"Nahḍa": Mapping a Keyword in Cultural Discourse

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The word "nahḍa" today may appear in quite different contexts. The term most often used to render the word "renaissance," for instance European Renaissance, in Arabic (see e.g. *Hans Wehr*), it is also the name of an Islamic political party in Tunisia. It remains most familiar, however, as the name of a period of cultural, linguistic, and political change that occurred in the Arabic-speaking world, particularly Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya," the Arab Nahḍa, is frequently translated as "The Arab Renaissance" or "The Arab Awakening," and in this context, the term is associated with the development of Arab nationalism and secular, liberal reformism.[1] In 1870, however—a point by which many consider the Nahḍa to have been well underway —its Arabic dictionary definition was given as follows: "Power, energy, strength; and from that, movement towards something" (al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ* 920). There is no suggestion there that "nahḍa" denoted any kind of broad cultural phenomenon, still less a renaissance. If the Nahḍa was an era of cultural efflorescence that ushered the Arab world into modernity,[2] this transformation apparently included the meaning of the word itself. Taking as its subject the rise to prominence of the term "nahḍa" in the nineteenth century, this article contends that examining the modern history of this word sheds light on key questions about the nature and limits of the Nahḍa movement itself, as well as more general issues of nineteenth-century linguistic and political change.

The approach I adopt is informed by Raymond Williams's *Keywords*. In place of an etymology, I pursue a partial genealogy of the term "nahḍa," tracing the discourses in which it was embed-

ded, and the circumstances that facilitated its transfer across different contexts. Of course, the debates and problems evoked by "key" terms cannot, Williams notes, be solved purely through linguistic analysis—but equally, they cannot be fully formulated without a consciousness of the words as themselves elements of these problems (16). Understanding meaning as socially produced and codified, Williams takes seriously instances in which a word's usage diverges from dictionary definitions, conceiving of such ruptures as "indicative of new ways of thinking, new discursive spaces" (16). This is not to say, he adds, that language is simply reflective of social and historical process: "On the contrary . . . some social and historical processes occur *within* language, in ways which indicate how integral the problems of meanings and of relationships really are" (16). This article does not use Williams's text as a model; his short studies are concerned chiefly with how words arrived at their present meaning(s), whereas my analysis is less teleological. However, his injunction that certain words be considered both indicators of, and actors in, social change, and analyzed accordingly, seems an excellent starting point.

As yet, there is little consensus regarding when and how the word "nahḍa" changed from a descriptive noun into both the title of a particular era (the Nahḍa), and a full-fledged cultural concept ("nahḍa").[3] These two functions are of course closely linked, and this article gives attention to both, as well as to the relationships between them. The precise limits of "the Arab Nahḍa" in particular are already much contested. Standard narratives long held that Napoleon's arrival in Egypt in 1798 was the trigger for a Westernizing, Christian-led cultural movement that revived the Arab world after centuries of stagnation (see Hourani). However, scholars such as Stephen Sheehi, Abdulrazzak Patel, Joseph Massad, Shaden Tageldin, and others have noted that the discourse of European-led enlightenment emerged in the violence of colonial encounters, distorting scholarship for years to come. Recent research has extended the Nahḍa's geographical and temporal boundaries, suggested a greater diversity in the religious affiliations of its actors, and argued for greater complexity in the political and social direction of the movement.[4] In the sources examined here, the range of phenomena explicitly

named "nahḍa" exceeds both the limits historically assumed for the Arabic Nahḍa, and the contemporary function of the term "nahḍa" as a translation for "renaissance." The term's role in reproducing and, sometimes, contesting colonial discourses also proves more complex than such a translation might imply.

Journalist and author Jurjī Zaydān is commonly credited with popularizng the term (Patel 13), and as a result I draw particularly on appearances of the word "nahḍa" in his popular and long-running journal *al-Hilāl*, alongside other literary journals of the period. My purpose here is not to pinpoint "the" moment of transformation, or "the" medium responsible. Equally, I do not intend to suggest that it is only in instances in which the term "nahḍa" is used that it might be considered applicable, still less that "the" Nahḍa came into being only once it had been named. To examine a concept or a movement by tracing the history of its name is necessarily bound to produce only a partial analysis, and the pitfalls of drawing too wide conclusions from philological study have been famously outlined by Edward Said (e.g. 98). However, Said also acknowledges the importance of the philological practice of Erich Auerbach and Giambattista Vico, which "sympathetically and subjectively entered into the life of a written text as seen from the perspective of its time and its author" (xix). It is such a philology that I attempt to undertake. Charting the semantic shifts and nuances of the term "nahḍa" as it was first used rather than assuming the validity of the glosses and translations it acquired later, this article produces new readings of key texts, and uncovers early iterations of "nahḍa" that are varied and sometimes surprising.

To this end, my focus on the term's appearance in the Arabic literary press is important. In the late nineteenth century, Arabic print media was a burgeoning industry. Producing translations of foreign texts, serializing original literature, and reporting local and international news, including scientific and technological advances, literary journals dealt constantly with unfamiliar phenomena.[5] By necessity, it was above all in journals and newspapers that new concepts and terms were tried, tested, and contested. As Marwa Elshakry argues, the expansion of the Arabic lexicon to meet the demands of modernity was an endeavor enthusiastically pursued by the editors of these journals ("Knowledge" 711-13).[6] Unsurpris-

ingly, linguistic change was controversial, and argument over the propriety of new words raged fierce in the journals themselves.[7] This debate also became deeply bound up with the writers' various political positions. Instances of lexical transformation, especially of a key word like "nahḍa," thus offer fascinating insights into the wider debates of which they were a part.

This article begins with 1892 and the evocation of the "Egyptian Nahḍa" in Zaydān's *al-Hilāl*. Reading the word's appearance there against its pre-history in the classical Arabic dictionaries reveals that its meaning shifts constantly even within the short text, constructing a narrative of Egyptian modern history at odds with that usually attributed to Zaydān. Testing the extent of this semantic flexibility, I return to earlier occurrences of "nahḍa" and its cognates in the wider Arabic press, and ask how they connect to other, later articles in *al-Hilāl*. The meaning of "nahḍa" seemingly remained highly flexible throughout the second half of the nineteenth century: The literary journals' various textual forms produce quite different versions of the term, which is proven capable of denoting a radically broad range of cultural, social, and political "movements." The article ends, indeed, by examining texts from the first two decades of the twentieth century, in which the term "nahḍa" connects phenomena from India to Istanbul. Collectively, these sources lead me to propose that both the geographical borders of the (Arab) Nahḍa, and the conceptual borders of "nahḍa," were at one point imagined as rather wider than they are today.

"Nahḍa," I argue, underwent a lengthy process of change that had by no means ended in the early twentieth century. We have tended tacitly to assume that the dominant connotations of the term "Nahḍa" today (modernizing, progressive, liberal, secular) are, if not those it always had, certainly those dominant during the Arab Nahḍa itself. However, throughout the sources examined here, "nahḍa" is employed in ways that diverge strongly from contemporary usage: The meanings dominant now were apparently once only options among many. Perhaps precisely because they were recorded largely in the press, many of these earlier interpretations have seemingly been forgotten. Resuscitating them adds much-needed nuance to our understanding both of Arab Nahḍa discourse and, more generally, of the ways in which key cultural terms intervene in and shape such discourse.

1892: A Nahḍa Is Announced

Jurjī Zaydān (1861-1914), the figure credited with popularizing the term "nahḍa," was a celebrated public intellectual of his time. A prolific producer of historical novels as well as the journal *al-Hilāl*, an autobiography, and several ambitious academic projects, he is lionized as a secular reformist and Arab nationalist. Zaydān was a Syro-Lebanese Christian who spent much of his adult life in Cairo, one of many compatriots to make their home there following the tightening of Ottoman censorship in Syria. He himself chose to leave Beirut after 1882, when his medical college was rocked by disagreement over the question of Darwinian evolution. It was in the December 1892 issue of his journal *al-Hilāl*, founded that year and named one of the three most influential periodicals of its era (Philipp, *Jurji* 3), that an article titled "*Al-nahḍa al-miṣriyya al-akhīra*" (The Recent Egyptian Nahḍa) was published. It is the first instance I have found of the term "nahḍa" used to announce a nationwide cultural movement.[8] This article, appearing as it did in an influential journal produced by a cultural authority, arguably marks a key moment in the history of the term "nahḍa."

The meanings of "nahḍa" here differ distinctly from later usage—that is, from its later translation as renaissance, and from the associations of liberal, secular, Westernizing reformism accruing to the Arabic Nahḍa. However, they also diverge from its prehistory in a different set of authoritative texts: the classical Arabic dictionaries. Although the latter differ from many modern European dictionaries in that they are more explicitly dedicated to the preservation of the perfection of the Arabic language, tending to prevent rather than document change, occurrences of small shifts in meaning are recorded over the centuries.[9] Tracing the passage of "nahḍa" through these texts reveals the noun to be a complex and flexible term.

Prior to the definition cited earlier from Buṭrus al-Bustānī's 1870 dictionary *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, the celebrated eighteenth-century dictionary *Tāj al-ʿarūs* identified "nahḍa" as a synonym for the related noun *intihāḍ*, meaning "rising" or "getting up" (al-Zabīdī 99). The verb has extra, specific functions: "*na-ha-ḍa*," used of a plant,

is "to mature" or "to ripen" (*istawā*); of a bird, "to extend its wings to fly [*basaṭa janaḥayhi li-yaṭīr*]." Five centuries earlier, *Lisān al-'Arab* (1290) also records a full entry for "nahḍa," with two meanings: "energy and strength" and "The steps [*'atab*] of earth that [are such that] the animal or human who ascends them from the lowland becomes out of breath [in doing so]" (*Ibn Manḍḥūr* 4560). In one of the earliest works to record the verb "*nahaḍa*," the tenth-century *Tahdhīb al-lugha*, "nahḍa" is absent, but three related nouns are listed: "*nuhūḍ*," "departure from a position"; "*nahāḍ*"; and "*nahḍ*," "thresholds or steps [*'atab*]" (al-Harawī 775).

In the tenth century, the idea of "movement" was already present in the noun, but was only implicit. In subsequent centuries, the meaning of the term expanded: From "steps," it became "the act of rising up steep steps" or "energy [required to do so]," and by the nineteenth century it stood for simply "rising," "movement," "energy" (al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ* 920). Since the older dictionaries were consulted well into the nineteenth century, and later still, many of these meanings, and those of the associated verb, were potentially retained. But over time, the connection to a physical act of (upward) movement was refined, while the sense of the energy required for it was abstracted, and emphasized.

The shifts across the dictionaries are subtle and metonymic, taking place slowly, over centuries. As noted by Booth and Gorman, the 1890s was a period of particular political tension in Egypt (2). Ten years after the failed 'Urābī revolt and effective British assumption of control over the country's affairs, the political affiliations of Egyptian citizens and residents were in flux. These new circumstances also affected linguistic change, and in 1886, Zaydān's own first book, *al-Falsafa al-lughawīyya* (Philosophy of Language), argued for the natural inevitability of the expansion of the Arabic language. That the meaning of the term "nahḍa" should change more quickly or thoroughly in this period of upheaval is thus not surprising, and such circumstances also affect the nature of that change. In this article of 1892, Zaydān exploits the semantic content of "nahḍa," dictionary definitions of "nahḍa," while imparting to it a new sense of the collective, embedding "nahḍa" in a series of metaphors that expand the noun's referential potential to produce an unusual account of Egyptian history.

His December 1892 article is framed as an assessment of the times. Unlike the narratives of earlier Nahḍa reformists, it represents Egypt's past as a series of periods of glory of which the current "nahḍa" is one—followed by decline:

> The Egyptians in their ancient days were a source of knowledge and a fount of civilization and wisdom, founders of the inhabited world, even including Rome . . . [until] the power of knowledge declined [*nḥaṭṭa*][10] in her and the power of ignorance was shed over her until she fell to ruin, and then God let fall upon her the Arab Islamic state, and raised her from the depths of ruin to the height of glory. Then the Kurds came to power, then the Circassians. (*Al-Hilāl* 1.4 123)

In the earlier writings of, among others, al-Bustānī, the nineteenth century is framed as the revival of a single glorious period, namely the Abbasid "golden age" (Sheehi, "Epistemography" 66). Zaydān, however, makes the Egyptian Nahḍa the latest in a *series* of periods of prosperity. Nahḍa here is not the single renaissance of a particular period: it is the name for a recurring historical stage, the period of progress always followed by a period of decline. Anne-Laure Dupont has connected Zaydān's periodization of history, in his later academic work, to his internalization of "rise and fall" historical theses he encountered in the works of European Orientalists (85). Yet the (later, and differently Orientalist) narrative of the Nahḍa as a rupture, one occasioned by new contact with Europe after the 1798 French invasion, is not one he subscribes to here. In 1892, Zaydān describes a nineteenth-century cultural efflorescence that is, precisely, *characteristic* of Arab history.

As Nada Tomiche insists, Zaydān in his later published works was indeed among those who gave Europe credit for the Nahḍa's reforms (n. pag.). In this article, however, Napoleon is dismissed, and credit for the Nahḍa goes entirely to the Pasha. When he arrived:

> [Napoleon] did not stay long before leaving, and she [Egypt] returned to the guardianship of the Ottoman state. But Egypt was not released from the halter of

> ignorance until the late and honorable Muhammad 'Ali Pasha took control. And so the recent history of reform now began in Egypt. (*Al-Hilāl* 1.4 123)

In fact, throughout the article, the dictionary definitions of the word "nahḍa" are arguably mobilized in such a way as to render impossible the interpretation of the Nahḍa as a European-led phenomenon. Perhaps the most striking instance is in the extended description of Muhammad 'Ali's assumption of power:

> So he lifted from the shoulder of the Egyptians and their thoughts a great weight, which had long been heavy upon them, and the shackle of their hands, and the voices of freedom in their midst grew stronger and called out for their love of the country and its safety, and so the Egyptians rose up [*fa nahaḍa al-miṣriyyūn*] and engaged themselves in the enjoyment of a haven of personal freedom, and all of them turned towards the support of the national cause, and it was a nationalist nahḍa [*nahḍa waṭaniyya*]. (*Al-Hilāl* 1.4 123)

"Nahḍa," here used to describe the period following Muhammad 'Ali's assumption of the rule of Egypt, effectively denotes an upsurge in national feeling and engagement, imparting a new sense of collective activity to the term. It is collective specifically in the sense of "nation-wide," and the focus on the nation is not surprising: The 1890s, after all, was a period of regrouping and reformation for nascent Egyptian nationalism. But it is also, arguably, semantically appropriate—in a sense, the movement "nahḍa" signifies both collective in that it involves multiple actors, and singular in that these actors are (nationally) unified.

In this same text, the other dictionary definition of "nahḍa" as "an act of rising or getting up" (al-Zabīdī 99) is crucial to a representation that evokes Muhammad 'Ali *physically* removing a weight from the shoulders of the Egyptians so that they are able to stand. The rhetorical force of the term, in other words, comes precisely from the fact that it evokes an image of physical movement, here employed metaphorically. Thomas Philipp has suggest-

ed that the fact that the term "nahḍa" is not explained in this article means that this usage of the word must already have been current (Philipp, *Jurji* 6).[11] Yet it also seems possible that Zaydān's expansion of the meaning of "nahḍa" through metaphor simply explains itself: formally, it actually recalls the metonymic semantic shift the term had undergone centuries before (from "steps" to "the act of rising [up them]"). The manner of the change is familiar, and only the place in which it is recorded and sanctioned is new—not a dictionary or a classical poem, but a Cairene literary journal.

A subsequent passage produces a fascinating reversal of the usual description of the Nahḍa as a liberal reformist movement directly stimulated by European presence. It, too, relies heavily on the sense of "nahḍa" as movement:

> But that freedom came fast, before its time, and chanced upon hearts with such weight of pressure upon them that when they felt comfort and release, they burst open, and were lost in the wide deserts of freedom, and no longer knew that they had limits; and this devolved to something whose consequences we do not praise, like revolutions and the shedding of blood and the entering of foreigners into the administration of the country. (*Al-Hilāl* 1.4 124)

Under Muhammad ʿAli, with the weight of oppression removed, the Egyptians rise too high, too fast, and, paradoxically, this is their downfall. Egypt's occupation is portrayed here not as the cause of "nahḍa," but as the *result* of unconstrained freedom following an untimely "nahḍa." At the same time, this evocation of "nahḍa" as a force that the population was not ready to meet dovetails with the logic underpinning racist colonial discourse of the period, which proposed that "mature" and "immature" peoples "achieve" civilization naturally at different times. Elshakry, citing Zaydān's embrace of the theory of evolution, has argued that this distorted evolutionary thought permeated his later history-writing (Elshakry, "Between" 138). Given that Zaydān had been familiar with Darwin's work since the medical school debates of 1882, it is tempting to speculate that its influence may be felt here too.

In this reading, then, the expanding meaning of "nahḍa" is entangled very early on with colonial discourse and hierarchies, but not precisely according to standard narratives. Although Zaydān's representation of historical and social change seems profoundly influenced by (often racist) European history-writing, the explicit part played by Europeans in his account of the forward movement of "nahḍa" is as obstructions that slow, even halt it, but in spite of which all is not lost: "But this [the foreign takeover] did not prevent the Egyptians' acquisition of sentiments of intellectual independence and their realization of the essence of national belonging and their rights as such, and of the presence of foreigners among them" (*al-Hilāl* 1.4 124). This new consciousness is identified as a second, and more successful, "nahḍa," resulting in a flourishing of literary and cultural production. Once again, while today "nahḍa" is used to refer to these results themselves—to mean "an era of increasing cultural activity and social reform"—here, it describes simply the motivating force that *instigated* that activity:

> And as a result of that recent Egyptian *nahḍa*, we see our Egyptian brothers from different classes busily engaged in the founding of associations and companies and the authoring of books and the publishing of political, industrial, intellectual, and agricultural newspapers the like of which has never been seen before. (*Al-Hilāl* 1.4 125)

The passage ends by once more widening the sense of the word.

Nahḍa does seem here to evoke both the spark that spurred the era, and its content:

> It is incontestable that the era we are in is one of those which history is proud to record, for it is an Egyptian *nahḍa* that we hope will endure—for ennui is the scourge of development and civilization. And if our brothers continue on the path on which they are currently walking, they will receive from the patron of their good fortune nothing but greater stimulation and more alert watchfulness for their benefit. (*Al-Hilāl* 1.4 125)

Nahḍa at this point refers not to a single action or force, but to a state of dynamism that defines the era. It is difficult in this instance to translate "nahḍa" with a single word. "Awakening" is too short-lived; "renaissance" seems inappropriate given that little of what is described here resembles the content of the European Renaissance. "Movement" is rather vague, but perhaps most appropriate: the English word means "collective endeavor" as well as "physical movement forward," and both senses are present here in the image of the path and of multiple "brothers." Further, the term today used in Arabic to express physical, political, and social movement is *ḥaraka*, which in Bustānī's dictionary was offered as a synonym for "nahḍa."

Zaydān's "Egyptian *nahḍa*" was many things: the upsurge of national feeling following liberation from oppression; the energetic force that lifted Egyptian society too high, resulting in disaster; the motivation for, and cultivation of, cultural activity; and the proud era of the late nineteenth century. The term is used in ways that expand and exploit its prior dictionary definitions rather than rejecting them, and its transformation here is arguably a continuity of, rather than a rupture with, its history within the dictionaries of transformation through metonymy—indicating the new function of the cultural press as agent and arbiter of linguistic change. This perhaps might offer an explanation for why "nahḍa," as opposed to one of the several other nouns (*yaqaḍḥa*, *ṣaḥwa*, etc.) current at the time to express "rising" or "(re)awakening," is chosen here. The term's pre-existing connotations of physical movement, flourishing, and (upward) force are all essential to the narrative of the Egyptian Nahḍa he is writing—a narrative which, once these connotations are understood, appears different from others typical of the period, and to Zaydān's own later versions.

Diverging Paths: Abbasid *Nahḍa*, Anarchist *Nahḍa*

In the 1892 announcement of Egyptian Nahḍa, the term "nahḍa" is employed in a way that departs from strict dictionary definitions, but that also lacks connotations common to typical contemporary usage: It does not notably imply a movement that is revivalist, secular, or liberal, still less Western-looking. The

article does, however, use "nahḍa" to denote a broadly familiar timeframe and set of characteristics, and does so to write a historical narrative which, if different from those associated with Zaydān and his liberal reformist compatriots, is also well-known to scholars of the Nahḍa today. In this sense, it appears to be a turning point: a text that paves the way for later meanings of "nahḍa," if it does not produce them. However, the history of language is not strictly teleological, and in the nineteenth century's linguistic upheaval codifying the meaning of a word was everywhere more difficult. Journals, for instance, drew together a wide variety of literary forms—*al-Hilāl* included fiction, popular science, quasi-academic criticism, and news—and words might be used quite differently in each. Indeed, in the pre- and post-1892 texts examined next, it is the enduring flexibility of the term "nahḍa" that stands out. In the early years, this flexibility is arguably possible because the word's expanded meanings are not yet codified through popular use; in the 1890s, the term has seemingly passed into the popular lexicon, but has indeed become so popular that it is used to name, and semantically to connect, radically different cultural phenomena.

As noted earlier, scholars are divided into roughly two camps regarding the point at which "nahḍa" acquired its modern meanings: those who suggest it happened in the late nineteenth century, in the work of Zaydān, and those who locate it rather earlier. It has been suggested already that Zaydān in the 1890s was not quite using "nahḍa" as we tend to today, and so the claim that in fact it was already fully transformed decades earlier bears investigation.

Recently, Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss as well as Fawwaz Traboulsi suggest that by the mid-nineteenth century, the word "nahḍa" was being used specifically to mean "renaissance"—at least by the prolific journalist, translator, traveler, and littérateur, Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, whom they cite as the first person to use "nahḍa" to name *the* Nahḍa. According to Traboulsi, al-Shidyāq "launched the famous formula: There will be no liberation or renaissance of the east without the liberation and renaissance of the Oriental woman" (199). Hanssen and Weiss, more cautiously, translate the same phrase simply as "There is no Nahḍah without a women's Nahḍah" (16). Both translations—in particular

the latter, with its capitalization—thus in fact assume that by this point the noun "nahḍa" had already acquired a titular function.

The suggestion that "nahḍa" might legitimately be translated as "renaissance" here seems suspect. "Nahḍa" in Zaydān's 1892 texts, as noted already, hardly seems to describe something resembling the European Renaissance. Examples such as Cornelius Van Dyck's 1878 translation into Arabic of Jean-Henri Merle d'Aubigné's *Histoire de la Réformation du seizième siècle* also demonstrate that in this period, when the word "renaissance" (as in European Renaissance) was translated into Arabic, it was rendered not as "nahḍa" but as "*iḥiyā'*," "revival" (Ch. 7). Further, all three scholars cite the famous quotation: "Ahmad Fāris was ahead of the game on the subject of women when he said that 'There can be no *nahḍa* of the East, without the *nahḍa* of women'" (Traboulsi and al-Azmeh 34). Unfortunately, Traboulsi and al-Azmeh provide no provenance or context for this citation,[12] and, as a result, its precise meaning is somewhat difficult to assess. It is certainly possible that the later decision to use "nahḍa" to name the (capital N) Nahḍa may have drawn legitimacy from, or responded to, its early appearance in the work of the much-read al-Shidyāq. It also certainly seems here to express collective activity, making "rising up" a metaphor for "advancement" or "progress." And, given the later importance of the "women's nahḍa" (see Baron), it is tempting and intriguing to conclude that the pivotal first use of "nahḍa" itself was in the context of affirming women's rights.

However, this brief quotation does not seem enough to suggest that al-Shidyāq was identifying here, or announcing, *the* Arab Nahḍa—particularly given that there is little evidence that this precocious alteration was adopted by al-Shidyāq's contemporaries. Not only did al-Bustānī record a far narrower definition in *Muḥīṭ* in 1870, but a glance at issues of his influential periodical *al-Jinān* also reveals many instances of the verb *nahaḍa* used to signify only "to rise or get up." The verb appears many times in short stories, used in a physically literal sense: people "rise" from the table, from dinner, from bed (*al-Jinān* 6 128, 213, 293).

In an article titled simply "Egypt," the April 1875 issue of the journal does render an appearance of the related noun "*nuhūḍ*" to mean collective, progressive movement or uprising.[13] Describ-

ing his own era as "the age of light" that followed centuries of decadence, al-Bustānī notes that luckily, upon realization of the new dominance of the West, in the early 1800s action was taken:

> The governors [*ahl al-siyāsa*] of it [the East] saw that perhaps they and their subjects [*ra'āyāhā*, "flock"] were being led by this towards revolution [*inqilāb*—"coup" today, but then (beneficial) "revolution"] against the Sultan, they *nahaḍū ba'ḍ al-nuhūḍ* and succeeded [*najaḥū*][14] in some affairs and were belated in others. (al-Jinān 6 225)

Williams notes that many key words are best understood relationally, as parts of "clusters" of other key terms (25). In Arabic, concepts of "progress" and "advancement" were at this time already expressed using "*taqaddum*" and "*taraqqī*," neither of which are employed here.[15] If "nahḍa" is placed in constellation with these two, it must be seen as related, but different: progress in the specific form of collective, energetic movement upwards. That al-Bustānī does not quite choose "nahḍa" in this text, but rather employs two words from the same consonant root, "*nuhūḍ*" and "*nahaḍa*," suggests that new connotations of the root were already present, and perhaps even that it was emerging as a useful way to express something for which there was as yet no other word.

It would seem an exaggeration to suggest that the root "*naha-ḍa*" and associated nouns were in these earlier decades widely used with connotations of collective movement, of progress, and of specifically political action, but instances certainly exist. The verb "*nahaḍa*" also appears in 1852 in the proceedings of the Syrian Society for the Acquisition of Sciences and Arts, referring to the progress of science in Syria (Wartabīt 10-13), and in 1865 to describe a political uprising in Francis Marrāsh's novel *Ghābat al-ḥaqq* (Hill 245). Thomas Philipp also identifies an 1888 issue of *al-Muqtaṭaf* which refers to "*Nahḍat al-ṭibb*," or "the medical Nahḍa," in Egypt (*Jurji* 6). The issue describes the changes to Egypt's medical system wrought by Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's French medical adviser, Clot Bey. Although it appeared in diverse

contexts, nowhere was "nahḍa" unambiguously used to denote a generation of scholars, a historical period, or a cultural awakening.

Recent work has proposed a distinction between the nostalgic first and more forward-looking second generation of the Nahḍa (Selim "The Nahda" 71): The first would include al-Bustānī and al-Shidyāq, while Zaydān would form part of the second. When it comes to the word "nahḍa," one could certainly argue that although it appears in the writings of the first generation, it emerges more decisively as a key word in that second generation, as in Zaydān's first 1892 article, examined above, where it does indeed seem to herald a move away from nostalgia. In fact, in the decade following that article, the term increasingly appeared as a triumphant title for the nineteenth-century cultural movement current at the time.[16] However, this was not its only function. Although decisively connected with the idea of collective, cultural, and possibly political movement, it also arguably remained popular in the 1890s as a more general conceptual term, whose frame of reference had, if anything, widened rather than narrowed. Whereas previously the term had been used to express *current* or recent phenomena in the Arab world, "nahḍa" was now conceived as something that could be found throughout history, all over the world.

For instance, examples from *al-Hilāl* in the year 1894 that include significant appearances of "nahḍa" are a historical article on the "Abbasid nahḍa," and a short news item on the anniversary of "the *nahḍa* of the Paris Commune." That *al-Hilāl* encompassed such different textual genres is perhaps one of the reasons why the term "nahḍa" remained multivalent within it; on the other hand, that "nahḍa" was appearing in such different forms, admittedly produced by the same author, might also say something about the enthusiastic new adoption of the term. What connects these two texts is that, in each, "nahḍa" denotes a general, repeatable phenomenon rather than a single, unique one. To evoke "nahḍa" here is to engage with the place of Egypt and the Arab world within a global past and present.

In 1894, *al-Hilāl* published a series of articles by Zaydān titled *Tārīkh ādāb al-lugha al-'Arabiyya* (History of the Literatures of the Arabic Language),[17] forerunners to his later books on the subject. The articles begin with the pre-Islamic "Jāhili-

yya" period, and chart Zaydān's reading of Arabic literary history "from its ancient times until the present day" (al-*Hilāl* 3.9 260).[18] Although he covered the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the Umayyads in one article each, elucidating the Abbasid Nahḍa took Zaydān an entire year. He referred to it not, as was customary at the time, as "*al-'aṣr al-dhahabī*" (the Golden Age),[19] but as "*al-nahḍa al-'arabiyya fī 'aṣr al-'Abbāsiyyīn*": the Arabic Nahḍa in the Abbasid Age (*al-Hilāl* 3.13 387).

The parameters of the title are intriguing. First, there is the reference to "*al-nahḍa al-'arabiyya*," which was to become a standard title for the nineteenth-century Nahḍa. This formulation (as opposed, for instance, to "*Nahḍat al-'Arab*," the Nahḍa of the Arabs) connects "nahḍa" to language, rather than to ethnicity. This makes sense: "Arab" in the Abbasid period denoted only Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula. Using "al-nahḍa al-'arabiyya" served to erase perceived ethnic differences within the Abbasid Empire and reimagine it as collectivity connected by language. Connection through language also happened to be a driving principle of the pan-Arab nationalism developing in the period—to which Zaydān at one point inclined.

Having previously announced a present Egyptian Nahḍa, Zaydān projects the idea of "nahḍa" onto the past to link the Egyptian present to a shared Arab history, of which Zaydān—who was not Egyptian—was also a part. By rewriting the Abbasid era as a "nahḍa," Zaydān posits the modern-day Nahḍa not as the renaissance of a former glory, but as an independent, equally glorious entity: He evokes the past to congratulate present readers, rather than to shame them. Here again, his history-writing, unlike that of earlier writers (Sheehi, *Foundations* 25-44), is not nostalgic but triumphant. This certainly might be considered evidence of a distinction between two Nahḍa generations that was facilitated by the adoption of this term.

Zaydān differentiates the Abbasid period from those preceding it by its relationship with other languages and cultures:

> And the Abbasid period is marked out as the intellectual ['*ilmiyya*] Arab *nahḍa* because towards the end of the Umayyad period they did not incline towards

> the knowledge of foreigners but focused exclusively on the religious and linguistic sciences, as we have noted . . . there was no love of knowledge or desire to raise their light with the bettering of their relations with the Western states. (*al-Hilāl* 3.13 387)

The Abbasid period, by contrast, saw a surge of translation from other languages, Zaydān argues, particularly Persian and Greek. Where in his first article on the Egyptian Nahḍa Zaydān minimized external involvement, here he identifies it as a definitive cause of "nahḍa," and one even wonders whether this new interpretation would later be projected forward to produce his alternative, 1914 iteration of the nineteenth-century Nahḍa as one that began with European input, specifically the French invasion.[20] In its emphasis on the limits of the religious sciences, this certainly could be interpreted as an early example of the "secularizing" of Arab history for which Zaydān would become famous (see Philipp, *Jurji*, Part One).[21]

Over the next months, Zaydān elucidated, at length, the different aspects of this "nahḍa": Beginning with biographies of its key figures, he also identified its many branches of knowledge, its poetry, its religious scholarship, and its other literature. "Nahḍa" was thus brought to encompass the cultural activity of the period, and all its actors. This upsurge of activity was identified as prompted by the embrace of other cultures, and of extra-religious knowledge. The verb "to blossom" (*izdahara*) does not appear, but "nahḍa" might be translated here as cultural "flowering" or "flourishing."

Although this translation actually recalls the *Tāj al-'arūs* definition of the verb "nahḍa"—"[of a plant] to ripen, to mature" —Zaydān's rewriting of Abbasid history using "nahḍa" serves not only to connect the Arab present to a celebrated past, but actually dramatically to shift the meaning of "nahḍa": towards a very particular kind of translation-inspired, secular, liberal, linguistically bounded cultural "advancement." This definition of "nahḍa," repeated and expanded upon in the fourth volume of one of his major published books, *Tārīkh ādāb al-lugha al-'Arabiyya* (1914), is also the one that, perhaps more than any other,

has endured. Certainly, Zaydān's characterization of the Abbasid period closely resembles some contemporary portrayals of the Arab Nahḍa—and yet it is quite different from the account Zaydān gave of the "Egyptian Nahḍa" in 1892.

It may have been in 1894, then, that the term "nahḍa," in an unlikely context, acquired the meaning that would later become dominant—but that meaning was then only one of many. The following text, written by the same author in the same year, offers an example of "nahḍa" used in a way that has little or nothing to do with ideas of progress or literacy. In the April 1, 1894 edition of *al-Hilāl*, the "Egyptian News" section reports the arrest of a man in Cairo for the publication of an anarchist pamphlet celebrating the anniversary of "*Nahḍat al-Kūmūn*"—the Nahḍa of the Paris Commune. The wording of the *al-Hilāl* article (translated below) suggests that it is directly quoting the pamphlet; Gorman has concluded that it is, noting that anarchist groups, consisting mainly of Italian workers, Egyptian Greeks and Jews, and some Egyptians, produced pamphlets in both Italian and Arabic (230).[22] However, since it has so far been impossible to locate the original due to the fact that this type of ephemera was seldom archived, whether the precise wording is reproduced must remain a matter of speculation. Previous and following issues of the journal offer no more information, and the news pages of *al-Muqtaṭaf* for the same period seem to make no note of the incident.

The article in question reads as follows:

> A Pointless Anarchist Publication
>
> A Greek man published an anarchist publication in Cairo on the 18th of last month which urges workers to celebrate the commemoration of the *nahḍa* of the Commune [*nahḍat al-kūmūn*] of 1871, and it says in it: "Remember that this day is the commemoration of the *nahḍa* of the Commune in Paris—so onward! O ye oppressed workers, let us unite and call out together. Destruction to the filthy rich! Long live the social revolution, long live anarchism!"—except that this project bore no fruit because the police seized him and took him to court. (*Al-Hilāl* 2.15 475)

Although "nahḍa" might be translated here as "upsurge" or "flourishing" to denote the brief triumph of the Commune, the full significance of the word is hard to render. It lies in the association the term arguably creates between the Paris Commune and other "nahḍāt," namely the Egyptian one, at a time when "nahḍa" was emerging as a common term for denoting cultural movement, and was doing so primarily through the publications of liberal, bourgeois intellectuals like Zaydān.

Were this report a direct quotation, it would suggest that the term "nahḍa" had currency among groups quite different from the secular intellectual bourgeois circles in which Zaydān and his compatriots moved. "Nahḍa" could be used to refer to, and forge connections with, radical political movements that were very far from Egyptian liberal reform or Abbasid translation movements. Further, although Zaydān's use of the word "pointless" (*'aqīm*) in the title suggests a certain disdain on his part for the anarchist cause, *al-Hilāl*'s introduction does not object to the pamphlet's evocation of "nahḍa"—indeed, it repeats it. If Zaydān is simply quoting the pamphlet, he sanctions its use of the word "nahḍa," demonstrating that for him, at least, it remains a term whose political connotations—and geographical boundaries—remain flexible. If he is translating or paraphrasing the text this is, of course, doubly the case.

Sheehi and others have convincingly portrayed Nahḍa discourse as liberal, nationalist and, though often overtly anti-colonial, profoundly bound up in colonial epistemologies (see *Foundations*). The more radical politics of the time have been considered a separate matter.[23] But if, during the Nahḍa period and at the time when it was first being named as such, the word "nahḍa" was also being used to evoke (even connect) contentious politics and revolutionary movements, this alone might surely prompt us to question the political boundaries we have assumed for the Arab Nahḍa at this time. Throughout the mid- to late nineteenth century, the meaning of "nahḍa" was changing, and the significations that were to become dominant were not unassailable. Although "nahḍa" could evoke liberal, secular, reformist cultural activity, this was by no means its only function. Its connotations of "energy," "power," and "movement forward" were available to describe very different kinds of movement and power—and as

such, they might potentially be used to forge connections between these various movements for diverse political purposes.

Broader Boundaries: "Nahḍa" in the World

The enduring difficulty of translating "nahḍa" throughout these texts into a single English word is revealing. Many terms newly appearing in Arabic in this period were effectively translations, created or re-signified to render the names of foreign phenomena. Glosses of "Nahḍa" today as "renaissance" might imply that "nahḍa" too first gained new meaning as a translation, selected to render the French term. If this were the case, to describe the Arab Nahḍa *as* Nahḍa would have been to liken it to the European renaissance, placing the former in a subservient and imitative relation to the latter. Of course, the evidence of these sources suggests that this was not the case: The word "nahḍa" gained new meaning describing a domestic phenomenon on its own terms, not comparing it to a foreign one. But this does not mean that translations of "nahḍa" as renaissance are incorrect. In 1912, in fact, Zaydān himself used "nahḍa" to render "European Renaissance" (see *Riḥla*).[24] This particular gloss for "nahḍa" was indeed to become common, even standard (the reasons would be the subject of another essay) but at this point it was still one of many. In fact, Zaydān's use of "nahḍa" in 1912 seems connected to the capacity of the term to name diverse global phenomena, including—as opposed to specifically—renaissances.

After all, Europe was not the only place outside of the Arabic-speaking world that Zaydān identified in this period as experiencing "nahḍa," and the other examples he proposes cannot reasonably be considered "renaissances." The following texts demonstrate that in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the term "nahḍa" was employed by Zaydān, among others, to connect cultural movements all over the world. Ilham Khuri-Makdisi has suggested that what is called now the Nahḍa of the nineteenth and early twentieth century is only the Syro-Egyptian manifestation of a phenomenon occurring across the Ottoman Empire (1-34). Some writers of the Nahḍa itself would no doubt agree with her: According to these sources, that overar-

ching "nahḍa" possibly even extended further East, beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire and into colonial India. Evidence presented here suggests that, both in the literary press and in Zaydān's published work, the term "nahḍa" served, however briefly, as the title of a perceived transnational Eastern phenomenon.

Although this article focuses on journals, Zaydān's 1903 *Tarājim mashāhīr al-sharq* (Biographies of Famous Men of the East), a collation and extension of biographies originally published in *al-Hilāl*, is a key resource for scholars of the Nahḍa. Its very title expresses the extension of Zaydān's interests beyond the Arabic-speaking world, to a wider "East" (1:1). The second volume of *Tarājim* focuses on "those celebrated for knowledge and culture during the nineteenth century" (2:3). They are divided into: "Pillars of the recent intellectual nahḍa";[25] "The publishers and writers of newspapers"; "Men of letters and of service to knowledge and literature"; and "Poets."

With Zaydān's opening acknowledgement that "many of the most famous of our littérateurs, our authors, and our poets of the last century we still have not included in this book" (2:5), the question that poses itself at once is who Zaydān means by "our." The borders of the "East" as delimited by the figures included in the *Tarājim* biographies in fact stretch beyond the furthest points of the Ottoman Empire, from Albania to Zanzibar to Afghanistan and India[26]: They exceed the way Europeans have used "East" both in the early twentieth century and now. Zaydān is often associated with Arab nationalism, but this resembles something more like an inclination to Easternism, a concept still in its infancy at this point.[27]

The replacement of previously used adjectives, "Arab" and "Egyptian," with the term "intellectual" moves this Nahḍa beyond nationality and language, and the reference to this diverse collection of figures as "our" poets, leaders, kings, etc. does initially read as an expression of the collective cultural patrimony of a newly-imagined "East." However, the photograph on the title page of the second volume is of a decidedly Western figure, Frederick II of Germany, and the first identified Nahḍa "pillar" is Clot Bey (Antoine Clot)—the aforementioned French physician who became chief surgeon to Muhammad 'Ali—who was, according to Zaydān, "The founder of medical reform in

Egypt" (2:7). Apparently this version of the "East" is not even so simple as "non-West." Clot Bey's fellow "pillars" are Nāṣīf al-Yāzijī, Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Tahtāwī, Buṭrus al-Bustānī,[28] 'Alī Pasha Mubārak, Doctor Cornelius Van Dyck, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and, finally, Syed Aḥmad Khān (*Tarājim* 2:62).

Hanssen and Weiss have suggested that the contents of the *Tarājim* provided a model for future histories of the Nahḍa (2). In fact, this section of the *Tarājim* confirms that only parts of Zaydān's many portrayals of "nahḍa" have actually endured. The bulk of those included as "pillars" are indeed today considered standard Nahḍa figures, but there are a few exceptions. For instance, although Zaydān's identification of two Europeans, Clot Bey and Van Dyck, as "pillars" of Nahḍa is perhaps reflected in scholarly tendencies to attribute the Nahḍa to contact with Europe, few have actually identified them *as* Nahḍa figures. Zaydān's inclusion of them, indeed, is *not* as external inspirations to their Arab colleagues, but as scholars of equal stature engaged in the same work. This perhaps elides some of the colonial-era power relations in which these figures may have been entangled, but it does underline the fact that Zaydān's position on Europe was not nearly as deferential as has been suggested (see also Dupont 102).

The parameters of Zaydān's Eastern intellectual "nahḍa" also stretch further Eastward than is standard today. His final figure, Syed Aḥmad Khān, is "a pillar of the recent intellectual "nahḍa" in India [*bilād al-hind*]." Aḥmad Khān was an Indian Muslim scholar and a loyal colonial subject (Robinson n. pag.). After working as a jurist for the East India Company, he founded the Aligarh Muslim University, which became the center of the "Aligarh Movement" in Northern India. This movement was *not* part of the self-named "Bengali Renaissance" of the same period, and indeed from the 1870s Aḥmad Khān steered his followers away from the Indian nationalist movement. A prolific scholar, he was concerned primarily with the "modernization" of Muslim education along European lines (Robinson n. pag.).

It appears, then, that Aḥmad Khān's credentials for inclusion in this Nahḍa of the East were based on his role as a Muslim reformist like al-Afghānī, also a "pillar": Religion in common connects India to the Arab Nahḍa. Although Zaydān is famed for

writing secular history that tried to extricate Arab history from Islam, this seemingly did not extend to extricating Islamic reformist scholars from the Nahḍa endeavor. It has sometimes been suggested (e.g. Tomiche n. pag.) that nineteenth-century Islamic reformism was essentially separate from the secular, Christian-led Nahḍa. More recent work (e.g. Patel) has tended to challenge this, and Zaydān's inclusion of al-Afghāni and Khān as Nahḍa luminaries suggests that such a division was certainly not apparent to him. Zaydān's own secularism, seen here, is not *laïque*: It neither occludes religious identities nor rejects religious scholars. Rather, religious categories and identities are made subordinate to other, more important ones. In Zaydān's version of Aḥmad Khān's life, his contribution to Indian "nahḍa" is described without much reference to religion. Zaydān begins the entry with the classic narrative of eighteenth-century ignorance and decay in the East (as opposed to the "rising sun of knowledge in the West") but rewrites it to include India alongside "Iraq, Shām, and Egypt" (*Tarājim* 2:62).[29] The first link between these countries is made on the basis of their shared former state of decline.

When the Arab nations realized their state, Zaydān continues, they remedied their predicament by "founding schools, newspapers, printing presses and so on" (2:62). India was different: "As for India, most of the credit for its nahḍa must go to a man from among them . . . Syed Aḥmad Khān." His importance, Zaydān goes on to explain, lies in the fact that during his life, India was under the rule of the British, and Indians so hated the British that they "would not eat or drink with them, or live with them, or read their books, or learn their language. . . . opportunity passed them by and they were stuck on the forked stick of obedience, striving for independence" (2:62). Luckily, he adds, Aḥmad Khān realized that this striving was in vain, and took on responsibility for their affairs, founding schools and "urging the people towards the adoption of [new] knowledge" (2:62).

Once more, Zaydān's complex relationship with colonialism and European influence is articulated through the limits he gives the term "nahḍa." On the one hand, from a gamut of anti-colonial Indian reformists, Zaydān cherry-picked for inclusion in his Eastern Nahḍa "Hall of Fame" Aḥmad Khān, an ardent public supporter of

British rule. On the other, he actually elided the man's rejection of the independence movement, representing his "nahḍa" as a way of *seeking* independence through reform—a position strongly resembling Zaydān's own on Egyptian independence. Zaydān's re-articulation of the Arab Nahḍa as a transnational, Eastern Nahḍa in the *Tarājim* challenges associations of the Arab Nahḍa with Egyptian, Syrian, and pan-Arab nationalisms. The term here is used to forge connections across national and perceived ethnic boundaries within the colonized "East." However, if it is a liberating force, it is reformist and not revolutionary: Connections are made on the basis not of shared struggle against colonial rule, but shared "progress" under it. Zaydān's international intellectual Nahḍa still evokes a "rising up," not an "uprising."

However, Zaydān's position elsewhere differs somewhat depending on context and time period. Although Zaydān exerted editorial control, *al-Hilāl* published articles by many authors, and was not explicitly associated with any political position. This fact, combined with Zaydān's own shifting politics, made for a journal capable of espousing a variety of types of politics. The following example is taken from *al-Hilāl*, issue of June 1910, and is titled "The History of the Political Nahḍa in British India." Written by Ibrāhīm al-Sam'ān, "a Nazarene littérateur" (*al-Hilāl* 18.4 571), it has an editorial introduction by Zaydān himself. Here, the connections of "nahḍa" to a liberal reformism that often accepted colonial rule are directly challenged.

The article connects the upsurge in anti-colonial activity termed, in the title, an Indian "nahḍa" to Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War:

> And after the Russo-Japanese war, their demands gained much more importance, particularly since the victory of Japan in the Far East instigated in Asia in general, and in India especially, an extraordinary movement, which readied the earth for the sowing of the seeds of revolution. (*al-Hilāl* 18.4 571)[30]

In other words, it evokes a "political nahḍa" closely connected to a "revolution." It is also identified later in the article as a

"national, nationalist movement" (*ḥaraka waṭaniyya qawmiyya*) that constituted a resurgence of the 1857 revolution (*thawra*) (*al-Hilāl* 18.4 571). This is a significant shift, in the space of only a few years, from Zaydān's description in *Tarājim* of an Indian "nahḍa" that arrived only *after* the failed revolution, and was the work of loyalist reformists.

The reformist connotations of "nahḍa" are in fact not explicitly invoked. The decision to refer to the movement in the title as a "nahḍa" rather than, as in most of the rest of the article, a *ḥaraka* (movement) or *thawra* (revolution) might be an effort to mobilize the positive and legitimist connotations the word probably had for *al-Hilāl*'s readership, making them more receptive to the insurgency. Al-Sam'ān represents the movement explicitly as a manifestation of Eastern rejuvenation and solidarity; the word "nahḍa" adds a further semantic connection with the experiences of *al-Hilāl*'s majority Egyptian and Syrian readers. And the timing is important: Following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, Zaydān, like many others, was more receptive to contentious political positions (Philipp, *Jurji* 18). Zaydān was an avid supporter of the Revolution, and wrote several articles on the subject of constitutionalism. In the aftermath of the challenge to the Ottoman regime, Zaydān was apparently willing to expand "nahḍa" to encompass anti-colonial revolution, presenting the 1910 Indian revolutions as positive political revitalization despite having earlier dismissed the 1857 ones as futile "hatred" and stagnation.

The idea that "nahḍa" was a phenomenon repeated worldwide, and that the nineteenth-century Nahḍa stretched beyond the Arabic-speaking world and into India and the rest of the Ottoman Empire, reoccurs beyond *al-Hilāl* and the work of Zaydān.[31] In issues of *al-Muqtaṭaf* and *al-Zuhūr* in 1910 and 1913, articles appeared comparing and connecting the "Arabic" and "Turkish" nahḍas—referring not only to cultural activity and the expansion of the press, but also to Ottoman military reform. More interestingly still, in 1911, in his journal *al-Manār*, Islamic reformist Rashīd Riḍā named a later iteration of Indian Islamic reformism as a "nahḍa" (*al- Muqtaṭaf,* May 1911 478; *al-Zuhūr*, May 3, 1913 151; *al-Manār,* February 1913 104).[32] Together these sources indicate that the boundaries typically applied to "the" Nahḍa of the nine-

teenth and early twentieth century, identifying it as a circumscribed and exclusively Arab phenomenon, were not necessarily in place when that "Nahḍa" was unfolding. In the 1910s, the Arab Nahḍa, and indeed the Arab world, were conceived of by at least some authors as part of a larger East. Intellectual connections and comparisons were forged in the press that, perhaps due to the ephemerality of that medium, have since been forgotten or obscured.

Conclusions

By the 1930s, in fact, many of these connections and comparisons had already vanished from mainstream discourse.[33] Seeds of this later shift are present in Zaydān's work, and precisely how it occurred is certainly a subject worthy of further investigation. This article, however, has focused rather on the preceding decades, mapping the shifts that took place in the meaning of the term "nahḍa" between 1850 and 1914. I have demonstrated that, throughout much of the Nahḍa era itself, the word "nahḍa" retained and developed meanings that diverge significantly from the connotations of secular, liberal, nationalist, Christian-led, Westernizing "renaissance" dominant today. I have also suggested that acknowledgement of those earlier definitions is essential to nuancing analyses of the literary press as a space of linguistic and discursive change, of the development of the concept of "nahḍa," and of the content of the "Arab Nahḍa" itself.

Firstly, the range of contexts in which the word appeared was wide. As proposed already, it is possibly because the meanings of "nahḍa" unfolded across many genres, including non-literary ones, that some of the nuance these texts provide when read together has been lost; Iterations of the term in books by Zaydān or, later, Taha Hussein have perhaps survived better. Certainly, the popularization of the term in the press did not at once lead to its clear re-signification and the consolidation of a new, lasting meaning, but to a period of even greater flexibility. The process by which terms were codified in the Arabic literary press was one which could prove lengthy and uncertain, and which in this case was perhaps most decisively concluded elsewhere, in books and even in other languages.

Beyond the history of the term *qua* term, this article has sought to draw out the ways in which "nahḍa" was conceived of by Arab Nahḍa writers, as revealed in their use of the word itself. Of course, such an analysis can only be partial. The Nahḍa existed and was discussed long before it was named, and in countless texts in which the word is never used. Further, and as Williams has acknowledged, the examination of a single word, however important, cannot provide the solution or even the key to related, wider debates. It may, however, present new perspectives and nuances.

Beginning with Zaydān's announcement of "Egyptian Nahḍa" in his journal *al-Hilāl* in 1892, this article has therefore traced the usage of the term in the preceding and following decades. Reading appearances of the word with what might be called a philological eye—that is, without the assumption that its meaning is fixed or singly translatable—it has been possible to identify shifts in its meaning and usage well into the twentieth century. Acknowledgement of this potential flexibility has permitted new readings of texts, revealing the existence of a range of different representations of the Arab Nahḍa, and conceptions of "nahḍa" in general. The word was increasingly widespread in the 1890s, and in places acquired some of its later definitions (progressive, secular cultural activity), but through the 1900s, the phenomena named as "nahḍa" and even as part of the Arab Nahḍa were of an astonishingly broad range. The Arabic Nahḍa was not named as such until the 1890s, and, decades later, the ways in which it was conceived of by its own actors remained highly changeable. If nothing else, this surely prompts the suggestion that the movement itself was more internally diverse, and underwent more change over time, than even the thesis of two Nahḍa generations has proposed.

Further, as the word's definition shifted—from "upsurge" to "uprising" to "flourishing," and back—so too did the positions it could express, and the discourses to which it contributed. Portrayals of the Nahḍa that present Nahḍa thought as Arab, proto-liberal, and inevitably inflected by colonial discourse are convincing and important. Yet the range of narratives and political positions in which the word "nahḍa" is embedded in these texts suggest that this analysis can be nuanced: that Nahḍa discourse, even as encountered solely within texts where the idea of

"nahḍa" is explicitly evoked, could sometimes be a little more diverse. Some sources read here did indeed describe events and figures recognizable as part of what is now commonly called the Arab Nahḍa. Others, however, named as part of that same Nahḍa places, people, and politics seldom included today, and still others used "nahḍa" to identify and connect completely different phenomena across time and space.

To pay attention to the history of the term "nahḍa" is not to restrict possible understandings of the concept of "nahḍa" or the Arab Nahḍa: quite the opposite. If today, when examining Nahḍa texts, scholars expanded their understanding or translation of the word "nahḍa" to encompass some of the many meanings it once had, subtly different readings might emerge. If they further expanded the borders of that Nahḍa to encompass those proposed by Zaydān and others in the early twentieth century, positing the existence of a movement that connected Arab intellectuals with those in India and across the Ottoman Empire, they might draw for the Nahḍa an entirely different map.

Notes

* I would like to thank my early readers, Hala Halim and Zachary Lockman, for their help and guidance.

[1] See recent work by Patel, Sheehi, and Baron. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

[2] For a critical examination, see Sheehi's *Foundations*.

[3] Selim states that the era we now call "Nahḍa" was first named as such "somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century" ("The People's" 35). Traboulsi as well as Hanssen and Weiss agree, the latter attributing the first usage of "nahḍa" to Shidyaq in the 1850s (Hanssen and Weiss 2). However, Hanssen and Weiss also note that it was *al-Hilāl* which "made it mainstream" (2). Patel and Levy also note that Zaydān is "generally agreed" to have coined the term.

[4] Gran locates an increase in cultural activity in the eighteenth century; Sharkey discusses Nahḍa in the Sudan; Patel focuses on Muslim intellectuals in the Nahḍa.

[5] By which I mean journals whose focus was not only news but which also included short fiction, quasi-academic articles, translations,

and so on, and which commonly described themselves as "*adabiyya wa-'ilmiyya*," "cultural/literary and intellectual/scientific." Many had relatively high readerships (Ayalon 148-52).

[6] Elshakry focuses on *al-Muqtaṭaf*, a scientific and literary journal contemporary of *al-Hilāl*. Zaydān edited it for a brief period in the 1880s.

[7] See Patel's chapter "Language Reform and Controversy" (102-26). The extent of the changes occurring in the language so incensed scholar Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī that in 1901 he published *Lughat al-Jarā'id*, a searing polemic on the linguistic offences of his contemporaries that identified the newspaper as the prime culprit. He had previously published his criticisms in his own journal, *al-Ḍiyā'*.

[8] I cannot claim to have examined every text published in this period, and I would be fascinated to see earlier examples. For instance, I have encountered references to an 1890 Cairene Jewish newspaper called *Nahdat Isrā'īl*, but thus far I have not been able to obtain a copy of it. Philipp also notes the existence of an article in *al-Muqtaṭaf* in 1888 regarding a "medical nahḍa" (*Gurgī* 7) but, as I will discuss later, the use of the term in this case is slightly different.

[9] Williams argues that dictionaries, as records of usage, are a good place to start when writing word-histories; in Arabic dictionaries, only a very limited kind of usage is in fact documented. Their sources are not chiefly contemporaneous texts but previous, authoritative lexicographical works, with occasional recourse to poetry, and through usage in poetry or literature of a similar status that the meaning of a word, according to these authorities, may legitimately change.

[10] A term used especially by earlier intellectuals to describe (dismiss) the pre-modern period.

[11] I have, in fact, found earlier examples of the term "nahḍa" being used to express collective movement, addressed later, but they do not refer to what is recognizably "the" Arab Nahḍa.

[12] Traboulsi and al-Azmeh's quotations are mostly from al-Shidyāq's *al-Sāq 'alā-l-sāq fī mā huwa al-fāriyāq*, but this citation has no reference. I have been unable to locate it in *al-Sāq* myself.

[13] A shift for this word too: al-Bustānī, in *Muḥīṭ*, includes it only under the entry for the verb "*nahaḍa*," where the definition given is a combination of those in previous dictionaries: "From its place, to rise; to its enemy, to hasten; and the plant ripens; and the bird extends its wings" (920).

[14] A significant word for al-Bustānī (Sheehi, *Foundations* 41).

[15] Investigating the relationship between these terms is outside the scope of this article.

[16] By 1906, a "Nahḍa Society" had been established in Syria, several journals of contemporary culture existed with "Nahḍa" in their names, the "women's nahḍa" had been announced, and so on.

[17] For this period, I would usually translate "ādāb" as "cultures," but the introduction features a long discussion of what "ādāb" are and offers as a translation the English word "literature," in Latin script.

[18] Zaydān's periodization and writing of the canon are interesting in themselves. Massad has detailed what he considers Zaydān's elision of certain types of poetry from the literary canon (59-60), while Dupont has worked extensively on Zaydān's history-writing—though she has focused on his later books, which as are in some places dramatically different from his earlier, more experimental articles.

[19] This is how, for instance, al-Bustānī referred to it in his *Khuṭba* of 1858.

[20] He also notes that "a great service was done to the world because they [the Arabs] preserved the knowledge of the Greeks and the Persians by translating them into their tongue at a time when Europe was mired in the darkness of ignorant generations," without which Europeans "when they came to want to regain that knowledge would have found nothing in their hands" (389).

[21] Zaydān was also pushed out of a position as a history scholar at Cairo University on the basis of alleged inadequate treatment of Islam in his historical work .

[22] Unfortunately, neither Gorman nor anyone else has been able to find the original.

[23] Khuri-Makdisi's work is a notable exception, as is the work of Gorman.

[24] Indeed, by translating "renaissance" as "nahḍa," Zaydān arguably risked distorting his readers' understandings of the European renaissance, or at least eliding some of its specificities.

[25] The term in Arabic is "*'ilmiyya*." I render it here and subsequently as "intellectual" rather than the standard "scientific" because, in this context, and in fact very often for texts of this period, it is a more accurate translation: Zaydān is talking about work that includes literature and journalism, and figures almost none of which would ever be described in English as "scientists."

[26] Rulers from all these places are included in the first volume.

[27] This concept only emerged in the mid-nineteenth century (the word appeared in 1835) and is not usually assumed to have had much traction during the Nahḍa.

[28] Al-Shidyāq is somewhat prominently missing here, especially given that *al-Hilāl* published several articles on him, including one referring to him as a "pillar of the nahḍa" in 1893.

[29] It is worth noting that in the 1900s, articles also appeared in *al-Hilāl* and *al-Muqtaṭaf* discussing the "nahḍa of Baghdad," thus explicitly welcoming Iraq into the Arab Nahḍa. Shām, meanwhile, refers to, roughly, modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

[30] Zaydān himself was deeply interested in this, initially calling it a surprising victory given the scientific work on the superiority of the Caucasian race over the Mongolians. It later prompted an interest in constitutionalism that developed throughout his work over the next several years.

[31] For further examples, see Khayat. I was unable to see this work in time fully to engage with it.

[32] Riḍā published *al-Manār* from Cairo: He lived there much of his life, and was heavily involved in the intellectual community there (to the extent that he had something of a feud with Zaydān in 1912-13). That Riḍā should be involved in a discourse of "nahḍa" does not, therefore, seem surprising. However, Tomiche has noted that Islamic reformists are not always, indeed not often, discussed in terms of Nahḍa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (n. pag.). For Tomiche, this is appropriate:

> This movement of rebirth and awakening . . . gave rise, in the mid-19th century, to two complementary manifestations. The one, endogenous, sought an internal revision of the Islamic phenomenon, and this is what is known as "reformism." The other, exogenous, was born out of East-West contact and is correctly defined as Nahḍa—a liberation and rejection of the shackles of the past, as well as an advance towards modernism as represented by foreign models. (n. pag.)

Yet I have already demonstrated that at least for many of those writing the word "nahḍa" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their own Nahḍa was decidedly not simply "born out of East-West contact," nor did it uncomplicatedly "reject the shackles of the past" or advocate "foreign models." From this alone, its total disconnection from reformist ideas seems unlikely.

[33] In 1926, for instance, when the immensely influential Taha Hussein wrote of "*al-nahḍa al-ḥadītha*," he described a purely Arab, primarily Egyptian endeavor (see *Fī-l-shi'r al-jāhilī* [On Pre-Islamic Poetry]); by 1938, he had produced *Mustaqbal al-thaqāfa fī Misr* (The Future of Culture in Egypt), a text which severed Egypt's history from India and China to emphasize its classical past. In the following decades, European scholars translated "Nahḍa" as "Awakening" and "Renaissance," semantically identifying it as nationalist or a Westward-looking phenomenon.

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