

book remains fixed on the spread of ideas that are integral to the functioning of global capitalism. While other categories of ideas may travel across the globe through distinct mechanisms and networks, Sukarieh contends that the core investigative approach advanced by the book remains relevant: an in-depth exploration of geographically anchored actor networks, resource mobilization, strategic utilization of key urban spaces, and the intricate balance between the objectives of dominant actors and those of their less influential counterparts (p. 8). In doing so, this comprehensive study advances critical insights into the factors and networks that shape the global dissemination of ideas.

Despite the rich complexity of its theoretical framework and the in-depth examination thereof, this book is a smooth read, eloquently written, and well-organized. There is only so much any one book can do, and its persuasive emphasis on the role of cities in shaping the spreading of ideas may encourage future research on other categories of cities, particularly at a time when the region is witnessing heightened power struggles. Most notably, cities like Beirut and Baghdad represent a missing category of cities situated at the fault lines of global and regional power politics, wherein the discourse on youth-related concepts and associated strategies for their delineation unfolds as a contested terrain embroiled in the tenuous interactions between global and regional state and non-state actors.


While the principal thrust of the book clearly revolves around the organized movement of ideas from the West to the Middle East, the inclusion of cities such as Beirut and Baghdad can help add insights into the multifaceted and ever-evolving currents by which youth-related ideas spread. These currents may either reinforce or challenge the overarching framework underlying the “global youth development complex.” An exploration of these dimensions could help factor in the interplay of exchanges and conflicts between different networks aiming to shape discourses and ideas related to youth and the resultant impact on the conception and implementation of youth-related paradigms, practices, and policies within the region. In other words, are not alternatives to the “global youth development complex” but contenders? Even if one wishes to remain focused on the former, how does it engage with the latter?

The missing engagement with cities where alternatives to the global youth development complex compete to shape ideas of youth, while justifiable within the book’s scope, may inadvertently limit its capacity to extrapolate insights encompassing the broader implications of these ideas outside the purview of the chosen cases (see, in particular, the Conclusion, where Sukarieh does engage with other studies examining the spread of global ideas in the region at different periods of time).

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Arabic Exile Literature in Europe: Defamiliarizing Forced Migration

**Johanna Sellman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).
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Literature about travels to Europe, texts reflecting on identity and belonging, and describing encounters with the Other all have a long tradition in Arabic literature stretching back to the



time of the Nahda. The theme of migration has been treated from different angles but almost always with a stress on the difference between East and West: from the early precolonial literature with its partly critical but at the same time also inquisitive and even positive outlook on Europe as a center of modernity to learn from, to later texts from the colonial period describing the encounter between the spiritual East and the spiritually hollow West, often embodied in an encounter between a male student from an Arabic country and a European woman, to the more problematized descriptions of the 1960s–1970s focusing on exile and alienation. However, since the 1990s in connection with turbulent political and social circumstances, a new kind of literature of migration has started to emerge. It is referred to as literature of forced migration and it is distinguished from earlier literature of migration by its new aesthetics and styles. At the center of this new literature of forced migration stand the refugees and asylum seekers who for different reasons, be they political, economic, or related to war, have been forced to migrate. To quote the author of the study reviewed here, Johanna Sellman, this is literature written from the perspective of those outside “normatively defined citizenship” (p. 3).

It is this literature of migration of the post-1990s that is in focus in Sellman’s *Arabic Exile Literature in Europe: Defamiliarizing Forced Migration*. A keyword in the study, as apparent already in the subtitle, is defamiliarization. The term, first coined by the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, is here defined as a creative and literary tool for challenging and reimagining hegemonic concepts of categories such as borders, citizenship, and belonging. It is thus the aim of the study to explore how different defamiliarizing techniques and non-realist speculative modes of writing, like fantasy, dystopian writing, and science fiction, are used in contemporary Arabic literature of forced migration with the purpose of problematizing, challenging, and reimagining simplified representations of migrations and migrants as well as borders, citizenship, and belonging. The corpus of the study consists of a selection of novels, short stories, and theater plays by several Arabic writers from different countries. What the texts have in common is that they engage with contemporary forms of forced and undocumented migration through creative defamiliarization, thus challenging hegemonic binaries like those between the East and West or between the exile and the refugee. The majority of the texts are written in Arabic but the corpus also includes narratives originally written in French, German, English, and Swedish by authors who have ties to the Arabic-speaking world. Thus, for example, among the texts discussed we find a play by the Swedish novelist and playwright Jonas Hassen Khemiri, who has a connection to Tunis through his father but who writes in Swedish, and a novel by Abbas Khider, who is of Iraqi origin but writes in German.

The study is divided into six chapters with an introduction and a concluding discussion. Chapter 1, “Shifting Frameworks for Studying Contemporary Arabic Literature of Migration to Europe: A Case for Border Studies,” presents the purpose of the study as well as situates the topic theoretically and historically. Sellman, in Chapter 2, turns to a discussion of the so-called *harraga* literature. This term started to appear in the 1990s as a name for a particular kind of text describing the clandestine and dangerous illegal crossings of migrants over the Mediterranean in order to reach Europe. The word *harraga*, which in Algerian Arabic means “those who burn,” refers to the migrants’ practice of burning their identity papers before setting out on the journey, but it may also be interpreted figuratively as the act of burning one’s past, that is, burning one’s possibilities of returning. This literary genre, which is not restricted to the Arabic part of North Africa but also extends to sub-Saharan African literature as well as to other parts of the Arabic world, includes texts that are written in Arabic, French, and English, but the author of the present study focuses on the Arabic and Francophone *harraga* literature. She discusses three novels written by authors from Morocco (Mahi Binebine and Youssef Fadel) and Eritrea (Abu Bakr Khaal) and points at the use of the fantastic, the nightmarish, the wildness, and the mythical in these narratives in order to defamiliarize dominant discourses on migration. Chapter 3 is devoted to the Iraqi writer Hassan Blasim, at present living in Finland, and his “nightmare realism” where boundaries and borders, not only between nations but also between human bodies as well as between

different species, the human and the nonhuman, are broken down. Chapter 4 explores how failed translations in narratives serve as a defamiliarizing tool. This is exemplified by two novels written by two writers of Iraqi origin, Hawra al-Nadawi, who grew up in Copenhagen, and Abbas Khider, who resides in Germany, and the play *Invasion* written in Swedish by Jonas Hassen Khemiri. The author shows how the theme of failed projects of translations may unsettle and defamiliarize seemingly fixed ideas of identities and belongings and create new meanings. Chapter 5 discusses the Arabic literary, theater, and arts scene in Berlin, which started to flourish in connection with the arrival of over a million Syrians in 2015–16. The chapter starts with a presentation of this new cultural and literary scene, which is heavily dominated by Syrian writers and artists, followed by an analysis of a number of short stories picked from two collections by the Syrian writer Rasha Abbas as well as the experimental play *Please, Repeat After Me*, written in English by the, likewise, Syrian writer Ziad Adwan. Sellman argues that these narratives are less occupied with the routes, journeys, and border crossings than the narratives previously discussed and focus instead on the defamiliarization of the concept of migration as a crisis. Finally, Chapter 6 stands out from the rest of the study with its focus on London and Paris, two historically established centers of Arabic literature in Europe. This contrasts with the more recent Arabic diasporas treated in the former chapters. Even though these centers play a less prominent role regarding the new literature of forced migration, they still, not least in view of their established literary institutions and publishing houses, are able to contribute to the spread of the new literature to a wider audience. In this chapter, Sellman points to the existence of connections between the work of the new generation of migrant writers and some of the established authors residing in these old centers of Arabic literature, authors who rather than being referred to as migrant writers are looked upon as writers connected with their respective nations in the Arab world or with world literature. As examples of this she brings up and discusses works of established writers such as Samar Yazbek (Syria) and Hoda Barakat (Lebanon), who both reside in Paris, and Hanan al-Shaykh (Lebanon) and Haifa Zangana (Iraq), who live in London. In their works, Sellman identifies and discusses literary techniques parallel to the techniques used in the literature of forced migration discussed in previous chapters.

Arabic Exile Literature in Europe is a rich and valuable academic contribution to the study of literature of migration with its focus on the most recent trends and literary works as well as new Arabic diasporas like Berlin, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. These are new fields of research that have not yet been widely studied. She is well-read and her analyses and discussions are thus well-supported theoretically as she connects them with scholarship on Arabic literary studies and migration and border studies.

Still, a remark must be made here about one small mistake in the text. The title of Yi-Fu Tuan's 2001 study *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* is referred to in the Introduction as well as in the Bibliography as *Place and Place* (pp. 8 and 252).

However, this is a minor flaw that may be easily corrected in a future edition and it does not at all lessen the value of the study. The purpose of the work, to show how this literature of forced migration challenges the simplified representations of migration, belonging, and identity, is well fulfilled. What makes the study even more important is that Sellman challenges her readers' potential pre-understandings of what Arabic literature of migration is and what it includes. She does this by widening the scope of the study and letting it encompass different kinds of texts, well-known works as well as those by authors perhaps not yet so familiar to us, texts written in other languages than Arabic, and eventually also including texts written by well-established writers residing in the old Arabic cultural centers of London and Paris, thus pointing to the connection between these literary works and the more recent ones by so-called forced migration writers. The book is an indispensable resource for scholars and students as well as for non-specialists interested in literature on migration.