

Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (1925–2009)

A Maker of the *Nahḍa*

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Abstract: This text explores the oeuvre of Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (1925–2009), with special attention to his work on the history of the Arabic theatre. I contextualize Najm’s intellectual production in the wider intellectual horizon of the 1950s and 1960s. The argument is that Najm, together with others, constructed a narrative of the Arabic literary renewal (*nahḍa*) based on their notions of modernism and pan-Arabism. Arabic plays were essential in this construction since these represented modernity and the break with the (Ottoman) past.

Keywords: Arabic theatre, Arabic literature, nationalism, theatre historiography, Arabic plays, *nahḍa*

المستخلص: تدرس هذه المقالة أعمال محمد يوسف نجم (١٩٢٥-٢٠٠٩)، مركزةً بشكل خاص على تأريخه للمسرح العربي. يقرأ الباحث نتائج نجم الفكري في السياق الثقافي العام لخمسينات القرن العشرين وستيناته. تحاول المقالة أن تبين أن نجم، إلى جانب سواه من الباحثين، صاغ سرديةً للنهضة العربية قائمة على فهمه الخاص للحدائث وللوحدة العربية. الأعمال المسرحية العربية كانت أساسية في هذه السردية، ذلك أنها شكلت صورة عن الحدائث والقطع مع الماضي العثماني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المسرح العربي، الأدب العربي، القومية، تأريخ المسرح، الأعمال المسرحية العربية، النهضة

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The scholarly output of Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (1925–2009), professor of modern Arabic literature at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in the periods 1946–1948 and 1954–1998, can be categorized as falling into four main fields: 1) Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Arabic literature; 2) Medieval Arabic manuscripts (especially poetry); 3) Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Arabic periodicals; and 4) Miscellanea in Arabic literature. In addition, he co-translated five books from English into Arabic, including three authored by leading Western Orientalists (Hamilton R. Gibb and Gustav von Grünebaum), wrote a number of—as he called them—“cultural surveys,” and edited or chaired the editorial board of volumes on various topics. He compiled his own list of publications in his last edited book¹ (see annex).

This article provides a short overview of Najm’s scholarly formation and contextualizes his work on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Arabic literature—especially on the Arabic play—within the historiography of literary criticism and theatre history. In doing so, this essay will relate Najm’s work to the social history of knowledge production in Arabic in the 1950s and 1960s. Like his influential colleague and collaborator Iḥsān ‘Abbās (1920–2003),² Najm was at the centre of Arab intellectual production in the 1950s and 1960s, contributing significantly to the shaping of the Arabic literary canon and to the scholarly construction of what came to be called the *nahḍa*. While ‘Abbās explored Andalusian Muslim and medieval Arabic literature (which since then became the “heritage” or *turāth*) more generally, Najm focused on and framed the nineteenth century as the beginning of “modern Arabic literature” (“the awakening” or *nahḍa*).

Najm’s oeuvre is remarkable not only for its diversity and pioneering originality, but also for its composition entirely in Arabic. It is rare to find an erudite scholar today whose secondary and undergraduate education occurred in English-speaking schools, and who teaches in a private American university, but who uses only Arabic. Najm was centrally concerned with the re-publication of rare Arabic nineteenth- and early twentieth-century plays and newspapers. He sought to establish a textual *canon* and a *history* of modern Arabic literature, thus fashioning it as an object of scientific study and a grand narrative. In many ways, he was more a historian than a theorist of

¹ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, ed., *Dār al-Mu‘allimīn wa-l-Kulliyā al-‘Arabīyya fī Bayt al-Maqdis* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2007), 442–448. The Arabic translations in this article, unless otherwise indicated, are the work of the author.

² Wadād al-Qāḍī, “‘Abbās, Iḥsān,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Three. Edited by Kate Fleet et al. Brill Online, 2016. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/abbas-ihsan-COM_23780> (accessed January 21, 2016). See also Rula J. Abisaab’s article in this volume.

literature *per se*. Today, certain elements of his scholarly agenda might be critiqued,³ but this article examines the historical meaning of Najm's scholarship, considers what was at stake in producing an Arabic canon, and evaluates the significance of Najm's work.

Life and context

Najm was first educated in the Arab-American College in Jerusalem (*Dār al-Mu'allimīn*; from 1927, the *Arab College*), graduating in 1943. He then studied for an M.A. at AUB, again in an American-Arab atmosphere. Najm later recalled that after receiving his M.A. he considered applying for a Ph.D. in Arabic literature at the two leading English-speaking centres of Oriental Studies: the School of Oriental and African Studies in London with Hamilton R. Gibb (1891–1971) or at Princeton with Philip Hitti (1886–1978). However, his professor, Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī (1885–1977), chair of AUB's Arabic Department until 1950, advised him to go to Cairo and complete his studies there with the great Egyptian literati: Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm, and others.⁴ Najm started to teach at AUB in 1946, but in 1948 he left Beirut for Cairo.

This was a pivotal decision. Najm arrived in Egypt in 1948. For the next six years at Fuād I University (today Cairo University), he studied and socialized with Egyptian writers and fellow Palestinians like Iḥsān 'Abbās, he conducted extensive research in various libraries and archives, and he worked with the legendary pan-Arabist educator Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī (1882–1968) at the newly-founded Arab League (see below). Najm received his Ph.D. in 1954. He then returned to Beirut and taught at AUB until his retirement, when he became professor emeritus in 1998.

Najm's formative years saw momentous change in the Arab world: the end of the French Mandate in Lebanon and Syria (1943), the 1948 promulgation of Israel, the defeat of Arab armies, the plight of Palestinians, the political chaos and the subsequent military coup d'état in Egypt in 1952, and pan-Arab nationalism. Najm was born in 1925 in al-Majdal 'Asqalān in Palestine under the British Mandate, and was educated first in Jerusalem, yet he never openly expressed a political opinion in his scholarship after his homeland was occupied, his people dispersed, and his birthplace was turned into the Israeli city of Ashkelon. Likewise, the momentous events in Egypt and elsewhere in the 1950s appear nowhere in his academic work.

³ Nadia al-Bagdadi, "Registers of Arabic Literary History," *New Literary History* 39, no. 3 (July 2008): 437–461; Michael Allen, "How *Adab* Became Literary: Formalism, Orientalism and the Institutions of World Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43, nos. 2–3 (2012): 172–96.

⁴ Manuscript of speech given at an AUB celebration in 1992, in File 2, in AAi6.l (Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm), American University of Beirut Jafet Library Archives and Special Collections.

Even the 1975–1990 civil war in Lebanon, which raged immediately around AUB, figured only as a modest excuse in a 1985 publication, when he related the piece’s postponed publication to “the severe conditions which influence me and my fellow-citizens and which are known to everyone.”⁵

This does not mean, however, that we have no access to Najm’s political opinions. I would suggest that we can look at his entire oeuvre as a testimony of these opinions, from his engagement with the medieval Arabic literary “heritage” and the new Arabic texts of the nineteenth century (especially plays), to his organizational role in inter-Arab literary societies from Kuwait to Libya. It is, I propose, not a coincidence that the 1950s and 1960s were Najm’s golden years—a period that saw the publication of his most significant books and major editions at an almost frantic pace. The 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, the Lebanese Civil War, and the repeated odyssey of Palestinian refugees made the later years a difficult era in terms of the environment and resources, but most importantly the period after 1967 saw what Adeed Dawisha has described as the “demise of Arab nationalism.”⁶ There is no evidence that Najm was an Arab nationalist (in the sense of demanding one sovereign state for all Arabic-speaking peoples, or at least for the core territories)—indeed, he probably wasn’t one in a political sense; however, one should not disregard his formative years in 1940s Beirut studying with Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī and in the early 1950s in Cairo. There, the young Najm helped the aging father of pan-Arab ideology, Sāṭi‘ al-Ḥuṣrī, in editing the cultural journal of the Arab League, *Ḥawliyyāt al-Thaqāfa al-‘Arabiyya*, between 1949 and 1953 and also in establishing a Museum of (Pan-)Arab Culture. In addition, in 1953–1954, Najm became the director of the library and of publications at al-Ḥuṣrī’s Institute of Higher Arabic Studies at the Arab League.⁷ This work with the father of pan-Arabist ideology seems to have had more influence on Najm’s thinking than did the territorial nationalism of Egyptian authors. His extensive correspondence with Iraqi and many other Arab writers testifies to this effect.⁸

With this background in mind, we can see that Najm’s various publications reflect the idea of an imagined Arabic textual abode comprised of medieval poetry and nineteenth-century plays, as well as twentieth-century Palestinian and Gulf-poetry.

⁵ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, ed., *Masraḥiyyāt al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1985), 8.

⁶ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 277.

⁷ Najm, *Dār al-Mu‘allimīn*, 441. The last years of al-Ḥuṣrī received less attention in scholarship. See William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati‘ al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 78–80.

⁸ File 8, 9, and 10 in AAi6.l (Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm), American University of Beirut Jafet Library Archives and Special Collections.

In a 2003 edited volume about Su‘ād M. al-Ṣabāḥ (1942–), the Kuwaiti princess and poetess, Najm praised her contribution to the “Arab homeland” (*al-waṭan al-‘Arabi*).⁹ Najm seems to have remained faithful to the core of intellectual Arabism’s ethical engagement: the unity of scholar and audience in learned Arabic. But given the Cold War context, this remained more of an invisible political manifesto in his work as his scholarship otherwise strived to be seen as disengaged.

Making Arabic literature as Arab literature

Adeed Dawisha suggests that for Arabs, Arab nationalism was “the mirror that ... allowed them to delve into their glorious past and glean from it future possibilities,” even though ultimately they turned away from it.¹⁰ It is important to recognize that this “mirror” was constructed of words and ideas which were collected and expressed by historians and literary scholars. Najm was one of the core scholars who discovered various pasts in Arabic textual production. In this way, he helped to crystallize the very idea of Arabic literature, even if he did so through a reductionist treatment of the medieval concept of *adab* and its historical context.

As Najm saw it, new genres, such as the novel and the play, represented a *break* in Arabic textual production. This view in Arabic was first established by Jurjī Zaydān (1861–1914), Louis Shaykhū (1859–1927), and others in the late nineteenth century¹¹ (although it seems that there was another, since forgotten understanding of modern Arabic literature as a *continuation* rather than a break).¹² There is a direct link between these *fin-de-siècle* Christian intellectuals of Syrian origin to Najm in the person of the above-mentioned professor Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī at AUB. Al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī wrote about “modern [Arabic] poetry” (*al-shi‘r al-ḥadīth*), which he dated as starting “from the middle of the nineteenth century,”¹³ as part of the national awakening, and thus he needed a working definition of *adab* connected to sovereignty (see more below). This idea of a break was also held by European Orientalists such as Sir Hamilton R. Gibb.¹⁴

⁹ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, “Ammā ba‘d ...,” in *idem*, ed., *Manāra ‘alā al-khalīj (al-Shā‘ira Su‘ād Muḥammad al-Ṣabāḥ)* (n.p.: al-Muntadā al-Thaqāfi al-Miṣrī, 2003), 793–795.

¹⁰ Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, 313.

¹¹ Al-Bagdadi, “Registers of Arabic Literary History,” 444–447.

¹² Hilary Kilpatrick, “Modern Arabic Literature as Seen in the Late Nineteenth Century: Jurji Murqus’s Contribution to Korsh and Kirpichnikov’s *Vseobshchaya Istoriya Literatry*,” in *Studying Modern Arabic Literature – Mustafa Badawi, Scholar and Critic*, eds. Roger Allen and Robin Ostle (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 83–101.

¹³ Anīs [al-Khūrī] al-Maqdisī, *al-‘Awāmil al-fa‘āla fī al-adab al-‘Arabi al-ḥadīth – al-ḥalqa al-ūlā fī l-‘awāmil al-siyāsiyya* (Cairo: al-Muqtaṭaf, 1939), Author’s foreword, first page, without page number.

¹⁴ Hamilton Gibb, *Arabic Literature* (1926; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 159–162.

The conviction that modern Arabic literature is a new phenomenon is clear in Najm's first publication, *The Novel in Modern Arabic Literature in Lebanon until the Great War* [*al-Qiṣṣa fī al-adab al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth fī Lubnān ḥattā al-ḥarb al-ʿuzmā*], which he published in 1952 in Cairo (the introduction is dated May 1951) while working on his doctorate. He introduces the book as the first in a series on modern Arabic literature, and instead of giving "the last word", he emphasizes that his intention is to open up new questions and make the study of Arabic literature more precise and scholarly.¹⁵ At the end of the book, Najm promises a subsequent study ("part two") covering "the Lebanese novels in the interwar period," but he did not actually publish any further chronological surveys.¹⁶ The book is somewhat eclectic: the first eighty pages provide context and offer important remarks on Arabic journalism and theatre in general; three chapters then follow on the social novel, the historical novel, and the short story, respectively. Here, "Lebanon" and "Lebanese" (*Lubnāni*) are used to refer not so much to a polity and its citizens, but rather to a place of origin; this is why Jurjī Zaydān, Faraḥ Anṭūn (1874–1922), and Zaynab Fawwāz (d. 1914), living in Egypt, and the Arabic literature from the Americas created by individuals born in the nineteenth-century territory of the later twentieth-century state of Lebanon are the main heroes of the book. In later works, Najm often uses the term "Egyptianizing (or Egyptianized) Lebanese," meaning those intellectuals from Mount Lebanon or Beirut who lived in Egypt.

Three main methodological features of this book make it paradigmatic of Najm's later works and perhaps of early Cold War Arabic literary scholarship in general. The first is an effort to establish an accurate description and chronology (Najm's main word is *daqīq* or "precise" both in the introduction and in the last sentences; in later works he also mentions "precision" as his most important goal). This refers to the close study of a limited time period, which, nonetheless, assumes a general periodization. Second, there is an engagement with literary criticism by selection and by a strong sense of what constitutes a genre (novel, short story) and what does not; there is also judgement about quality. Third, there is the notable *absence* of any mention of the Ottoman Empire. The authors in question and their texts moved freely between Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus in the nineteenth century as subjects of a single empire, yet this is completely excluded from the analysis. In another book, Najm explained his view that this "de-Ottomanized" pre-WWI Arabic literature was the precondition of post-WWI Arabic literature.¹⁷

¹⁵ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, introduction to *al-Qiṣṣa fī al-adab al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth fī Lubnān ḥattā al-ḥarb al-ʿuzmā* (Cairo: Dār Miṣr li-l-Ṭibāʿa, 1952), [jīm]-yā.

¹⁶ Najm, *Al-Qiṣṣa*, 274.

¹⁷ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya fī al-adab al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1956), 5.

These three features—to repeat, a philological attention to text and chronology, a selective treatment based on genre and taste (canonization), and the erasure of the Ottoman background—characterize Najm’s entire oeuvre. Unlike literary critics in Egypt, such as Muḥammad Mandūr (1907–1965) and Luwīs ‘Awaḍ (1915–1990), who privileged style, interpretation, and theory, Najm advocated a historical and semi-philological approach to texts. He shared this approach with the Western Orientalist establishment; it is perhaps no coincidence that we find a copy of his first book with an autograph recommendation to Sir Hamilton R. Gibb (at the time, Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford) dated 9 March 1952. Najm’s focus on taste and genre deliberately aimed for a strong educative and canonizing effect—something he later directed at his own students at AUB. His second book on the subject, *The Art of the Novel* [*Fann al-Qiṣṣa*] (1955), explicitly deals with “the operation of tasting/sensation” (*‘amaliyyat al-tadhawwuq*) and offers a theoretical explanation of the novel form, what constitutes a good novel, and how it should be read. Some terms he advocated, like *qaṣūṣa* for short story, however, never became accepted in Arabic. Though there is evidence that in the 1950s Najm wanted to write a “full” history of modern Arabic literature, he never actually did so.¹⁸

The third feature of Najm’s scholarship had the most far-reaching consequences. In the 1930s and the 1940s, Sāṭi‘ al-Ḥuṣrī in Arabic and George Antonius in English formulated, respectively, the narrative of the “the Ottoman yoke.”¹⁹ In interwar Beirut, the aforementioned Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī clearly understood Ottomanism in literature as a sign of servitude and “religion (Islam).”²⁰ This view calibrated the study of “modern Arabic literature” for study only vis-à-vis Western—especially French, British, and American—literary production and not, say, in any relation to Turkish literary production. This view was also very strongly held in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s Egypt. For the scholars who were educated in the 1930s and 1940s, the idea of Arab sovereignty was connected to national history and language within the everyday political struggle of ending the Mandate. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, Najm’s generation had to delete the Ottomans from both historical and literary narratives.

It is worth noting that “modern Arabic literature” as a subject in its own right was only accepted beginning in the 1970s in non-Arab universities, after the work of interwar pioneers such as James Heyworth-Dunne, Julius (Gyula) Germanus, and from the 1960s Shmuel Moreh, Pierre Chachia, and Mustafa Badawi. Until then, “modern Arabic literature” was often the last chapter or post-scriptum to surveys of medieval

¹⁸ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 5.

¹⁹ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1939; Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications, 2001); Sāṭi‘ al-Ḥuṣrī, *al-Bilād al-‘Arabiyya wa-l-Dawla al-‘Uthmāniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyin, 1960).

²⁰ Al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī, *al-‘Awāmil*, 10.

literacy as “literature.” Orientalist scholars, such as Gibb, saw the new Arabic genres as important, but the philological treatment of classical Islamic texts remained their main concern. Thus, when Najm started his career in the 1950s, the only paradigm available was the Arab nationalist understanding of literature. Arabic literature had to become Arab literature.

Najm, like (and sometimes with) Iḥṣān ‘Abbās, also produced a number of text editions of ancient Arabic poetry and prose. The poems of Zuhayr (first-century AH/seventh-century AD), Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt (first-century AH/seventh-century AD), Aws ibn Ḥajar (pre-Islamic), al-Khuzā‘ī (d. 860), al-Mutanabbī (d. 955), and Usāma b. Munqidh (d. 1188/AD?) are somewhat unexpected from a scholar of modern Arabic literature. Some of the edited medieval prose texts, like Ibn Wakī’s (d. 1003) attack on al-Mutanabbī, reveal that Najm was possibly interested in the history of literary criticism in Arabic as well;²¹ that is, in the pre-history of his own profession. Indeed, he wrote one of the rare studies of the historiography of Arabic comparative literature in the interwar years.²²

Other diverse prose editions, like that of Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), al-Ghazālī (d.1111), and Husamzade (d. 1670/71), suggest a will to join Western Orientalist philologists in publishing and interpreting the Arabic *Schrifttum* at large. In addition, channelling these works into Arabic “literature” may have been fuelled by the pan-Arab spirit. This might have shaped his editing of modern literature also. In fact, among his first edited volumes (1954) was the poetry of Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1863–1936), the noted Iraqi poet and intellectual. Starting in the 1990s, Najm also edited a number of volumes of other contemporary Arab writers, all of whom published in Kuwait: Nizār Qabbānī, the aforementioned Su‘ād al-Ṣabāḥ, and others.

The present author is not fully equipped to judge the quality of Najm’s editions of medieval poetry or whether these were sufficiently “critical” editions. One of his first editions (Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt) was heavily criticized by Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad in the journal of the Arab Manuscripts Institute in 1959.²³ These early

²¹ Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Wakī‘ (al-Tinnīsī), *Kitāb al-munṣif li-l-sāriq wa-l-masrūq min-hu fi iẓhār sariqāt Abī l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, vol. 1 (Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Waṭanī li-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-Funūn wa-l-Ādāb, 1984).

²² Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, *Nazariyyat al-naqd wa-l-funūn wa-l-madhāhib al-adabiyya fi al-adab al-‘arabī al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1985).

²³ Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad, “Dīwān ‘Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt – taḥqīq: al-duktūr Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm,” *Majallat Maḥad al-Makḥṭūtāt al-‘Arabiyya* 5, no. 1 (1959): 379–393.

editions seem to be actually even better taken care of (in terms of formal editing)²⁴ than the editions from the 1990s and the edited volumes produced in Kuwait in the 2000s. For instance, in later years, even tables of contents are often missing, there is no philological introduction discussing the manuscripts and their variants, and there are no glossaries.²⁵ One must also note that many of the editions were published by the Beirut publisher Dār Ṣādir, suggesting a working relationship between the scholar and the business enterprise.

As to literary criticism, Najm seems to have read pre-WWII and 1950s literary theory in English; he also translated the influential literary critic David Daiches's work into Arabic. However, new theories do not inform his work; post-structuralism, for example, is completely missing. In one instance, he acknowledges the influence of psychoanalysis in literary criticism, but this method does not otherwise appear in his own writing.²⁶ In this sense, Najm's contribution to the study of Arabic literature was not a theoretical one.

Ultimately, Najm continued the work of his professor, Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī, in constructing "modern Arabic literature" in Arabic as a secular, Arab literature, organized around the idea of a break that erased the Ottoman context and engaged with early Arabic poetry as an Orientalist ideal. His first book on the rise of the novel in the late nineteenth century remains a classic, while his random textual editions connect to the philologist establishment, but not in any rigorous sense. Let us turn, then, to the field where Najm's contribution was truly unique: the history of modern Arabic theatre.

Theatre history of the Nahḍa

Najm's most important and unique contribution to literary scholarship and, one may rightly say, to history in general is the study and publication of nineteenth-century Arabic plays. He almost single-handedly created Arabic theatre history and criticism in Arabic. Western scholarship often forgets to mention his work or any work in Arabic, for that matter.²⁷ Yet without Najm's groundbreaking study and editions of plays, we would have lost a major part of Arabic reform literature and a crucial source

²⁴ Aws ibn Ḥajar, *Dīwān Aws ibn Ḥajar*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1962); 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn (Ḥusāmzade al-Rūmī), *Risāla fī qalb kāfūriyyāt al-Mutanabbī min al-madhī ilā al-hijā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Amāna, 1972).

²⁵ Such is the case, for instance, in *Dīwān Ḥumayd ibn Thawr al-Hilālī*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1995).

²⁶ Najm, *Naẓariyyat al-naqd*, 54–56.

²⁷ Like in Carmen M. K. Gitre, "The Dramatic Middle East: Performance as History in Egypt and Beyond," *History Compass* 13, no. 10 (2015): 521–532.

of history.

When Najm published *The Play in Modern Arabic Literature* [*al-Masraḥiyya fī al-adab al-‘Arabī al-ḥadīth*] in 1956, there was no systematic study of Arabic theatre in Arabic or any other language. In the interwar period and at the beginning of the 1950s, only scattered articles were available, such as those of Sulaymān Ḥasan al-Qabbānī (before WWI),²⁸ the collected essays of the critic and actor Muḥammad Taymūr (1922),²⁹ daily reviews of new plays and performances in Arabic, the articles of Zakī Ṭulaymāt, Yūsuf As‘ad Dāghir, and a few books on interwar theatre in Arabic,³⁰ an article of Jeanette Tagher in French,³¹ the thesis of G. R. Orvieto in Italian,³² and Neville Barbour and Jacob Landau’s early articles in English (Landau also published in Hebrew).³³ In 1956, Yūsuf Dāghir published the second part of his great bibliographical *Maṣādir* intended for general education, which included many playwrights.³⁴ But there was no systematic and historical survey of Arabic plays of the “annals” type, let alone their interpretation, prior to Najm’s.³⁵

There are a number of reasons for this neglect in pre-1950s scholarship. Arabic plays were often not taken seriously by Arab literary critics, there was very scarce state funding for Arabic troupes, and the plays remained only curiosities for Western philologists until the dramas of Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm. But in the early 1950s, Najm approached theatre criticism and history *as history* and looked to Arabic periodicals³⁶ and archival documents to shed light on forgotten relationships and to establish a

²⁸ Sulaymān Ḥasan al-Qabbānī, *Bughyat al-mumaththilīn* (Alexandria: Jurjī Gharzūzī, [after 1902]).

²⁹ Muḥammad Taymūr, *Mu‘allafāt*, 3 vol. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-I‘timād, 1922).

³⁰ Zakī Ṭulaymāt, “Kayfa dakhala al-tamthīl bilād al-sharq al-‘Arabī,” *al-Kitāb* 1, no. 4 (February 1946): 581–583; Yūsuf As‘ad Dāghir, “Fann al-tamthīl fī khilāl qarn,” *al-Mashriq* xlii (1948): 457.

³¹ Jeanette Tagher, « Les débuts du théâtre modern en Égypte, » *Cahiers d’Histoire Égyptienne* 1, no. 2 (1948) : 192–207.

³² Cited in Jacob M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), 207.

³³ Neville Barbour, “The Arabic Theatre in Egypt,” *Bulletin of the SOAS, University of London*, two instalments of three parts: 8, no. 1 (1935): 173–187 and no. 4 (1937): 991–1012; Jacob M. Landau, “Abu Naddara, an Egyptian-Jewish Nationalist,” *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 3 (1952): 30–44; Jacob M. Landau, “The Arab Theater,” *Middle Eastern Affairs* 4, no. 3 (March 1953): 77–86.

³⁴ Yūsuf As‘ad Dāghir, *Maṣādir al-dirāsa al-adabiyya*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Jam‘iyyat Ahl al-Qalam fī Lubnān, 1951–1972).

³⁵ For a more extensive bibliography, see J. M. Landau, R. Bencheneb, Metin And, J. T. P. de Bruijn, E. Allworth, and J. A. Haywood, “Masrah.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. Brill Online, 2016. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/masrah-COM_0703 (accessed February 3, 2016).

³⁶ His main source was *al-Ahrām*—it is possible that the microfilms of the early issues in the Egyptian National Library, where many items of theatrical news are highlighted, are of his hand.

precise chronicle. He also talked to elders who had actually seen the late nineteenth-century plays on stage;³⁷ and he contacted senior researchers, such as Jeanette Tagher’s partner, the librarian-researcher Jacques Tagher, in Egypt.³⁸

With its attempted systematization and chosen time frame, Najm’s *al-Masraḥiyya* was ground-breaking and has remained unsurpassed to this day. Naturally, subsequent scholars—including the present author—have challenged, enriched, and corrected his data and assumptions in various ways, but this engagement simply affirms his pioneering role.

Scholars in post-Ottoman nation-states constructed histories of drama as part of a national literature—and Najm was one of the first pioneers. His interest in Arabic theatre should be understood in relation to the above-mentioned construction of “modern Arabic literature” as a break in Arabic literacy. Arabic plays in the nineteenth century were indeed understood as a new phenomenon that was truly “modern” and “civilized” or “civilizing.” Najm may have also been influenced by the great Egyptian press historian Ibrāhīm ‘Abduh’s rediscovery of James Sanua (Ya‘qūb Ṣannū‘, 1839–1912, aka Abū Naẓẓāra) in the early 1950s as a journalist and the first director of an Arabic troupe in Egypt, with all the peculiarities of having an Italian-Jewish Egyptian as the “founder” of Egyptian theatre at a time when Egypt was at war with Israel.³⁹ The Israeli scholar Jacob Landau published his own book in English only two years after Najm’s (1958; although he had already written an article about Sanua in 1952) but did not (and, indeed, could not) make use of Najm’s much more widely researched Arabic book.⁴⁰ There must have been a sense of competition.

Arabic theatre was important in the new regimes of various post-colonial Arab states in the 1950s, for they projected this somatic art as a secular part of world culture. This was a view propagated not only by states but also by secularist-nationalist intellectuals, like Luwīs ‘Awaḍ in Egypt, who also published books on Egyptian theatre as a national art.⁴¹ Likewise, there was the leading work of Refik Ahmet Sevengil in republican Turkey in the interwar period⁴² and the work of Metin And in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴³

³⁷ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹ Ibrāhīm ‘Abduh, *Abū Naẓẓāra imām al-ṣiḥāfa al-fukāhiyya al-muṣawwara wa-za‘īm al-masraḥ fi Miṣr, 1839–1912* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1953).

⁴⁰ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*.

⁴¹ Luwīs ‘Awaḍ, *Al-Masraḥ al-Miṣrī* (Cairo: Dār Īzīs, 1955)

⁴² Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul nasıl eğleniyordu?: fetihten zamanımıza kadar* (İstanbul: Suhulet Kitaphanesi, 1927); *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1934).

⁴³ Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu, 1839-1908* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1972).

Informed by this context, Najm's own understanding was that Arabic theatre was "a new art" in history,⁴⁴ although there have been various Arabic performance traditions. Accordingly, he enumerates European (mostly French) theatre activities in Egypt from Napoleon to the 1860s, and then switches to the Arabic theatre tradition in Greater Syria. It is interesting that he surveys the "traditional" Arabic-Egyptian performances only in the introduction to Sanua's theatre troupe in the section on Egypt.⁴⁵ It is clear from this arrangement that, in his eyes, the Beirut tradition belonged to a European or Europeanized theatre practice, while Sanua's theatre was more of a "popular" nature.

In Najm's understanding, the play is the "second face" of the novel. He handles the play mostly as a textual product, not as a performance, despite the fact that in the introduction he highlights the special circumstances of playwrights, such as the staging and the cooperation with actors, which differentiate plays from novels. He supposes the influence of the audience on the playwrights and actors and the existence of "a theatrical taste" (*al-dhawq al-masraḥī*) among urban Arabic-speakers in the nineteenth century. But Najm conforms to the textual paradigm. He makes a curious distinction by giving only some plays extensive analysis and others almost none at all; he offers no explanation, only noting that the latter cannot be treated with "the serious requirements of criticism."⁴⁶ Indeed, the author sincerely also admits that his own "taste" played a role in the selections.⁴⁷

The book is comprised of two parts, historical and literary. The historical part sets up the canon of theatre "pioneers" in Arabic: Mārūn Naqqāsh (1817–1855), Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī (1835?–1902), and James Sanua (whom he calls Ya'qūb Ṣannū'). Then he highlights smaller troupes and the numerous Arabic amateur theatrical societies and clubs in the late 1880s and 1890s—something that remains the most unexplored area of theatre history to this day. The second part of the book offers literary analysis and criticism of dramas with subchapters on translated/Arabized/Egyptianized or original plays according to topical subgenres. Notably, Najm contrasts two traditions in Arabic theatre: a lighter, musical tradition (represented by al-Qabbānī) and a dramatic tradition (represented by Naqqāsh).⁴⁸ Scholars today would likely challenge this distinction, but the division makes sense if one can connect the play to its social and economic functions as a performance.

⁴⁴ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 73–76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁸ He repeats this in *Masraḥiyyāt al-Qabbānī*, p. wāw.

Despite the book's laudable achievements, one must also acknowledge its shortcomings. Najm left three notable gaps in his study. The first is that, again, the Ottoman Empire is completely missing: he uses the categories of Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt as nation-states when talking about the nineteenth century. Second, he does not mention the commercial aspects of early Arabic theatre, namely, that it was also a business enterprise. And third, he does not mention the relationship of artists and plays to political processes and ideologies. These three aspects of nineteenth-century Arabic theatre have yet to be fully explored.

In the last sixty years, some of Najm's earlier data has been corrected by a number of theatre historians, including Najm himself. Ramsīs 'Awaḍ was the first to investigate political history through the theatre in Arabic.⁴⁹ Najm, however, was also interested in the relationship between politics and theatre, and he planned a publication on the contemporary Egyptian theatre in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. As a private note testifies, he thought that Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, Yūsuf Idrīs, Alfrīd Faraj, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, along with others, "saw the problems of democracy, at its bottom, as the problem of social justice."⁵⁰ This publication unfortunately never appeared.

Matti Moosa (1970; 1997), Mohamed al-Khozai (1984), and Mustafa Badawi (1988) have provided differing interpretations concerning early Arabic plays, but also relied on Najm's original research and, in this way, aimed to update and correct Jacob Landau's 1958 study in English. Many later Arab theatre historians tried to establish relationships between earlier mimetic traditions, such as the shadow-play or puppet-theatre, and the nineteenth century genres. Concerning nineteenth-century Syria and Egypt, Philip Sadgrove eminently contributed with new material and corrections.⁵¹ Finally, Najm himself revised his own early work in his 1985 edition of Shaykh al-Aḥḍab's plays (see below).

Overall, Najm did not engage in debate with the scholarship produced after his book. We know nothing about his reaction to Landau's *Studies*, to the interesting book of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ghunaym about Sanua (1966), or to Matti Moosa's or Sadgrove's publications. Nor did this pioneer of Arabic theatre history react to the challenge in 1996 when Shmuel Moreh and Philip Sadgrove published the play of Abraham Daninos, an Algerian Jew, and claimed it as the first Arabic play since it had been

⁴⁹ Ramsīs 'Awaḍ, *Ittijāhāt siyāsiyya fī al-masrah qabla thawrat 1919* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1979).

⁵⁰ Undated note, file 1, in AAi6.l (Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm), American University of Beirut Jafet Library Archives and Special Collections.

⁵¹ See, for instance, various articles by Philip Sadgrove, along with his book *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century: 1799–1882* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996).

lithographed in 1847.⁵² Although the announcement was somewhat sensational, one must note that Daninos' work was known to specialized scholars earlier. For instance, it was mentioned by Clement Huart in his *A History of Arabic Literature* (1903), which was, in fact, republished in Beirut in 1966⁵³ (thus, in theory, Najm could have known Daninos' work earlier). As far as I know, Najm never reacted to the problem of Daninos' play.⁵⁴ These absences mean that Najm did not engage with the scholarship produced after his own work. It is possible that since most of these occurred in English he deliberately disregarded these developments.

There is one notable exception. At the beginning of the 2000s, Najm engaged in a major press exchange, in Arabic, with the Egyptian theatre historian Sayyid 'Alī Ismā'īl. Ismā'īl has been attempting to delete Sanua's theatre from Egyptian history⁵⁵ and Najm was unconvinced by Ismā'īl's arguments. Najm wrote a public refusal, insisting on the significance of Sanua's theatre,⁵⁶ but Ismā'īl was similarly unswayed. The debate could have been easily concluded by citing Sadgrove's work, but neither of the scholars did so.⁵⁷ Najm went on to republish the 1872 play of 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Miṣrī, a close associate of Sanua, but it was still insufficient to convince Ismā'īl.

Plays as historical documents

Apart from the book *al-Masraḥiyya*, Najm's most fundamental contribution to theatre history was the publication of eight nineteenth-century playwrights' works that he repeatedly framed as "literary and aesthetic documents."⁵⁸ Since manuscripts rarely survived, or are accessible, and printed plays were produced in small numbers, the publication of these works was an invaluable service to scholarship and the public. Publication is, naturally, a process of selection that favours some playwrights, while leaving others relatively forgotten, such as Ismā'īl 'Āṣim (d. 1919 or 1920),

⁵² Shmuel Moreh and Philip Sadgrove, *Jewish Contributions to Nineteenth-century Arabic Theatre: Plays from Algeria and Syria: A Study and Texts (Journal of Semitic Studies, Supplement 6)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press on Behalf of the University of Manchester, 1996).

⁵³ Clement Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature* (1903; Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 430.

⁵⁴ Neither Huart's nor the Moreh-Sadgrove book are found in the list of books in his private library (although these are found in the AUB general collection). Information gratefully received from Yasmine Younes (American University of Beirut Jafet Library Archives and Special Collections).

⁵⁵ Sayyid 'Alī Ismā'īl, *Muḥākamat masraḥ Ya'qūb Ṣannū'* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 2001).

⁵⁶ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm, "Riyādat Ṣannū' li-l-masraḥ ḥaqīqa ... wa-hādhihi hiya al-adilla," *al-Ahrām al-Masā'ī*, 5 March 5, 2001.

⁵⁷ See some details about this debate in my "Arabic Theater in Early Khedivial Culture, 1868-1872: James Sanua Revisited," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 1 (February 2014): 117-137.

⁵⁸ For instance, Najm, ed., *Masraḥiyyāt Abī Khalīl al-Qabbānī*, p. ḥā.

an important Egyptian playwright, poet, and lawyer of the 1890s (his three plays were republished only in 1996).⁵⁹ Since Najm's work, other source publications have appeared, particularly the article collections of the National Centre for Theatre, Music, and Popular Arts in Egypt. Najm began calling for more attention to theatre history as early as the 1950s,⁶⁰ but it was only recently that this call began to be heeded.

Najm's editions are mostly republications of the printed versions of plays, although in two cases he used unique manuscripts which were and still are considered somewhat sensational, as we shall soon see. He started with Mārūn Naqqāsh's three plays (reprinted from *Arzat Lubnān*, edited by his brother Nqūlā in 1869); then continued with eight printed plays (out of the supposed fifteen) attributed at the time to Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī; next came manuscripts and one printed play by James Sanua (see more on this below), the printed plays of Muḥammad 'Uthmān Jalāl, the printed plays of Salīm Naqqāsh, and the five printed plays of Najīb al-Ḥaddād—many of which are translated or adapted ("Arabized" or "Egyptianized") texts. These six volumes were all printed in the 1960s and further ones were planned, but the civil war interrupted the work. Ultimately, only two more volumes were produced: in 1985, eight extraordinary manuscript plays of Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab (out of seventeen), and in 2002, the 1872 play of 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Miṣrī as part of the debate with Sayyid 'Alī Ismā'īl.

There are some curious lacunas and historiographical mysteries concerning these publications and especially the manuscripts. Najm did not publish the manuscripts in facsimile but only the edited versions. In addition, although the editions show care, he did not fully apply the tools of philology. It is important to highlight background stories in order to understand the "workshop" of Najm in the 1960s. The first background story and mystery relates to James Sanua's manuscripts. It seems that after 'Abduh's 1953 book, the Egyptian scholar Anwar Lūqā contacted Sanua's daughter, living in Paris, and described the manuscripts he found in her flat in Paris in an 1961 Arabic article in an Egyptian journal.⁶¹ After this, Najm contacted Lūqā, offering to publish the manuscripts, but Lūqā, after a first agreement, finally did not respond. Thus, Najm himself contacted Sanua's daughter and directly obtained the manuscripts from her.⁶² However he did not publish all of them. There remained

⁵⁹ Ismā'īl 'Āṣim, *Ismā'īl 'Āṣim - awwal mu'allif masraḥī Miṣrī* ([Cairo]: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, al-Markaz al-Qawmī li-l-Masraḥ wa-l-Mūsīqā, 1996); Sayyid 'Alī Ismā'īl, ed., *Ismā'īl 'Āṣim - al-a'māl al-kāmila: masraḥiyyāt* ([Cairo]: Dār Zahrā' al-Sharq, 1996).

⁶⁰ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 7–9.

⁶¹ Anwar Lūqā, "Masraḥ Ya'qūb Ṣannū'," *al-Majalla* 5 (1961): 51–71.

⁶² Najm, *Ya'qūb Ṣannū'*, pp. *alif* and *bā'*. See also Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 52.

two shorter theatricals, and recently the Swiss scholar Eliane Etmüller has received permission from Sanua's granddaughter to publish these as well.⁶³ In another Sanua-related note, Najm only mentioned Sanua's friend 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Miṣrī's 1872 play *in passim* in *al-Masrahiyya*; as far as I know the play was first discussed *in extenso* by Philip Sadgrove in 1988,⁶⁴ but Najm did not refer to Sadgrove's work in either his debate with Sayyid 'Alī Ismā'īl or in his 2002 edition. Conversely, Sadgrove does not mention Najm's publication of Sheikh al-Aḥḍab's plays (1985) in his article on Syrian theatre in the 1850s–60s (1987).⁶⁵ The reason for these unfortunate moments of mutual disregard are unclear (perhaps mere asynchronization), but their result has been that the full history of early Arabic theatre remains to be written in light of various new discoveries and research agendas.

A second historiographical enigma concerns the relationship between the nineteenth-century actor/impresario Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī and the playwright Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab. In 1970, Najm received seven volumes of manuscripts from a Damascene lady among which he identified some dramas as Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī's plays, or plays performed by al-Qabbānī's troupes. In 1982, he received three other volumes of manuscripts that contained the plays of Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab. Comparing the two collections of manuscripts, he was able to determine that a number of plays performed by al-Qabbānī were in fact al-Aḥḍab's.⁶⁶ Thus, he corrected his earlier publication of al-Qabbānī's plays. However, he only published a few of al-Aḥḍab's plays with an informative introduction but without presenting a deeper textual comparison. The plays of Sheikh al-Aḥḍab, the first known Arab Muslim playwright, are possibly more important than those of any other nineteenth-century playwright, in terms of their scope, quantity, and originality. A more serious engagement with these texts and their Ottoman Greater Syrian context is still required and could possibly change the previously established canon of Naqqāsh-Qabbānī-Sanua.

Najm's 1956 study remains the only widely-known general survey of nineteenth-century Arabic theatre in Arabic. The 1985 publication on al-Aḥḍab attests that there are numerous issues that remain to be explored (and it is telling that this crucial source publication has received very few reviews). Najm's influence has been enormous and no serious article or book about Arabic theatre has been published that does not

⁶³ <http://kjc-sv016.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de:8080/exist/apps/naddara/index.html> (accessed January 15, 2016).

⁶⁴ Philip Sadgrove, "Leyla - The First Egyptian Tragedy," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 7 (1988): 161–176.

⁶⁵ Philip Sadgrove, "The Syrian Arab Theater after Mārūn Naqqāsh (the 1850s and the 1860s)," *Archiv Orientalní* 55 (1987): 271–283.

⁶⁶ Najm, *Masrahiyyāt al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab*, 20–22.

mention or build on his work in one way or another. In a way, the position taken vis-à-vis Najm's oeuvre is the measure of the research's scholarly value—consider, for example, Badawi's *The Early Arabic Drama*, Sadgrove's *The Egyptian Theatre*, or Ismā'īl's speculations. In addition, a number of researchers, mostly historians of the modern Middle East, have recognized in the last decade the value of Arabic plays exactly in the way Najm suggested—i.e., as “documents.” Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, Ziad Fahmy, Carmen Gitre, and the present author writing in English have all explored plays as sources for social and political history and this tendency shall hopefully continue in future publications.⁶⁷

Summary

In this article I have explored Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm's scholarly formation, the paradigm of Arabic literature he inherited and further strengthened, and specifically his foundational history of Arabic theatre in Arabic. I have argued that his oeuvre is informed by an almost imperceptible pan-Arabist ideal and a secularist bent. He engaged deeply with Arabic language and textuality in chronologically diverse material, while also maintaining the radical “modernity” of new genres in the nineteenth century. He was arguably the one core scholar most responsible for establishing the *nahḍa* as a break in Arabic history—but as a break that was most significant in terms of identity politics.

Accordingly, Najm was a maker of and believer in cultural canons. His list of pioneers in Arabic theatre (Naqqāsh-Qabbānī-Sanua) remains influential to this day. Indeed, he has had to respond to only one real challenge in Arabic (that of Ismā'īl). He continued to play various roles in inter-Arab organizations until his death, and his position as a founding father of Arab theatre history in Arabic is well-deserved. While he was restrained from participation in global scholarly debates in English or from broader theoretical contributions, his non-engaged scholarship nonetheless strengthened his contribution to Arabic literary and theatre history in Arabic.

In sum, Najm's scholarly work reflects the period in which he was educated and lived as a young man, its political and material constraints and opportunities. Protected from everyday state politics at the private AUB, though not from the effects of war, he was able to produce key texts for future scholars and debates in Arabic, and this service has established his name as a historiographical standard to which all revisionists will always return.

⁶⁷ Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010); Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Gitre, “The Dramatic Middle East;” Adam Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

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Compiled by Adam Mestyan

(Only first editions are given, and only articles which Najm listed in his own bibliography in *Dār al-Mu‘allimīn*. All entries were cross-checked with library holdings and other bibliographies and, if necessary, corrected on the basis of the available printed copies. His contribution varies in the edited volumes: *i‘tināʾ*, *taḥqīq*, *tahrīr*, *bi-qirāʾati-hi*, *ishrāf*, etc – for simplification I provide only “ed.” but I made a distinction between “edited books” [collection of scholarly articles], “compilations” [selected texts], and “text-editions” [mostly intended critical editions of manuscripts]. I thank Zalfa Hoballah for her assistance with the bibliography.)

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[In his own bibliography in *Dār al-Mu‘allimīn*, Najm mentions on page 444 among his “Studies on Arabic Theatre” the publication *al-Masraḥiyya fī al-adab al-‘arabī al-ḥadīth – al-Juz’ al-Thānī: (1905–1920): al-qism al-awwal: al-masraḥ al-ghināʾī fī Miṣr (1905–1920)*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1952. If the date is correct, this would be his first publication; however, there is no trace of it. In addition, the reference to the second part is confusing. *al-Masraḥiyya fī al-adab al-‘arabī al-ḥadīth* (there is no indication that it would be a first part) was first published in 1956.]

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