining that it is only a first “attempt” to understand the psychological dimension of social *takhalluf*, which would require experts to conduct more field studies.<sup>96</sup> He understood his book as a call to create “the foundation of a special psychology for our society . . . and the Arab human being.”<sup>97</sup>

The starting point for Hijazi’s analysis of the psychological dimension of *takhalluf* is his critique of modernization theories. For him, modernization in Third World countries has largely failed because it was planned either without taking account of human beings or by dealing with them only as a tool of development. Hijazi is particularly attentive to how, in his view, autocratic states’ construction and implementation of development programs neglected the role of the individual. He not only criticizes the absence of democratic structures and practices,<sup>98</sup> but also focuses—as the subtitle indicates—on “the oppressed human being” (*al-insan al-maqhur*), whom nature, society, and government oppress. For Hijazi, *takhalluf* always manifests together with political oppression. In fact, he claims oppression is always a primary factor for the manifestation of *takhalluf*. On the one hand, his socio-psychological analysis aims to bring together the macro- and micro-level failures of development strategies. On the other hand, he critiques these top-down strategies that were designed without considering the human agents who would realize them.<sup>99</sup> Hijazi argues that the combination of *takhalluf* and oppression damages the societal fabric, beginning with child rearing<sup>100</sup> and extending to violent and aggressive behavior toward women.

As oppression (*qahr*) leads to succumbing (*rudukh*) to those conditions, it results in a clear feeling of having lost control of one’s life. This feeling creates an inferiority complex as well as a sense of shame, which dominates the thought, behavior, and reactions of men and women, ranging between either conformity and rebellion or rapprochement with and dissociation from political power. People’s reactions to oppression are not static, however; the same person can move from one reaction to another throughout his or her life.

Hijazi further describes different defense mechanisms, such as retreating into oneself, which can mean adhering to traditions or a golden past and result in somebody’s integration into a family or group. The arbitrariness



of social and political conditions can also result in the attempt to regain control of one's life by adhering to obscurantist practices, while another effect is the omnipresence of masked and symbolic violence in society. Hence, the outbreak of violence is only the "explosion of a hidden truth in the structure of *takhalluf*."<sup>101</sup>

In the last chapter of his book, Hijazi claims that the status of women is the clearest example of oppression and its contradictions in an underdeveloped society. For him, the loss of control, the inferiority complex, the sense of shame, the absence of dialectic thought, and practices of superstition all refer to women. This is so because women not only experience oppression, but also are humiliated on all levels (e.g., sex, body, thought, and social position), so that they often react by retreating into themselves and adhering to traditions. Yet, simultaneously, women are adored as mothers. Thus views of women—those of men and those of society—range between absolute adoration and total denigration.<sup>102</sup>

Hijazi's study is not exclusively centered on asserting and explaining an Arab *takhalluf* or backward mentality. Rather, he speaks in general about developing or Third World countries. The study nevertheless is mainly influenced, as the author admits, by "the condition of the Lebanese man in particular and the Arab in general."<sup>103</sup> The author refers only incidentally to examples from the Arab world. The explosion of violence, though happening rarely, remains a permanent danger in an underdeveloped society.<sup>104</sup> When Hijazi speaks about rational and mental *takhalluf*,<sup>105</sup> he does not trace its reasoning back to the predominance of agricultural peculiarities with which the Arab could be associated.<sup>106</sup> Instead, he points to the politics of education, which is related to the existing oppression. The Arab world is no different in this respect from other Third World countries. Throughout, schools teach scientific knowledge only superficially. Therefore, according to Hijazi, knowledge does not spread in a society that remains dominated by tradition and superstition.<sup>107</sup> He also claims that *takhalluf* is not only a phenomenon in developing countries, but can also be found in societies "which have reached the top of technological progress,"<sup>108</sup> because technological development may have satisfied the basic needs of the human being but is often incapable of asserting the human being's full dignity since he—and Hijazi, like most of his contemporaries, uses the male pronoun—remains a tool for production and consumption.

### Nawal El Saadawi: Arab Women as Slaves

El Saadawi criticizes what she views as the contradictory, hypocritical, and duplicitous value system of traditional Egyptian society, as well as the ignorance, aggression, and egoism of Arab men. For her, however, this is paradoxically not meant to be a critique of Arab culture per se. Rather, it is another example of the universal oppression of women. In 1980, Saadawi published *The Hidden Face of Eve*—comprising selected translations drawn from the 1972 *al-Mar'a wa-l-jins* (Women and Sex), the 1974 *al-Untha hiya al-asl* (The Female Is the Origin), the 1975 *al-Mar'a wa-l-sira' al-nafsi* (Women and Psychological Conflict), and the 1979 *al-Wajh al-'ari li-l-mar'a al-'arabiyya* (The Naked Face of the Arab Woman). In her preface to *The Hidden Face of Eve*, El Saadawi posits as her main thesis that “the oppression of women, the exploitation and social pressures to which they are exposed, are not characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or countries of the ‘Third World’ alone,” but “constitute an integral part of the political, economic and cultural system preponderant in most of the world—whether that system is backward and feudal in nature, or a modern industrial society.”<sup>109</sup> She speaks out against the idea that the problems of Arab women stem “from the substance and values of Islam” or that “the retarded development of Arab countries” was “largely the result of religious and cultural factors or even inherent characteristics in the mental and psychic constitution of the Arab peoples.”<sup>110</sup> Therefore, El Saadawi is unable to “agree with those women in America and Europe who draw sharp distinctions between their own situation and that of women in the region to which I belong.”<sup>111</sup>

In spite of drawing all her examples from Egypt, she does not want to see the inferior, “slave-like status” of Arab women as exceptional.<sup>112</sup> As she puts it: “We the women in Arab countries realize that we are still slaves, still oppressed, not because we belong to the East, not because we are Arab, or members of Islamic societies, but as a result of the patriarchal class system that has dominated the world for thousands of years.”<sup>113</sup> This stance does not prevent her from offering a long list of criticisms of Egyptian society, which includes, among others, the following points: “the distorted concept of honour in our Arab society,”<sup>114</sup> exemplified in the abuse or rape of girls and a man’s false accusation that his bride was not a virgin because he had

never heard of flexible hymens;<sup>115</sup> the sexual abuse of “most female children” by family members and a patient’s story of an abusive grandfather;<sup>116</sup> the circumcision of girls<sup>117</sup> and an account of El Saadawi’s own circumcision.<sup>118</sup> El Saadawi further explains that the education of a girl fundamentally differs from that of a boy, as it is centered on warnings that scare and intimidate her.<sup>119</sup> “The education that a female child receives in Arab society is a series of continuous warning about things that are supposed to be harmful, forbidden, shameful, or outlawed by religion. The child therefore is trained to suppress her own desires, to empty herself of authentic, original wants . . . and to fill the vacuum that results with the desires of others.”<sup>120</sup> The education of girls equals “a process of annihilation”<sup>121</sup> in which she may lose her personality and her capacity to think independently, and become a victim and a toy in the hands of others.

Although El Saadawi does not argue that culture is the exclusive cause of the oppression of women in the Middle East, she claims that religions and cultures are relatively similar in their ability to discriminate against and liberate women. In the introduction to *al-Wajh al-'ari li-l-mar'a al-'arabiyya*,<sup>122</sup> El Saadawi states that Islam and Arab culture “are not exceptional in having transformed woman into a commodity or a slave”<sup>123</sup> because “Western culture and Christianity” did the same. “Women are not mentally inferior to men,” as many believe, but, on the contrary, history shows “that women started to exercise the powers of their minds before men, and were the first to embark on the quest for knowledge. The first goddess of knowledge was a woman later named Isis, and before her was Eve.”<sup>124</sup> The English translation adds to the Arabic text that “Arab women preceded the women of the world in resisting the patriarchal system based on male dominance. Fourteen centuries ago, Arab women succeeded in opposing the unilateral use of the male gender in the Qur’an when its passages referred to both men and women.”<sup>125</sup> El Saadawi further believes that history has proven that socialist revolutions and wars of liberation like those in Algeria and Palestine accelerated the process of women’s liberation, which is linked to people’s liberation “from imperialism, capitalism and class exploitation;” yet while women have failed to “unite into an organized political force,” they “have been unable to complete their emancipation, even in the socialist countries.”<sup>126</sup>

With regard to her own profession, El Saadawi criticizes the “backward” mentality which prevails in the medical profession in Egypt and

which relates “sex” (*jins*) to “shame” (*‘ayb*).<sup>127</sup> El Saadawi further criticizes how psychology, especially in Egypt, is a male-dominated science that is unable to understand that women’s frigidity and divergent or abnormal sexual behavior (*shudhudh jinsi*) is not something merely personal, but the result of education and social pressures.<sup>128</sup> She sees this as a result of a psychology deriving its negative stereotypes about women from the theories of Sigmund Freud, whom she accuses not only of “errors”<sup>129</sup> in understanding the psyche of women, but also of being “a teacher of psychological and physiological circumcision.”<sup>130</sup>

El Saadawi’s writings are relatively void of empirical data concerning Egypt. Nearly all her anecdotes are from her own experience as a physician and psychologist with female and male patients in the country. But *al-Mar’awa-l-sira’ al-nafsi* is based on fieldwork she conducted in the 1970s. This kind of fieldwork is absent in the works of the other four self-criticism authors considered here. El Saadawi’s research is based on the experiences of one hundred “neurotic”<sup>131</sup> and sixty “normal” women. Her starting point is the observation that many women suffer from a psychological disorder but that nobody cares as long as they fulfill their appointed tasks.<sup>132</sup> Drawing on the numbers of visitors seeking help in two psychiatric institutions in Cairo, El Saadawi extrapolates that the proportion of neurotic women in Egypt may be twice as high as in New York.<sup>133</sup>

El Saadawi’s findings neither offer a clear picture nor are they particularly easy for readers to interpret. She claims to have developed two research findings. First, she concludes that social change in Egypt particularly affects educated women. Second, she highlights the unexpectedly high percentage of educated (66.2 percent) and uneducated (97.5 percent) women who underwent circumcision in childhood.<sup>134</sup> According to El Saadawi, the procedure has a lasting effect on women’s psychological and sexual life and is, among other issues, responsible for frigidity because the “lifelong psychological shock of this cruel procedure” influences “the personality and mental make-up of females in Arab societies.”<sup>135</sup> But the percentage of circumcised women was higher among the “normal” (90 percent) than among the “neurotic” group (77 percent), which suggests that the procedure itself is not decisive, but rather how a woman copes with the experience. When El Saadawi further finds that the percentage of women who reported masturbating in childhood was much higher among

the “neurotic” (62 percent) than the “normal” group (15 percent),<sup>136</sup> she interprets these results, without questioning their reliability, in an astonishing way.<sup>137</sup> First, she holds that neurotic women are “more courageous in rebelling against traditions and imposed systems and in practicing sex and they are less subservient than normal women.”<sup>138</sup> Second, she traces the (“natural”) behavior of masturbation back to the fact that neurotic women were circumcised less often than normal ones.<sup>139</sup> Thus, for El Saadawi, neurotic women behave more “naturally” with regard to sex than normal women, although they seem to have experienced circumcision more often as a shock than normal women. Given the figures, this interpretation would, however, also mean that at least 39 percent of the neurotic group were sexually active *although* circumcised, nearly four times more than the maximum possible percentage of sexually active “normal” women who are not mutilated—a quota which not only contradicts the negative effects of circumcision that El Saadawi posits, but also suggests that something is wrong with “normal” women, who seem to suffer much more under social pressure than women suffering from neurosis.

### Hisham Sharabi: From Child Rearing to Authority

In the 1970s, Sharabi also drew a dark picture of child-rearing practices in Arab countries, particularly in Muslim middle-class families.<sup>140</sup> He argued that the main education methods are intimidation and punishment, inflicting mental and emotional harm on the children and their personality development.<sup>141</sup> Sharabi explains that “the model of the Arab family” is the “extended family” (*a’ila mumtadda*), which is identical to the “clan” (*ashira*), in whose realm most marriages are arranged.<sup>142</sup> As community formation primarily takes place within the family, it is “dialectically” interwoven with society.<sup>143</sup> This means that the family directs the individual’s responsibility toward the family rather than toward society and, in spite of this, the family also manages to reproduce society’s hierarchical structure and family-centric values.<sup>144</sup> That the Arab individual, from childhood on, is trained “to deal with persons rather than with things”<sup>145</sup> means for Sharabi that the individual is trained for either alignment or dominance, but not prepared to deal with the unknown, criticism, or compromise—an argument that Sharabi proves by citing anecdotal evidence.<sup>146</sup>

In *Neopatriarchy* (1988), Sharabi develops this approach into a full-fledged theory aimed at explaining the ailing Middle East. The term “distorted change” in the subtitle is given as *takhalluf* in the Arabic translation, while the prefix “neo” is not given in the Arabic title (*al-nizam al-abawi*).<sup>147</sup> He published the book just as the crisis of the 1967 defeat seemed to have been aggravated by the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and the rise of Islamism after the Iranian revolution (1978–79). Without directly referring to his predecessors,<sup>148</sup> Sharabi combines al-‘Azm’s critique of irrationality (when he speaks of semi-rational social structures) with al-Hafiz’s critique of socialist and capitalist regimes (when he criticizes neopatriarchy in its conservative as well as progressive forms) and El Saadawi’s critique of male-dominated society with Hijazi’s analysis of psychosocial structures and dynamics. The main difference is that Sharabi condenses the critiques. For example, his explanation of the central psychosocial feature of Arab society is stated in a single paragraph, arguing that it runs from father to state (i.e., from the “natural” to the “national” family):

Thus between ruler and ruled, between father and child, there exist only vertical relations: in both settings the paternal will is the absolute will, mediated in both the society and the family by a forced consensus based on ritual and coercion. Significantly, the most advanced and functional aspect of the neopatriarchal state (in both conservative and “progressive” regimes) is its internal security apparatus, the *mukhabarat*.<sup>149</sup>

This paragraph was even approvingly quoted by a reviewer writing on critical, anti-Orientalist approaches.<sup>150</sup>

Sharabi begins the preface to his book with a graphic scene from the Lebanese Civil War: two men are killed in cold blood on the side of the road because they belong to the “wrong” religious sect. The scene, according to Sharabi, provides “the clue to the unraveling of the larger Arab society,” which he describes as “neopatriarchal society.”<sup>151</sup> Moreover, the scene epitomizes “the frustrations and humiliations” since 1948, including political despotism, corruption, Israel’s humiliating hegemony, Egypt’s submissive-ness, self-sacrifice (suicide bombers), mindless violence, self-hatred, and cynicism—in short, “the paralyzing trauma engulfing the Arab world.”<sup>152</sup> Sharabi sets out to provide an “analytical framework” for a systematic

interpretation “in which the diverse facts, events, and aspects of social and political phenomena can be organized and made sense of.”<sup>153</sup> The basic assumption of Sharabi’s book is the following:

over the last one hundred years the patriarchal structures of Arab society, far from being displaced or truly modernized, have only been strengthened and maintained in deformed, “modernized” forms.... Neopatriarchy, from the standpoints of both modernity and traditionality, is neither *modern* nor *traditional*. . . . It is an *entropic* social formation characterized by its transitory nature and by specific kinds of underdevelopment and non-modernity. . . .<sup>154</sup>

In a chapter titled “The Structure and Relations of Neopatriarchy,” Sharabi puts forward the idea that “authority and submission” are the main characteristics of “the Arab family,” especially concerning child rearing.<sup>155</sup> The only source from which he quotes several times is a Lebanese psychiatrist’s study that was then already more than a decade old. Apart from this, Sharabi only mentions *en passant* the writings of El Saadawi and Fatima Mernissi on the education of Arab individuals, putting the term “education” in quotation marks.<sup>156</sup> The rest of the chapter, like most of the book, is full of references to Freud, Marx, Piaget, and Reich. The “often peculiar lack of basic data in the book” is mentioned by Annika Rabo in her review; yet, she argues, this “becomes intelligible” because “Sharabi mainly addresses an Arab audience.”<sup>157</sup>

A rather peculiar aspect is Sharabi’s attack on standard Arabic (*fusha*).<sup>158</sup> This language, he also argues in the Arabic version of his book, plays a central role in neopatriarchal discourse because it not only has an “essentially ideological character . . . with its rigid religious and patriarchal framework,” but an “inherent tendency to ‘think itself’, that is to say, to impose its own patterns and structures on all linguistic production.”<sup>159</sup> As “the child’s first encounter with the classical or literary language is through the sacred text, which children are often made to learn by heart,” the spontaneous attempts at questioning “are aborted,” while “rote learning” and “the rejection of all questioning” become “the normal way of acquiring ideas and internalizing values.”<sup>160</sup> Reading and questioning, which have served to spread “the Protestant revolution,” are not promoted by the neopatriarchal Arab culture because the Qur’an “is still recited, chanted, and repeated by heart

but not, or rarely, *read*.”<sup>161</sup> “The monological mode of discourse . . . aims not to enlighten but to dominate” and forms the opposite to critical reading, silencing discussion and opposition, which “can only be carried out behind the back of authority.”<sup>162</sup> Sharabi holds that the neopatriarchal discourse developed in different (traditional, liberal, and socialist) languages because reformers were not able to break its power. There have now remained only two kinds of discourse: one expressed in the traditionalist language of the sacred text, “the other in the language of the progressive (reformist or secular) ideologist, the neopatriarchal language of the daily newspaper.”<sup>163</sup>

### Counter-Criticism and Reconciliation

Post-1967 Arab self-criticism triggered, almost from its very beginning, polemical responses. Several critics positioned it as being in line with European and Zionist scholarship and underlined positive aspects of Arab culture.<sup>164</sup> In his 1973 book on “the Arab personality,” Egyptian writer and jurist al-Sayyid Yasin (b. 1919) held that al-‘Azm’s examination of a superficially modernized (*fahlawi*) Egyptian personality stood out as particularly weak among similar explanations for the Arab relapse.<sup>165</sup> According to Yasin, the major problem in socio-psychological explanations is the social strata to whom the negative personality characteristics are ascribed—whether the majority of the people (middle class, peasants) or the minority (politicians, intellectuals, middle class)—and whether these negative images really represent national characteristics.<sup>166</sup> Drawing on two studies conducted on Palestinians,<sup>167</sup> al-Sayyid Yasin stresses the importance of family structures and the responsibilities of the individual toward his or her relatives.<sup>168</sup> Yasin concludes that Arabs hold their families, which form the pivotal point in their lives, in high esteem, especially in times when they have to struggle on two fronts—the war on *takhalluf* in all its forms and the Israeli challenge.<sup>169</sup>

In a 1978 scholarly essay, Fouad Moughrabi remarked that the socialization patterns in the Arab world “may not be all that undesirable or ridiculous as many would have us believe.”<sup>170</sup> He argues against the methodology of most studies on the “Arab basic personality” and holds that this kind of literature is inadequate in its attempt to explain collective behavior. It only leads to an erroneous “representation”<sup>171</sup> of the Arab population (since most studies do not distinguish between élites, leaders,



masses, peasants, and Bedouins) and neglects the process of change that Arab societies have undergone (with regard to child-rearing practices, personality characteristics, and value systems). With regard to al-'Azam, Moughrabi writes that the *fahlawi* personality "is not too far from that of the 'fear of failure' individual . . . . Not only is this type present in most national groups, but he, in fact, plays a most crucial role in development."<sup>172</sup> Besides, developing countries need different types of individuals, achievement- and task-oriented persons as well as people who take moderate risks and those who take high risks.

Since the 1980s, many Arab intellectuals combined a reflection on the trauma of 1967 with a critical reading of the Arab cultural legacy (*turath*).<sup>173</sup> The discussion on Arab culture thus intensified and paved the way for a reconciliation of seemingly opposed views of *takhalluf* and Orientalism. Writers no longer viewed Arab self-criticism and the critique of Orientalism as mutually exclusive, but as equally legitimate: the one being the prerequisite for the other. The Lebanese sociologist Halim Barakat, for example, took stock of the socio-psychological discussion of Arab political culture in an article published in 1990, in which he criticized the prevalence of stereotyping and generalizations in Western studies of the Arab world, which, according to him, often goes back to the use of proverbs and anecdotes that serve as examples to explain the Arab character.<sup>174</sup> Barakat sets out to correct such "static" Western approaches, drawing attention to the scarcity of empirical material available to scholars. He takes a given stereotype and shows that the opposite, as found in the Qur'an, proverbs, or social practices, is true and existent among Arabs as well. So, he juxtaposes fatalism and free will, shame and guilt, conformity and creativity, past- and future-oriented values, form and content. He argues that a "dynamic critical approach" should focus on social relationships rather than fixed characteristics.<sup>175</sup> Curiously, Barakat opposes the prevalence of certain attitudes among Arabs not by using empirical evidence, but by supplying more proverbs—although he generally questions the value of proverbs. In the same text, Barakat criticizes Sharabi's 1975 study as an "overemphasis," yet approves of the main idea of *Neopatriarchy* that Arab "adult behavior" can be reduced to "authority, domination and dependency" and justifies it as "essentially Marxist thought (rather than social psychology)."<sup>176</sup>

### The Heuristic Fallacies of Arab Self-Criticism

The five authors of Arab self-critique combined a Marxian analysis of society and capitalism and a cultural critique that was partly influenced by ideas of the European new left. They wanted to settle scores with both the rulers and the masses after the defeat of the Arab armies. This blow at both sides reflects their in-between positions as intellectuals who, as per Pierre Bourdieu's term of "dominated dominators," do not wholly belong to either side. They tried to view the problem of failed development in its entirety, arguing that authoritarianism, gender inequality, deficient education, and irrationality in politics could not be explained solely by political or economic factors. Thus, they were critical of Soviet communism, Orientalist scholarship, and essentialist notions of culture. By taking internal and external factors into consideration, they tried to overcome cultural and economic reductionism.

These intellectuals took sophisticated positions, and several of their original social critiques are still in circulation today. Yet it is important to ask: how far did their oppositional readings of Arab culture indirectly support the assumption that they wanted to dispel? As they tried to locate the roots of underdevelopment and backwardness in mentality, socialization patterns, and family structures, these approaches formed a slippery slope. They not only interweaved different social problems, but they also drew a line from military defeat and socio-economic underdevelopment to mental and psychological characteristics. Therefore, it seems fruitful to pinpoint the cognitive and normative biases palpable in their writings. I adopt cognitive bias here as a concept that allows us to describe perceptual distortions and inaccurate interpretations, especially the self-criticism intellectuals' perception of their own objectivity and their lashing out against alleged Arab irrationality.<sup>177</sup> Such an analysis challenges the insinuation that Arab self-critics wittingly or unwittingly parroted Orientalist prejudices and thus implicitly reinforced cultural imperialism. Instead, it poses the heuristic question of how these intellectuals tried to judge a complex and painful phenomenon such as underdevelopment under unsettled circumstances. I thus posit Arab self-criticism as a form of social criticism whose value was diminished by heuristic and methodological deficiencies, not so much by its polemical verve or alleged self-Orientalizing discourse patterns.

The priming effect, when a previous negative stimulus influences processing any further information, is a serious problem in the self-criticism works. The five authors did not seek to explain Arab culture, but the alleged backwardness of Arab culture. In the wake of the 1967 war and its outcome, they searched for cultural causes of the status quo, which they believed also to be negative. In spite of their rhetorical emphasis on social change, they focused on the structure, not its changing form and content. Therefore, the underlying categories of analysis appeared more stable than they might otherwise be. These included al-'Azm's superficial personality, al-Hafiz's irrationality in politics, Hijazi's oppressed human being, El Saadawi's male honor discourse, and Sharabi's neopatriarchy.

Thus, by way of the so-called attribution error, the five authors come close to relating behavior to personal characteristics, not to a certain situation. Even if al-'Azm, for example, observes *fahlawi* behavior in students and bureaucrats, it is questionable whether this behavior hints at a generalizable *fahlawi* personality—and not just at the behavior of students and bureaucrats, independent of their Egyptian background. By relating superficiality, irrationality, women's enslavement, human oppression, and patriarchy to the blocked transition process to modernity, the authors sometimes explain the phenomena by the blocked process and sometimes the blocked process by the phenomena. In the works of all five authors discussed, *takhalluf*, in the sense of backward practices, seems to be a vicious circle, which means that it represents a central ill of Arab society to be explained as well as a category explaining the central ills of Arab societies. Epistemologically, all five approaches fail to adequately explain the extent to which *takhalluf* causes the status quo of Arab societies or is caused by it.

The priming effect and focus illusion further suggest an illusionary causality, which relates political and military underachievement to cultural deficits, while political success seems to be related to intellectual capacities. This *illusionary causality* fuels the intellectuals' control illusion that good ideas lead to good politics and, by implication, that there is an Arab "impotence." So Sharabi, who set out to unravel the deficiencies of Arab society in order to enable it to leave its backwardness behind, ends up sounding the paradoxical note that society's ability to become modern might stem from his own wishful thinking, "the optimism of the will" to which one must hold fast, rather than from society's capacities.<sup>178</sup> Here, it becomes obvious

that the self-critical descriptions of society alternate between the tautology of affirming the backwardness of a backward society and the plea for radical social change as the only way out. This analytical-normative antinomy expresses the feeling that the existing social and cultural structures are so deeply rooted that they can only be removed by a revolutionary force that is nearly impossible to produce in a backward society.

A central conviction shared by all five authors is the idea that the personality formation within Arab families and the values handed down to the younger generation basically have an authoritarian character and affect society as a whole. The authors hold that Arab family structures are not only interwoven, but also causally inter-connected with all other levels of social life, from individual behavior when faced with socio-economic deadlock to political and military impasse. Sharabi constructs the triangle father-*mukhabarat*-state; however, a *mukhabarat* state like that in Syria has more in common with the police states in the former Soviet Union and East Germany than with Syrian family structures. El Saadawi understands Arab education as a process of annihilation of the female self; yet what appears to be the absolute control of women might turn out to be a possible reaction to a fundamental destabilization of traditional social structures and family values—or just a hyperbolic statement.<sup>179</sup> Al-‘Azm and al-Hafiz blame failed education for irrational and superficially modern behavior, but what seems to be irrational and superficial might be, according to Hijazi, a “learned” or even subversive practice under authoritarian circumstances. Hijazi believes that individual, familial, and social structures of *takhalluf* reproduce each other, but cannot delineate any way out with this approach, in spite of all his attempts in newer works.

In all these cases, there is a contrast between the lengthiness of the critiques and the scarcity of empirical material. Al-‘Azm mainly interprets newspaper articles, political speeches, and declarations, al-Hafiz theorizes political and intellectual shortcomings, and El Saadawi recounts personal anecdotes and impressions, while Sharabi is content with quoting two sentences on child rearing by a psychotherapist. There are exceptions, however. For example, Hijazi’s description of his experiences and considerations as marking the beginning of future research and his call for more fieldwork stand out for their refreshing candor. None of the authors treat family or kinship ties as relatively autonomous networks that have the capacity to adapt

to changing political structures and whose members use them to protect relatives and intervene in behalf of them. Rather, they try to understand the inner life of Arab society through the family because, in the words of Halim Barakat, “Arab society . . . is the family generalized or enlarged, and the family is society in miniature.”<sup>180</sup>

A focus on family life to determine the nature of social structures is justified insofar as families form the primary space in which people learn how to negotiate hierarchies, authority, conflicting claims, and compromises. Yet to resort to a blurry and essentialized category like “the Arab family” to locate the roots of underdevelopment and authoritarianism is problematic on at least four levels and represents a case where different fallacies come together, like *confirmation bias* (information is interpreted in preconceived ways), *contrast effect* (something appears more peculiar when compared with a contrasting object), and *subjective validation* (emotionally charged issues are treated as correct because of their significance to the interpreter):

First, the idea of the modern family itself can be traced to “modern statist projects”<sup>181</sup> that involved counting households, creating and changing family laws, and enacting family planning programs.<sup>182</sup> Already in the mid-nineteenth century, the collection of data in the Ottoman Empire aimed at defining and producing “modern families.”<sup>183</sup> The Arab self-criticism after 1967 represents another attempt at “seeing like a state”<sup>184</sup> and thus adds to the century-old view of the family as a “problem space in the Arab world.”<sup>185</sup> It has contributed to the “cultural construct of the ‘prison house’ of the Arab family as an ahistorical organization of norms and relations,”<sup>186</sup> which still remains “an easily recognized subtext in scholarship”<sup>187</sup> and can be traced in a wide range of literature dealing with “patriarchal” Arab society. For example, the Arab Human Development Report 2005 holds: “Quite a few Arab women are no longer prisoners of the house.”<sup>188</sup>

Second, ascribing an unrestrained “patriarchal nature” to Arab families is often both tautological and paradoxical (as is the case with “backwardness” and Arab societies). The Arab Human Development Report 2005 draws a relatively stable picture of familial oppression in spite of obvious social change,<sup>189</sup> but then cautions against such one-sided images because they might prevent “individuals” from rebelling against authoritarianism.<sup>190</sup> Although ethnographic literature mentions the fluidity and elusiveness of

the Arab family with its different denominations—*usra* (nuclear family), *'a'ila* (family), *bayt* (house), *ahl* (kin), *hamula* (patrilineal clan), *'ashira* (tribe)—as well as its changing forms and functions,<sup>191</sup> it still treats the Arab family as a describable unit that is extended, patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal, endogamous, and occasionally polygamous. This literature frames the family unit, not society or the state, as “the most important vehicle of socialization” that ensures “the stability of the existing order” and “provides the primary sense of identity and belonging.”<sup>192</sup> Therefore, one can conclude that “no concept or institution is more linked with an essentialized construct of culture than is the concept of family. To de-essentialize ‘Arab culture,’ one must first de-essentialize ‘the family.’”<sup>193</sup> Politically, the attempt at either changing or saving *the* Arab family has not only been a core trope used by colonial powers and anti-colonial forces,<sup>194</sup> but it has also been seen to be crucial to furthering or hindering women’s emancipation, social progress, democracy, and human rights in the post-colonial era, when “movements from all political directions have claimed the space of family as their own.”<sup>195</sup>

Third, it is the (Western) European pattern of the nuclear family against which the Arab family and kinship relations are implicitly positioned and judged.<sup>196</sup> Scholarship on family structures in Europe has, for the most part, supported the idea that the extended family—which was considered dysfunctional in capitalism—broke up during the period of industrialization and saw most of its functions taken over by the state, an idea which forms part and parcel of the standard narrative of modernization. Even Marxist critiques since Friedrich Engels underlined the linkage of the bourgeois family with capitalist society (“double reproduction”). New scholarship, however, draws a much more nuanced picture of family patterns since it has found that households in Western Europe before industrialization were smaller than the modernist myth suggested.<sup>197</sup> Thus, while the composition and function of families changed, the number of household members remained virtually the same. Extended as well as multiple household forms existed well after industrialization though with strong local and regional differences. New scholarship has also rediscovered the lasting economic importance of both family and kinship ties throughout the centuries since they form networks that are often decisive for economic success and contribute to social and symbolic capital.<sup>198</sup> In contrast to this scholarship, literature on

the Arab family has often lumped together family and kinship and taken their political, social, and economic dysfunctionality for the modernization of state and society for granted. The counterpart to this, at least implicitly stigmatizing<sup>199</sup> literature on the “Arab,” “southern” or “Mediterranean”<sup>200</sup> family, is its glorification in Arab popular culture and religious discourse. For Muslim scholars, for example, the Qur’an stands for the soul of Islam and the family for its body,<sup>201</sup> and Islamist thinkers have “elevated the Muslim family to an almost sacrosanct status.”<sup>202</sup> Both critique and sacralization contribute, according to anthropologist Suad Joseph, to an unquestioned “hypervalorization of the family” as well as to the axiomatic “centrality of the family” in the Arab world, “in both scholarly research and popular culture.”<sup>203</sup> The Arab Families Working Group, established in 2001, observed that “Arab family studies are among the least theoretically and empirically developed arenas of scholarly investigation of the contemporary Arab world.”<sup>204</sup> Most work on Arab families treats them like “an unproblematical concept that can be applied across classes and countries,”<sup>205</sup> while “hardly any research on Arab families is interdisciplinary, comparative, historical, and transnational in approach.”<sup>206</sup> As patterns of child rearing, gender relations, marriage strategies, and childbirth rates are exposed to permanent changes, research on Arab family and kinship ties has to take a broader view and combine the changing history of normative concepts (like *usra*, *a’ila*, *ahl*, or *bayt*)<sup>207</sup> with the actually lived experiences in a *longue duree* perspective, including the impact of migrant, transnational, and mixed families. A serious field of research on the transformation of families in the Middle East is only just in the making.<sup>208</sup>

Fourth, Robert N. Bellah reminds us that egalitarianism does not mean the absence of hierarchy, but that, throughout history, small- and large-scale tribal groups as well as complex societies have always negotiated egalitarianism, hierarchies, and legitimate authority in different ways.<sup>209</sup> The balancing of egalitarianism and authority is a complex issue that is not easily calculable. As a case in point, Japanese personality features have been extensively discussed in the field of cultural psychology over the last decade. Although not only conventional wisdom but also common scholarly views held that Japanese society was more traditionalist and collectivist than US society, meta-analyses have shown that most previous studies on the issue have not really supported this contention.<sup>210</sup>

Contradictory anthropological explanations for authoritarianism in Arab societies are a telling example in this respect since the observers disagree on whether Arab societies suffer from too little or too much authority in social organization.<sup>211</sup> In contrast to Sharabi, Lebanese anthropologist Fuad Khuri explains that Arabs do not understand hierarchies because, metaphorically, they think not in “pyramids,” but in “tents.”<sup>212</sup> Arabs also do not play chess because of the “hierarchical” power of its pieces, but prefer backgammon since Arab social organization and psyche is based on equality, like the equality between backgammon stones, which are vulnerable as individuals but protected in groups.<sup>213</sup> Although the subtle distinctions (and hierarchies) inside kin relations and the complexity of marriage strategies, which Khuri describes in his book, contradict his own simplified model, it is interesting to see that he explains the emergence of autocratic rule with an egalitarian approach. According to him, the source of autocratic rule lies not in an authority-submission scheme acquired through education but in the capability of the leading families to form a group with other equal “tents” to dominate the rest. In yet another approach, anthropologist Philip Salzman mixes Sharabi’s authoritarianism and Khuri egalitarianism. He takes a “tribal DNA” in Middle East societies for granted and coins the terms “balanced opposition” and “egalitarian authoritarianism” to explain conflicts between different kinship groups.<sup>214</sup> As Salzman bases his thesis on fieldwork among nomads of Iranian Baluchistan, Rex Brynen finds his argument “analogous to writing about the political dynamics of contemporary American politics and foreign policy based on an analysis of the family behavior of Alaskan fur-trappers.”<sup>215</sup> With the Arab uprisings and the following counter-revolutions, however, “family rule structure”<sup>216</sup> and “nepotism”<sup>217</sup> have resurfaced, even in the writings of critical authors, as one of the “deep” structures that help to explain the ills of Arab society because “many, if not all, Arab regimes have come to rely on family members to run the government”<sup>218</sup>—thus lumping together such different ruling families as the Saudis, the Asads, the Qaddafis, and the Mubaraks.

These examples not only tell us about the intricacy of anthropological work in the Arab or Muslim world,<sup>219</sup> but also reveal the problem of anecdotal evidence, fieldwork with small human samples and generalizations from it. A normatively loaded Marxist criticism of half-modern Arab families



and societies fits in here because it can be treated in two problematic ways, either as an impartial analysis or a call for help from the outside.

The first reading is exemplified by Gary S. Gregg's *The Middle East: A Cultural Psychology*, which he wrote after having conducted five and a half years of fieldwork among Berbers in Morocco.<sup>220</sup> The wording of the book title indicates that the author is painstakingly trying to avoid any stereotypical category like the "Arab mind" or "Muslim mentality." In section one of the book, however, we find a final chapter on "Honor and Islam," in which Gregg outlines the "traditional" forms of social organization in the Middle East. In section two, he sketches six periods of psychological development, from childbirth and infant care to the development of adults. Yet he presents no new empirical material, but mainly uses excerpts from Western and Arab secondary sources, including both the self-critical authors' texts from the 1970s and 1980s and the texts of their counter-critics. These excerpts are presented as divergent judgments by different authors, which can provide the full picture when put together—regardless of the contradictory views they present and the time, place, context, and impetus of their writing. Gregg believes that, with this material, he is able to show that Middle East countries form "a culture area' with distinctive influences on psychological development"<sup>221</sup> manifesting "the core self," "the social personae," and "gender identity."

A striking example for the second reading is given in a handbook on family therapy in the United States.<sup>222</sup> The author of an overview article, who relies on both Sharabi's and Barakat's works as well as other scholarship, argues that the Arab family is moving "towards a more Westernized nuclear family," yet remaining hierarchical and important for its members even in its extended form.<sup>223</sup> Arabs, one of "the most misunderstood ethnic groups in the United States,"<sup>224</sup> are described "as less likely than Westerners to seek help from mental health providers."<sup>225</sup> That more Arab families are becoming aware of the benefits of psychotherapy for a better life can be seen as an encouraging sign because seeking psychotherapy is "a learned behavior."<sup>226</sup> Therefore, Arabs are presented as "newcomers," but "good candidates for psychotherapy."<sup>227</sup> A caveat, however: "given the anti-Arab sentiment in the United States today, therapists are urged to examine their own attitudes and biases before treating Arab clients."<sup>228</sup> As funny as it may seem, the Arab family remains a promising case for the psychiatrist—in its traditional, neo-patriarchal, and, even more so, "Westernized" form.

## Conclusion

This article sought to demonstrate how post-1967 Arab self-criticism authors' endeavor to reckon with Arab regimes, political forces, popular culture, and intellectuals is an ambivalent one, creating two predicaments. First, the authors advanced an understanding of political and social repression as a structural feature of a backward society that reproduces itself. Their approach helped to trace back military and political failure to alleged deeper social structures like the authoritarian personality, patriarchal family, half-modern socialization, and behavior. Second, by exposing the all-encompassing nature of *takhalluf* in Arab societies, this genre of self-criticism basically ruled out the possibility of radical change although it clung to the "optimism of the will" (*à la* Sharabi) claiming that revolutions had taken place in other seemingly backward societies (like Russia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam).

The unintentional consequence of this approach was that not only Arab mentality, family, and political culture appeared to be more stable than the five authors wished these concepts to be, but also that a culturally widened notion of *takhalluf* became a scientified and popularized concept for the self-description of Arab societies. This process led to two further forms of bewilderment. In one such form, Arab self-criticism—although written in an atmosphere of defeat—has been taken at face value as a necessary and accurate analysis. Or—although pondering, in the Marxist tradition, the conditions of possibility for revolutionary change—it has been discussed as a self-Orientalizing critique, estranged from itself. Neither reading does justice to a social criticism that was timely and provocative, yet marred by heuristic fallacies and as much disenchanted as it was full of polemical verve.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 For overviews, see Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Eiji Nagasawa, "An Introductory Note on Contemporary Arabic Thought," *Mediterranean World* 13 (1992), 65–71; Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto Press, 2004); and Elizabeth S. Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- 2 See Christoph Henning, *Philosophy After Marx: 100 Years of Misreadings and the Normative Turn in Political Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
- 3 Niklas Luhmann, "Tautologie und Paradoxie in den Selbstbeschreibungen der modernen Gesellschaft," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 16, no. 3 (1987), 161–174.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 167.
- 5 Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm, *al-Naqd al-dhati ba'd al-hazima* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1968). The book ran through ten editions between 1968 and 1973, but was no longer printed by the original publisher (Dar al-Tali'a) after the 1973 war; see Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm, "Taqqim ba'd tul al-inqita," in *al-Naqd al-dhati ba'd al-hazima* (Damascus: Dar Mamduh 'Adwan, 2007, new printing), 9–15, here: 10. Al-'Azm had to stand trial in Beirut in 1970 because of his *Naqd al-fikr al-dini* on the charges of provoking religious troubles, but was acquitted. His professor's contract at the American University of Beirut was not renewed after the scandal. See, for example, Stefan Wild, "Gott und Mensch im Libanon: Die Affäre Sadiq al-'Azm," *Der Islam* 48 (1972), 206–253; Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 75.
- 6 Yasin al-Hafiz, *al-A'mal al-kamila*, 5 volumes (Damascus: Dar al-Hasad, 1997). Hafiz left the Syrian Communist Party for the Ba'th Party because of the Communists' critique of the Egyptian-Syrian unification (1958–61). See Hazim Saghiyya, *al-Ba'th al-Suri: Tarikh mujaz* (Beirut: Saqi, 2012), 44. Al-Hafiz broke with the Syrian Ba'th Party after 1967 and formed the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (Hizb al-'Ummal al-Thawri al-Ishtiraki) with members of the Marxist wing of the Ba'th Party. He was arrested because of his political views, and upon his release in 1968 moved to Beirut, where he died. After 1968 he established, together with fellow Marxist dissident Ilyas Murqus, a publishing house (Dar al-Haqiqa) and a political journal (*al-Wahda al-Arabiyya*).
- 7 Fadi A. Bardawil, "The Inward Turn and Its Vicissitudes: Culture, Society, and Politics in Post-1967 Arab Leftist Critiques," in *Local Politics and Contemporary Transformations in the Arab World: Governance Beyond the Center*, eds. Malika Bouziane, Cilja Harders, and Anja Hoffmann (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 91–109, here: 93.
- 8 Mustafa Hijazi, *al-Takhalluf al-ijtima'i: Madkhal ila sikulujijyyat al-insan al-maqhur* (Beirut: Ma'had al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1976). Hijazi finished his studies of psychology in Beirut and France with a PhD on *Délinquance juvénile et réalisation de soi* (1966) and worked as a consultant of development policy for ministries and non-governmental organizations from the end of the 1960s to the 1980s.
- 9 Her early work has been published in the volume from which I quote: Nawal al-Sá'dawi, *Dirasat 'an al-mar'a wa-l-rijal fi al-mujtama' al-'arabi; Al-Mar'a wa-l-jins; Al-Untha hiya al-asl; Al-Rijal wa-l-jins; Al-Mar'a wa-l-sira' al-nafsi; Al-Wajh al-'ari li-l-mar'a al-'arabiyya* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 1986). Compare also the partial translations in Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980) and *The Essential Nawal El Saadawi: A Reader*, ed. Adele Newson-Horst (London: Zed Books, 2010). El Saadawi studied medicine in Cairo and New York in the 1950s. She was dismissed from her post in the Ministry of Health after her first nonfictional book *al-Mar'a wa-l-jins* (1972) appeared. She then moved to Addis

- Ababa for some time; after her return to Egypt in 1980 and her critique of President Anwar al-Sadat she was imprisoned for three months. See Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 92. Because of a publication ban, political persecution, and threats by Islamists, she lived in the US from 1988 to 1996.
- 10 Hisham Sharabi, *Muqaddima li-dirasat al-mujtama' al-'arabi* (Beirut: Dar al-Muttahida li-l-Nashr, 1975); idem, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Sharabi studied philosophy in Beirut and Chicago, and then was professor of European intellectual history and social thought and held the Umar Al-Mukhtar Chair in Arab Culture at Georgetown University.
  - 11 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 13, 324–325. For a detailed analysis of the background, see Manfred Sing and Miriam Younes, “The Specters of Marx in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*,” *Die Welt des Islams* 53, no. 2 (2013), 149–191.
  - 12 Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 18–28 passim.
  - 13 See Fadi A. Bardawil, “Sunken Mythologies,” *Jadaliyya*, 18 February 2011, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/669/sunken-mythologies> (retrieved on 17 August 2016); also see Bardawil, “The Inward Turn.”
  - 14 See, for example, F. Gregory Gause III, “Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011), 81–90; Sami Zubaida, “The ‘Arab Spring’ in Historical Perspective,” 21 October 2011, available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/sami-zubaida/arab-spring-in-historical-perspective>; Asef Bayat, “Arab Revolutions and the Study of Middle Eastern Societies,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011), 386; and Ehud R. Toledano, “Middle East Historians and the Arab Spring: Early-Days Assessment,” *Sharqiyya* (2011), 4–11.
  - 15 This is one of the points made by Sadiq al-Azm, “Syria in Revolt. Understanding the Unthinkable War,” *Boston Review*, 18 August 2014, available at: [http://www.bostonreview.net/world/sadiq-al-azm-syria-in-revolt#.U\\_YGpZZLO7E.facebook](http://www.bostonreview.net/world/sadiq-al-azm-syria-in-revolt#.U_YGpZZLO7E.facebook).
  - 16 Ghali Shukri, *Diktaturiyat al-takhalluf al-'arabi* (Cairo: al-Hay' al-Misriyya al-'amma li-l-Kitab, 1994), 34–38, here 37. When pointing to a sociology of *takhalluf*, Shukri refers to Mustafa Hijazi’s study.
  - 17 Both Yasin al-Hafiz and Hisham Sharabi turned to a Marxist analysis of Arab society after the defeat of 1967. See footnote 6 and 49 in this article.
  - 18 Lorenz Erren, *Kritik und Selbstkritik: Kommunikation und Herrschaft unter Stalin (1917–1953)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008). The prefix “self” did originally not refer to an individual critic, but aimed at the permanent self-purification and progress of the proletariat through (self-)criticism.
  - 19 See the self-Orientalizing confessions of communists from the Arab East in Masha Kirasirova, “The ‘East’ as a Category of Bolshevik Ideology and Comintern Administration: Students of the Arab Section of the Communist University in the 1920s,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* (forthcoming).
  - 20 See below and also Ilyas Murqus, *Al-Marksiyya al-sufiyatiyya wal-qadaya al-'arabiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Haqiqa, 1973). Murqus had been excluded from the Syrian Communist Party because of his criticism of the French Communists’ attitude toward Algeria and the Syrian Communists’ reservations about Arab nationalism. See idem, *al-Hizb al-Shuyu'i al-Faransi wa-qadiyat al-Jaza'ir* (Cairo: Dar al-Tali'a, 1959); idem and Muhammad 'Ali Zarqa, *Khiyanat Bakdash li-l-qawmiyya al-'arabiyya* (Cairo: Dar al-Qawmiyya, 1959). Murqus influenced al-Hafiz and the formation of the latter’s Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, which emerged from the Marxist faction inside the Ba'th Party after the 1967 defeat and Hafiz al-Asad’s rise to power in 1970.

- 21 Compare to Bardawil, "The Inward Turn," 98. The following remarks aim at positioning the self-critical authors in relation to some of the main dominant intellectual trends. It is not the intention here to map the whole diversified field of Arab Marxists' approaches and viewpoints after 1967. For a more comprehensive overview, see Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 48–172.
- 22 Muhammad Kishli, "Bahth 'an al-khata' al-asasi," *al-Hurriyya*, 10 July 1967, 3–4. See also the title: "Kala... lam yuhzam al-'arab wa-lam takun harban ma'a Isra'il, bal hiya harb shamila ma'a Amrika," *al-Hurriyya*, 19 July 1967. Kishli, formerly a member of the Arab Nationalist Movement, was a founding member of the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon in 1970.
- 23 Muhsin Ibrahim, "Kala... lam yukhti' 'Abd al-Nasir wa-lam yuhzam al-'arab," *al-Hurriyya*, 19 July 1967, 2–3. In his new foreword to the 2007 edition of *al-Naqd al-dhati*, al-'Azm contrasts his own use of the word "defeat" to that in Ibrahim's article. See al-'Azm, "Taqdim ba'd tul al-inqita," 11. Ibrahim was regarded as the head of the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon.
- 24 Compare to Bardawil, "The Inward Turn," 93–95.
- 25 Bardawil, "The Inward Turn," 98.
- 26 Ghada Talhami, "An Interview with Sadik al-'Azm," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 19 (1997), 113–126, here: 114.
- 27 Ibid., 115.
- 28 For critical works about the Palestinian guerrillas, see Sadiq al-'Azm, *Dirasa naqdiyya li-fikr al-muqawama al-filastiniya* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1973); Yasin al-Hafiz, *al-Tajriba al-tarikhhiyya al-vietnamiyya: Taqyim naqdi muqaran ma'a al-tajriba al-tarikhhiyya al-'arabiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1976); idem, "Munaqashat fi al-idiyulujyya al-filastiniyya," in idem, *al-Hazima wa-l-idiyulujyya al-mahzuma*, al-'Amal al-kamila 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Hasad, 1997), 301–337; and Syrian Marxist Ilyas Murqus, 'Afwiyyat al-nazariyya fi al-'amal al-fida'i: *Naqad al-fikr al-muqawim* (Beirut: Dar al-Haqiqa, 1970). For a critical view of the Arab new left by a communist, see the work of Lebanese Communist Karim Muruwwa, *al-Yasar al-haqiqi wa-l-yasar al-mughamir: I'adat al-i'tibar ila al-haqiqiyya fi al-khilaf ma'a jama'at 'al-Hurriyya'* (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1970). Compare also to Manfred Sing, "Brothers in Arms: How Maoists Turned Jihadists," *Die Welt des Islams* 51 (2009), 1–44.
- 29 Tareq Ismael, *The Communist Movement in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3. For an Egyptian application of the term, see Ahmad Sadiq Sa'd, *Fi daw' al-namat al-asyawi li-l-intaj: Ta'rikh Misr al-ijtima'i al-iqtisadi: Misr al-Far'uniyya, al-Hiliniyya, al-Imbaraturiyya al-Islamiyya, al-Fatimiyya min al-Maghrib ila Misr, 'Ahd al-Mamalik* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun, 1979); and idem, *Tarikh al-'arab al-ijtima'i: Tahawwul al-takwin al-misri min al-namat al-asyawi ila al-namat al-ra'smali* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha, 1981).
- 30 See, for example, the works of the Egyptians Anouar Abdel-Malik, *Égypte: société militaire* (1962); idem., *Sociologie de l'impérialisme* (1971); Samir Amin, *Le développement inégal* (1973); idem., *L'impérialisme et le développement inégal* (1976).
- 31 Nasr al-Jabir, "Nahwa fahm zahirat 'al-takhalluf': Munaqasha li-fikr 'Isam al-Khafaji," *al-Tariq* 3 (1990), 4–34, in response to an article by 'Isam al-Khafaji, "Musahama fi bahth 'an huwiyatina: Hawl namat intaj al-kulunyali," *al-Tariq* 5/6 (1988), 127–172. Compare also the positive review by Salih Yasir Hasan, "al-Ta'rikh al-naqdi li-l-takhalluf," *al-Nahj* 26 (1989), 285–310, to a study by Ramzi Zaki, *al-Ta'rikh al-naqdi li-l-takhalluf: Dirasa fi athar nizam al-naqad al-dawli 'ala al-takawwun al-ta'arikh li-l-takhalluf bi-duwal al-'alam al-thalith* (Kuwait: 'Alam al-Ma'rifa, 1987); Falih 'Abd al-Jabbar, "Hiwar ma'a al-Brufissur Tumas Sintish [Tamás Szentes]: al-Qadaya al-nazariyya li-l-iqtisad al-'alami wa-mushkilat

- al-takhalluf wa-l-tatawwur," *al-Nahj* 33 (1990), 73–86. Szentes (b. 1933) is author of, among other works, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment* (1971) and *Theories of World Capitalist Economy* (1985). Both books were translated into Arabic.
- 32 See, for example, Dimitry V. Pospelovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory, and Practice, and the Believer*, 2 vols. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987–88).
- 33 Günther Kassian, *Die Orientierung an der frühislamischen Geschichte in der Ideologie des arabischen Sozialismus unter Nasser* (Bonn, 1991).
- 34 On Abu Dharr, see Ulrich Haarmann, "Abu Dharr, Muhammad's Revolutionary Companion," *Muslim World* 86, no. 4, 285–289; Werner Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte: Die Umayyaden im Urteil arabischer Autoren des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Beirut: Steiner, 1977), 210–221.
- 35 For the critics, see Salah al-Din al-Munajjid, *Balshafat al-Islam 'inda al-marksyyin wa-l-ishtirakiyyin al-'arab* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1966); and 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, *Abu Dharr al-Ghifari wa-l-shuyu'iyya* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1976).
- 36 Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Sirr ta' akhkhur al-'arab wa-l-muslimin* (Cairo: Dar Nahdat Misr, 1996); Shakib Arslan, *Li-madha ta' akhkhara al-muslimun wa-taqaddama ghayruhum* (Cairo: Matba'at 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1955, first published in *al-Manar* in 1930). For Qasim Amin, see Nergis Mazid, "Western Mimicry or Cultural Hybridity: Deconstructing Qasim Amin's 'Colonized Voice,'" *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 19 (2002), 42–67.
- 37 Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Chicago: Free Press, 1958), 10. I have found no clue as to whether the Arab self-critical authors knew about this book.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Scribner, 1973), 282.
- 40 Sania Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arab* (New York: Twayne Publishers 1960); Morroe Berger, *The Arab World Today* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962); and Yehoshafat Harkabi, *The Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972). Also compare Edward Said's critique of Patai and the authors considered in this article in *Orientalism*, 307–310.
- 41 Dalya Abudi, *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 28.
- 42 Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950).
- 43 John Levi Martin calls the study "probably the most deeply flawed work of prominence in political psychology." See John Levi Martin, "The Authoritarian Personality, 50 Years Later: What Lessons Are There for Political Psychology?" *Political Psychology* 22, no. 2 (2001), 1–26, here: 1.
- 44 At that time, Arab students in the US were found to be less authoritarian than students from Hong Kong, Rhodesia, and India, and only slightly more authoritarian than US and Brazilian students, as per a study citing similar results in previous studies. See Robert D. Meade and James O. Whittaker, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Authoritarianism," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 72 (1967), 3–7.
- 45 See Lutfi Diyab, "Al-Tasalutiyya wa-l-taba'ud al-ijtima'i lada talabat al-Sharq al-Adna fi al-jami'at al-amrikiyya," in *Qira'at fi 'ilm al-nafs al-ijtima'i fi al-bilad al-'arabiyya*, ed. Luwis Kamil Mulayka (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiyya, 1965), 220–229; 'Abd al-Sattar Ibrahim, "Al-Tasalutiyya wa-quwwat al-ana," in *Qira'at fi 'ilm al-nafs al-ijtima'i fi al-bilad al-'arabiyya*, vol. 2, ed. Luwis Kamil Mulayka (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1970), 209–242. This article was based on a MA study at Cairo University published later by idem, *Dinamiyyat al-'alaaqa bayn al-tasalutiyya wa-quwwat al-ana* (Cairo: Jami'at al-Qahira, Kulliyat al-Adab, 1998);

- and Nahid Ramzi, *al-Ra'y al-'amm wa-saykulujiyat al-siyasa* (Cairo: Maktabat al-An'lu al-Missriyya, 1991), 78–89, who mentions that there are only few studies on religious and political fanaticism (*ta'assub*) in Arab societies (89). The term was later also employed to describe the “authoritarian state” (*al-dawla al-tasallutiyya*).
- 46 Sharabi, *Muqaddima*, 97
- 47 See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (London: NLB, 1971), translated by Ben Brewster, 121–176.
- 48 This tendency materialized in the journal *New Left Review*, founded in 1960, and in the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (1964–2002), which promoted the study of sub-culture, popular culture, feminism, and race from a Marxist starting point. See, for example, Richard Hoggart, *Contemporary Cultural Studies: An Approach to the Study of Literature and Society* (University of Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1969); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963); and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958).
- 49 Sharabi, for example, not only referred to Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm, and Melanie Klein in his books, but also explained how his re-lecture of Freud and Marx in 1972 helped him to overcome his previous negative image of both, whose “backwardness” (*takhalluf*) he had previously castigated in his lectures at university in an ironic liberal style. See Sharabi, *Muqaddima*, 26–29. Sharabi’s appreciation for the Frankfurt School is also mentioned by Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left* (London: Verso, 2003), 14, 94.
- 50 This is a difficult task to undertake. See the discussion by Janice Peck, “Why We Shouldn’t Be Bored with the Political Economy versus Cultural Studies Debate,” *Cultural Critique* 64 (2006), 92–125.
- 51 Naomi Sakr, “Placing Political Economy in Relation to Cultural Studies: Reflections on the Case of Cinema in Saudi Arabia,” in *Arab Cultural Studies: Mapping the Field*, ed. Tarik Sabry (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 214–233, here: 218.
- 52 See Rex Brynen, “Political Culture and the Puzzle of Persistent Authoritarian Rule in the Middle East,” <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/icames/IPSA.pdf>, 3–12.
- 53 See the works by Gustav E. Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962) or Bernard Lewis, *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); for a critique see Said, *Orientalism*, 296–298 and 314–321.
- 54 See the works by Walter Rostow, William A. Lewis, Talcott Parsons, and Daniel Lerner; for a critique see, for example, Hemant Shah, *The Production of Modernization: Daniel Lerner, Mass Media, and the Passing of Traditional Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
- 55 For the representatives of the economic dependency theory, see above footnotes 30 and 31. A well-known example for the cultural deformation thesis is Iranian writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad’s 1962 book, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West (Gharbzadegi)*, translated by R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983).
- 56 See, for example, Sharabi, *Muqaddima*, 120–127.
- 57 Al-'Azm, *al-Naqd al-dhati*, 69–92, here: 69f. See also the review by Nissim Rejwan, “The New Arab Revolution?” *New Middle East* 16 (1970), 40–41.
- 58 Wild, “Gott und Mensch im Libanon,” 213.
- 59 Hamid 'Ammar, *Growing Up in an Egyptian Village: Silwa, Province of Aswan* (London: Routledge, 1954).

- 60 Al-'Azm, *al-Naqd al-dhati*, 70.  
61 Ibid., 71f.  
62 Ibid., 75.  
63 Ibid., 76.  
64 Ibid., 77.  
65 Ibid.  
66 Ibid., 11–26. Comparisons between Arab underachievement and Japanese success are popular. Compare also to Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, 101.  
67 Al-'Azm, *al-Naqd al-dhati*, 94. For similar ideas, see Yasin al-Hafiz, *al-Tajriba al-tarikhyya al-fitnamiyya*, al-A'mal al-kamila 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Hasad, 1997).  
68 Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm, *Naqd al-fikr al-dini* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1969).  
69 Ibid., 13.  
70 Ibid., 16f.  
71 Ibid., 8.  
72 Ibid., 9.  
73 Ibid, 9f. and 149–179.  
74 Al-Hafiz, "al-Ta'akhkhur al-'arabi taqnuluji am idyuluji-siyasi!?" in *al-Hazima wa-l-idiyulujiya al-mahzuma*, al-A'mal al-kamila 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Hasad, 1997), 249–257.  
75 Ibid., 251f.  
76 Ibid., 252.  
77 Ibid., 256.  
78 Yasin al-Hafiz, "Hazimat Huzayran judhuruha wa-asbabuha wa-nata'ijuha," in *al-Hazima wa-l-idiyulujiya al-mahzuma*, al-A'mal al-kamila 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Hasad, 1997), 115–142, here: 122.  
79 Ibid.  
80 Ibid., 126.  
81 Ibid.  
82 Ibid., 127.  
83 Ibid.  
84 Yasin al-Hafiz, "Ittijahat al-tatawwur al-'arabi al-muqbil," in *al-Hazima wa-l-idiyulujiya al-mahzuma*, al-A'mal al-kamila 4 (Damascus: Dar al-Hasad, 1997), 151–193, here: 174.  
85 Yasin al-Hafiz, "Tarikh wa'y aw sira dhatiyya idyulujiyya-siyasiyya," in *al-Hazima wa-l-idiyulujiya al-mahzuma*, al-A'mal al-kamila 4 (Damascus: Dar al-Hasad, 1997), 7–46, here: 43.  
86 Ibid., 38f. and 42f.  
87 Ibid., 35.  
88 Ibid..  
89 Ibid., 42f.  
90 Ibid., 41.  
91 Ibid., 46.  
92 Ibid.  
93 Hijazi, *Al-Takhalluf al-ijtima'i*, 349.  
94 Ibid.  
95 Ibid., 352.  
96 Ibid., 9 and 349.  
97 Ibid., 349.  
98 Ibid., 37.  
99 The lack of participation and empowerment has become a recurrent subject in the critique



- of development policy. See, for example, Michael Edwards, "The Irrelevance of Development Studies," *Third World Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1989), 116–135.
- 100 Hijazi, *Al-Takhalluf al-ijtima'i*, 113.
- 101 Ibid., 298.
- 102 Ibid., 308.
- 103 Ibid., 8.
- 104 Compare also *ibid.*, 271f., 278, 298–304.
- 105 Ibid., 108–132.
- 106 Ibid., 109–112, refuting the argumentation of leftist intellectual Nadim Bitar.
- 107 Ibid., 113.
- 108 Ibid., 43.
- 109 Nawal El Saadawi, "Preface to the English Edition" (1979), in *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980), xiii–xxxvii, here: xiii; also reprinted in Nawal El Saadawi, *The Essential Nawal El Saadawi: A Reader*, ed. Adele Newson-Horst (London: Zed Books, 2010), as "Preface to *The Hidden Face of Eve*," 43–65.
- 110 El Saadawi, "Preface to the English Edition", xiv.
- 111 Ibid., xxxiv. For a critique of Saadawi's "tendency to minimize women's oppression in the Arab world," see Magida Salman, "Nawal Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* (book review)," *Khamsin* 8 (1981), <https://libcom.org/library/nawal-saadawi%E2%80%99s-hidden-face-eve-book-review-%E2%80%93-magida-salman>.
- 112 El Saadawi, "al-Sayyid wa-l-'abd," in *al-Mar'a wa-l-jins*, 102–113, and *idem*, "Tahrir al-'abid lam yuharrir al-mar'a" in *al-Wajh al-'ari*, 797–803; compare *idem*, "Liberty to the Slave, But Not for the Woman," in *The Hidden Face*, 115–124.
- 113 El Saadawi, "Preface to the English Edition", xv.
- 114 El Saadawi, "The Very Fine Membrane Called 'Honour,'" in *The Hidden Face*, 25–32, here: 31.
- 115 El Saadawi, "Taqdim" and "Mafhum al-'Udhriyya," in *al-Mar'a wa-l-jins*, 7–11 and 20–37; *idem*, "al-'Adala laysat 'adila," in *al-Wajh al-'ari*, 929–940; compare *idem*, "The Injustice of Justice," in *The Hidden Face*, 19–24.
- 116 El Saadawi, "al-'Itida'ala al-tifla al-bint," in *al-Wajh al-'ari*, 924–928; compare *idem*, "Sexual Aggression Against the Female Child" and "The Grandfather with Bad Manners," in *The Hidden Face*, 12–15, 16–18.
- 117 El Saadawi, *al-Mar'a wa-l-sira' al-nafsi*, 666–671 *passim*; compare *idem*, "Circumcision of Girls," in *The Hidden Face*, 33–43.
- 118 El Saadawi, "al-Su'al al-ha'ir bi-ghayr jawab," in *al-Wajh al-'ari*, 778–781; compare El Saadawi, "The Question That No One Would Answer," in *The Hidden Face*, 7–11.
- 119 See, for example, El Saadawi, *al-Mar'a wa-l-jins*, 38–61.
- 120 El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face*, 13.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 El Saadawi, "al-Afkar al-asasiyya allati tadmanuha hadha al-kitab," in *al-Wajh al-'ari li-l-mar'a al-'arabiyya*, 777. For a similar introduction, compare *idem*, "al-Mabadi' al-asasiyya allati yartakiz 'alayha al-kitab," in *al-Untha hiya al-asl*, 194f.
- 123 El Saadawi, "al-Afkar al-asasiyya," 777. I quote after *idem*, "Afterword," in *The Hidden Face*, 211f., as far as the English translation is congruent with the Arabic original.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 Ibid., 212. El Saadawi cites some Qur'anic passages.
- 126 Ibid. Also compare the last chapter of *al-Mar'a wa-l-jins*, where Saadawi writes that women's struggle is part of the wider "liberation of society from world capitalism, and from the values, traditions, and systems of capitalism" and that only socialism in its "real

- meaning,” not in sloganeering, can provide justice and equality. See El Saadawi, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-jins*, 159.
- 127 El Saadawi, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-sira’ al-nafsi*, 669, compare idem, *The Hidden Face*, 37.
- 128 El Saadawi, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-jins*, 59; idem, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-sira’ al-nafsi*, 621.
- 129 El Saadawi, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-jins*, 48; idem, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-sira’ al-nafsi*, 664.
- 130 El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face*, xiv–xv, where she writes: “Sigmund Freud was perhaps the most famous of all those men who taught psychological and physiological circumcision of women when he formulated his theory on the psychic nature of women, described the clitoris as a male organ, and sexual activity related to the clitoris as an infantile phase, and when he maintained that maturity and mental health in a woman required that sexual activity related to the clitoris cease and be transferred to the vagina.”
- 131 She uses the term neurosis (‘*usab*) without deeper discussion and subdivides it into other unspecific categories—“anxiety” (*qalaq*), “depression” (*ikti’ab*), “fear” (*khawf*), “hysteria” and “others”—which are taken for granted and mainly help to categorize the women as “neurotic” or “normal” (*tabi’iyya*). See El Saadawi, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-sira’ al-nafsi*, 662.
- 132 Ibid., 620.
- 133 Ibid., 625.
- 134 Ibid., 666.
- 135 Idem, “Circumcision of Girls,” in *The Hidden Face*, 33, 39.
- 136 Idem, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-sira’ al-nafsi*, 641, 665f.
- 137 Ibid., 666–668, also compare excerpts from her interviews in idem, *The Hidden Face*, 35f.
- 138 Idem, *al-Mar’ a wa-l-sira’ al-nafsi*, 665.
- 139 Ibid., 666.
- 140 Sharabi, *Muqaddima*, 31–57, 81–102, 103–120.
- 141 Ibid., 43, 103–120.
- 142 Ibid., 34f. So-called cousin marriage, illegal in most US states since the nineteenth or twentieth century, is a frequently cited phenomenon, yet one that is hard to quantify. For varying numbers, see, for example, Mohsen A. F. El-Hazmi, A. R. Al-Swailem, A. S. Warsy, A. M. Al-Swailem, R. Sulaimani, and A. A. Al-Meshari, “Consanguinity Among the Saudi Arabian Population,” *Journal of Medical Genetics* 32 (1995), 623–626. For a methodological critique of using the term “cousin marriage” in data collections, see Martina Rieker, Barbara Ibrahim, Penny Johnson, and Annelies Moors, “Producing Modern Families Through Data,” in *Frangings: Rethinking Arab Families Projects—Volume I*, edited by Arab Families Working Group, 199–201, available at: [http://sjooseph.ucdavis.edu/Images\\_Homepage/old-plone-logos/afwgvolume1.pdf](http://sjooseph.ucdavis.edu/Images_Homepage/old-plone-logos/afwgvolume1.pdf) (retrieved on 11 May 2015).
- 143 Sharabi, *Muqaddima*, 38
- 144 Ibid., 48 and 57.
- 145 Ibid., 50.
- 146 See for example, ibid., 43f. and 105f., comparing events in Damascus and Boston. This kind of self-critique has since then been popularized. See the platitudinous anecdotes presented by ‘Abdallah al-Maghluth, *Kikhkhah ya Baba: Fi naqd al-zawahir al-ijtima’iyya* (Beirut: Madarik, 2011).
- 147 See Hisham Sharabi, *al-Nizam al-abawi wa-ishkaliyyat takhalluf al-mujtama’ al-‘arabi*, translated by Mahmud Sharikh (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-‘Arabiyya, 1992); a fourth edition appeared in 2000 from Dar Nilsun. In the text, “neopatriarchy” is given as *al-nizam al-abawi al-mustahdath*.
- 148 The book merely consists of a chapter in which the ideas of several radical critics, mostly Marxists, among them al-‘Azm, are summarized. See Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, 104–124.

- 149 Ibid., 7.
- 150 Val Moghadam, "The Critical and Sociological Approach in Middle East Studies," *Critical Sociology* 17, no. 1 (1990), 111–123, here: 118. She still sees the "neopatriarchal state" as a useful "umbrella term." See Moghadam, "Patriarchy in Transition," 148.
- 151 Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, vii.
- 152 Ibid.
- 153 Ibid., viii.
- 154 Ibid., 4.
- 155 Ibid., 40–48.
- 156 Ibid., 42.
- 157 Annika Rabo, "Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society by Hisham Sharabi," *Contemporary Sociology* 19, no. 1 (1990), 42–43, here 42.
- 158 Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, 84–103.
- 159 Ibid., 86.
- 160 Ibid., 85.
- 161 Ibid., 87.
- 162 Ibid., 88.
- 163 Ibid., 95.
- 164 Al-Sayyid Yasin, *al-Shakhsiyya al-'arabiyya bayna surat al-dhat wa-mafhum al-akhar* (Beirut: Dar al-Tanwir, 1981), 165–171, 180–184; Fouad M. Moughrabi, "The Arab Basic Personality: A Critical Survey of the Literature," *International Journal of the Middle East Studies* 9 (1978), 99–112; and Said, *Orientalism*, 27f. and 286.
- 165 Al-Sayyid Yasin, *al-Shakhsiyya al-'arabiyya*, 165–171, 180–184. Yasin also refers to early critiques of al-'Azm by 'Izzat Hijazi, "al-Shakhsiyya al-misriyya bayn al-salbiyya wa-l-ijabiyya," *al-Fikr al-Mu'asir* 50 (1969), 42–49, and Hani Mundis, "Hawla mushkilat al-naqd ba'd al-hazima: al-Jamahir wa-l-wa'y al-thawri," *Mawaqif* 4 (1969), 131–140.
- 166 Al-Sayyid Yasin, *al-Shakhsiyya al-'arabiyya*, 182f.
- 167 Ibid., 171–175.
- 168 Ibid., 174.
- 169 Ibid., 184.
- 170 Moughrabi, "The Arab Basic Personality," 111.
- 171 Ibid., 104, 105, 108.
- 172 Ibid., 108.
- 173 For the notorious debate between Moroccan philosopher Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri and George Tarabishi, see Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 154–171; and Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 20–24. For some of the conferences convened on authenticity, heritage, and renewal, see also Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 116–172. A conference on Arab rationality in Tunis in 1988 attended by many intellectuals, among them Jabiri and Tarabishi, prompted Syrian Marxist Murqus to write a voluminous, posthumously published critique. See Ilyas Murqus, *Naqd al-'aqlaniyya al-'arabiyya* (Damascus: Dar al-Hasad, 1998).
- 174 Halim Barakat, "Beyond the Always and the Never: A Critique of Social Psychological Interpretations of Arab Society and Culture," in *Theory, Politics and the Arab World: Critical Responses*, ed. Hisham Sharabi (London: Routledge, 1990), 132–159.
- 175 Ibid., 156.
- 176 Ibid., 143.
- 177 Here, I mainly draw on Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2013); Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Judgment Under Uncertainty,"

- Science* 185 (1974); and Tversky and Kahneman, "On the Reality of Cognitive Illusions," *Psychological Review* 103, no. 3 (1996).
- 178 Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, 155, writes: "It is perhaps my wishful impulse to overcome the paralyzing cultural trauma that has dominated my generation and might now take hold of the younger one, which impels me to affirm society's ability not only to survive but also to overcome its innermost disease, neopatriarchy, and to become modern. . . . Yes. To fight the pessimism of the intellect, one must hold fast to the optimism of the will."
- 179 A study on children's submission in a kindergarten in Baghdad found that there was more pressure on boys. See Anwar Fadi' Abd al-Wahhab, Sajla' Fa'iq, and Suzan 'Abdallah, "Qiyas al-idhān lada atfal al-riyad," *Majallat al-'Ulum al-Nafsiyya* 17 (2010), 326–348. Again, this result might be influenced by various factors, like for example a different education for boys by their families.
- 180 Halim Barakat, "The Arab Family and the Challenge of Change," in *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 97–119, here: 118. Compare for nearly the same wording Sharabi, *Muqaddima*, 38.
- 181 Suad Joseph and Martina Rieker, "Introduction: Rethinking Arab Family Projects" (2008), in *Framings: Rethinking Arab Families Projects – Volume I*, edited by Arab Families Working Group: 1–30, here: 3, available at: [http://sjoseph.ucdavis.edu/Images\\_Homepage/old-plone-logos/afwgvolume1.pdf](http://sjoseph.ucdavis.edu/Images_Homepage/old-plone-logos/afwgvolume1.pdf) (retrieved on 11 May 2015); Rieker, Ibrahim, Johnson and Moors, "Producing Modern Families," 177–209.
- 182 On modern family laws, see David S. Pearl, "Family Law," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. 2, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 212–215. On family planning, see Donna L. Bowen, "Family Planning," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. 2, ed. John L. Esposito, 215–217; Roswitha Badry, "Tanzim al-Nasl, Tanzim al-Usra," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (EI), ed. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. Heinrichs.
- 183 Rieker, Ibrahim, Johnson, and Moors, "Producing Modern Families," 182–191.
- 184 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
- 185 Joseph and Rieker, "Introduction," 1.
- 186 *Ibid.*, 5. Joseph and Rieker, *ibid.*, 4 and 7, explicitly point at the works of Hisham Sharabi and Halim Barakat.
- 187 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 188 UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, 168.
- 189 See the Arab Human Development Report 2005: "The family continues to be the first social institution that reproduces patriarchal relationships, values and pressures through gender discrimination. Such pressures on women increase in violence at times of crisis . . ." (16, 173). "Relations within the family have continued to be governed by the father's authority over his children and the husband's over his wife, under the sway of the patriarchal order. Those changes to which the framework of the family has been subjected, including the reaffirmation of the nuclear at the expense of the extended family and the decline in the percentage of marriage to kin, cannot be considered far reaching. Nor can it be claimed that they have affected the functional nature of the relationship between the sexes in any profound way" (168).
- 190 *Ibid.*, 17, 175: "Yet the Arab family is too complex to be summed up in one generalised and absolute characterisation; nor should society succumb to a negative stereotype of fatherhood. Such one-sided images lead individuals to surrender to authority figures and give

- credence to the notion that rebelling against authoritarianism or changing the status quo is impossible”
- 191 Valentine M. Moghadam, “Patriarchy in Transition: Women and the Changing Family in the Middle East,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35, no. 3 (2004), 137–162.
- 192 Abudi, *Mothers and Daughters*, 28.
- 193 Joseph and Rieker, “Introduction,” 13.
- 194 In general, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); for Lebanon and Syria, see Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
- 195 Joseph and Rieker, “Introduction,” 1 and 4.
- 196 For a critique, see Maria Todorova, “On the Epistemological Value of Family Models: The Balkans Within the European Pattern,” in *Family History Revisited: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Richard Wall, Tamara K. Hareven, and Joseph Ehmer (London: Associated University Press, 2001), 242–256.
- 197 Andreas Gestrich, *Geschichte der Familie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003), 61–72; Richard Wall, “The Transformation of the European Family Across the Centuries,” in *Family History Revisited*, 217–241.
- 198 Gunilla Budde, “Das wechselvolle Kapital der Familie,” in *Kapitalismus: Historische Annäherungen*, ed. Gunilla Budde (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 97–115; David Landes, *Dynasties: Fortunes and Misfortunes of the World’s Great Family Businesses* (New York: Viking, 2006); Carola Lipp, “Verwandtschaft: ein negiertes Element in der politischen Kultur des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 283 (2006), 31–77; Christopher H. Johnson and David W. Sabeen, eds., *Sibling Relations and the Transformation of European Kinship, 1300-1900* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); and Christopher H. Johnson, ed., *Blood and Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).
- 199 One hardly finds positive characterizations of the Arab extended family, and if one does, they are tactically motivated and relativized, as in the following statement on Arabs in family therapy in the US: “Family therapists need to be careful not to view these family systems necessarily as pathological, and to recognize that the extended family provides considerable emotional, financial, and other support. The family therapist needs to make direct statements, during sessions, attesting to his or her recognition of the importance of family. Interventions that build on the strength of the family . . . are likely to be more acceptable to more recently immigrated, traditional families.” See Karen L. Haboush, “Lebanese and Syrian Families,” in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, eds. Monica McGoldrick, Joe Giordano, and Nydia Garcia-Preedo (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 468–486, here: 475.
- 200 An example is the work of French anthropologist Germain Tillion, *The Republic of Cousins: Women’s Oppression in Mediterranean Society* (1966).
- 201 Abudi, *Mothers and Daughters*, 28f.
- 202 Ibid., 30.
- 203 Suad Joseph, “Introduction: Theories and Dynamics of Gender, Self, and Identity in Arab Families,” in *Intimate Selfing in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*, ed. Suad Joseph (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 1–20, here: 9.
- 204 Joseph and Rieker, “Introduction,” 6.
- 205 Ibid., 7.
- 206 Ibid.
- 207 See, for example, the erratic remarks under the entries “*a’ila*” and “*bayt*” by J. Lecerf in

- EI 2, vol. I, 305f. and 1139. The entry “*usra*” is entirely missing. In contrast, the article by Elizabeth W. Fernea only mentions the Arabic term “*ahl*.” See Fernea, “Family,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, vol. 2, 207–211.
- 208 Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600. The Life and Times of Isma‘il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Beshara Doumani, “Endowing Family: Waqf, Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800–1860,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 1 (1998): 3–41; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*; Akram F. Khater, *Inventing Home: Immigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Beshara Doumani, ed., *Family History in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805–1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Leila Hudson, “Investing by Women or Investing in Women? Merchandise, Money, and Marriage and the Formation of a Pre-National Bourgeoisie in Damascus,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 26, no. 1 (2006), 105–120.
- 209 Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 170–192, especially 177f.
- 210 For this debate, see Yohtaro Takano and Eiko Osaka, “An Unsupported Common View: Comparing Japan and the US on Individualism/Collectivism,” *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1999): 311–341; David Matsumoto, “Culture and Self: An Empirical Assessment of Markus and Kitayama’s Theory of Independent and Interdependent Self-Constructs,” *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1999): 289–310; Daphna Oyserman, Heather M. Coon, and Markus Kemmelmeier, “Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses,” *Psychological Bulletin* 128, no. 1 (2002): 3–72; Daphna Oyserman and Spike W. S. Lee, “Does Culture Influence What and How We Think? Effects of Priming Individualism and Collectivism,” *Psychological Bulletin* 134, no. 2 (2008): 311–342; and Yohtaro Takano and Shunya Sogon, “Are Japanese More Collectivistic Than Americans? Examining Conformity in In-Groups and the Reference-Group Effect,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2008): 237–250.
- 211 See, for more examples from Western literature, Lisa Anderson, “Democracy in the Arab World,” 84–86.
- 212 Fuad I. Khuri, *Tents and Pyramids: Games and Ideology in Arab Culture from Backgammon to Autocratic Rule* (London: Saqi, 1990).
- 213 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 214 Philip Carl Salzman, “The Middle East’s Tribal DNA,” *Middle East Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (2008), available at <http://www.meforum.org/1813/the-middle-east-tribal-dna> (retrieved on 14 August 2014); *idem*, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Book, 2007).
- 215 Brynen, “Political Culture,” 14.
- 216 As‘ad Abukhalil, “The Longevity of Arab Regimes: Causes of Oppression,” in *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis*, eds. Nouredin Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia, and Mimi Kirk (London: Routledge, 2014): 40–56, here: 45.
- 217 *Ibid.*
- 218 *Ibid.*
- 219 For a general treatment, see Daniel M. Varisco, *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Peter J. Bräunlein, “‘Islam Observed’ – ‘Islam Obscured’: Lokale Religionsforschung aus translokaler Perspektive,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 58, no. 2 (2006), 133–154.

- 220 Gary S. Gregg, *The Middle East: A Cultural Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a critical review, see Mandy Terc, "The Middle East: A Cultural Psychology," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 3 (2007), 123–126; for a friendly review, see Vincent Crapanzano, "Gary S. Gregg: *The Middle East: A Cultural Psychology*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 4 (2006), 621–623.
- 221 Gregg, *The Middle East*, 359.
- 222 Nuha Abudabbeh, "Arab Families: An Overview," in *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*, 423–436.
- 223 *Ibid.*, 427.
- 224 *Ibid.*, 423.
- 225 *Ibid.*, 431. A reason mentioned for this supposed reluctance is Arabs' "higher tolerance for mental illness."
- 226 *Ibid.*, 435.
- 227 *Ibid.*
- 228 *Ibid.*, 436.