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It may be a common practice in scholarly studies of concepts in Arabic literature to start the line of argument by emphasising the complexity and intricacy of an Arabic term. Maher Jarrar, author of the preliminary outline of the present anthology, is no exception when he states right at the start of his foreword that the term homeland (*waṭan*) in Arabic has many nuances “occupying an interstitial position between various disciplines and terrains—geographic, geo-strategic, ‘patriotic’, social, public, private, idyllic, emotional and nostalgic”—making the term especially hard to understand. With a view to the word in Arabic itself, this remark may at first seem surprising: In his *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Edward William Lane (d. 1876) translates the term *waṭan* as “the place of abode or residence of a man: a man’s settled place of abode; his place of constant residence; his dwelling; his home”, therewith referring to the *Ṣiḥāḥ* of al-Jawharī, the *Mughrib* of al-Mutarrizī, the *Qāmūs al-Muḥiṭ* of Firūzābādī and the *Miṣbāḥ* of al-Fayyūmī. Picking up this definition, nineteenth-century scholars like Rifā‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1873) or Buṭrus al-Bustānī (d. 1893) use the term in a rather political context or ‘patriotic’ sense, bringing it closer to the idea of ‘nation’ rather than ‘dwelling’ or ‘home’: In his dictionary, al-Bustānī notes that “*waṭan* is the house of residence of man and his (fixed) abode whether he was born in it or not.” He called his leaflets *waṭaniyyāt* and started each with *yā abnā’ al-waṭan* (o sons of the homeland) and signed each with *min muḥibb li-l-waṭan* (from a lover to the homeland). This is in line with the fact that when translating the *Marseillaise*, aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī used the word *waṭan* for the French *patrie: l’amour de la patrie* becomes *ḥubb al-waṭan*.

This semantic extension—or even ‘politicisation’—that the term *waṭan* experienced in the course of the nineteenth century is to be kept in mind when studying representations and visions of homeland in modern Arabic literature. The volume at hand, presenting itself as the result of an international symposium on representations and visions of homeland in modern Arabic prose literature und poetry held at the Lichtenberg Kolleg for Advanced Studies, University of Göttingen, in the year 2011, oscillates between

these two very concepts of *waṭan*—‘home’ and ‘nation’—furthermore highlighting the complexity, diversity and vitality of ideas and images of *waṭan* in Arabic literature. The eleven chapters’ headings seem to be indicative for a focus on conceptions of ‘home’, ranging from longing for home, leaving and losing home, over constructing and gendering home, to grieving over home and remembering home. As ‘nation’ is a burning issue both in the history of the modern Arab world and in the contemporary literature of that very time, it is scarcely surprising that this concept pervades this volume’s essays and articles, too—not only in the two chapters that explicitly question ‘nation’: chapter 5 *Proclaiming Home* “The Egyptian Writer ‘Alā’ al-Aswānī and the Concept of Nation: The Novel *The Yacoubian Building*” by Stephan Guth and chapter 9 *Gendering Home* “Representations of the ‘Nation’ in Arab Women’s Prison Memoirs” by Hosn Abboud.

As an anthology, the thematic spectrum of this volume covers a wide range of different genres of modern Arabic literature: travelogues, poetry, epistles, treatises, anthologies, prison memoirs, so-called ‘village books’ as collective autobiographies and, of course, novels. In general, the volume covers more prose than poetry, with Leslie Tramontini’s chapter on “Place and Memory: Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb and Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb revisited” and Stephan Milich’s very broad approach in chapter 7, “*Heimsuchungen: Writing waṭan in Modern Arabic Poetry*” being the only two contributions to the field of modern Arabic poetry.

Starting with a retrospect into classical Arabic literature and the topos of *al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*—the longing for home—and a foray through travelogues in the age of the Nahḍa, the book contributes to a deeper understanding of the beginnings of literary representations of home and homeland in Arabic literature. In the first chapter *Longing for Home*, Beatrice Gruendler highlights the ambivalence that was expressed towards the home in classical Arabic literature and investigates what the long-familiar term *waṭan* variously stood for and traces its historical development. From the earliest poetry on, when it comes to conceptions of *waṭan* (more often as a plural *awṭān*), it is not the physical home that poets elaborate on, but rather the (physical or psychological) space between the speaker and the destination of his longing—a form of nostalgia rather, just as Wen-chin Ouyang notes for the Arabic novel in her book *Politics of Nostalgia* from 2013. At first, in the classical *qaṣīda* we find the idea of mourning the ruins (*aṭlāl*) of a deserted dwelling of a former beloved. Even though the actual place plays an important role in expressing a certain ‘yearning’ in this context, it is not so much a feeling of ‘homesickness’ but rather an unbridgeable yearning

across time. Beginning in the ninth century in Abbasid times, we also find epistles, treatises and comprehensive anthologies exploiting the idea of ‘home’ scholarly and developing a nuanced palette of reactions towards ‘home’: An epistle entitled *al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868/9) is an example of early thematic anthologies on homesickness. The actual author Mūsā b. ‘Īsā al-Kisrawī (d. 907/8) not only compiled poetry but rather gives an almost anthropological account of Bedouin life and the Bedouins’ visions of their environment. Furthermore, the concept of ‘home’ plays an important role in books on travel and strangers, e. g. al-Tha‘ālibī’s (d. 1039) *Zād safar al-mulūk* with chapters on separation and exile. The nature of ‘home’ in classical Arabic literature differs from modern significations of country or nation in that it scarcely has any political dimension. Home was a personal location, the place of birth, the parental habitation, or tribal grounds—or even the dwelling of the beloved.

With the so-called Nahḍa, conceptions of ‘home’ assumed a rather socio-political shape in the early nineteenth century. Travelling provided the possibility of mutual exchange between Arab and European countries and visions of ‘home’ intertwined with ideas of ‘nation’. Nikolay Dyakov’s survey of three authors from the nineteenth century—al-Ṭaḥṭāwī who visited Paris, Muḥammad ‘Ayyād al-Ṭaṭṭāwī (d. 1861), who taught in St. Petersburg, and Aḥmad Zakī Bāshā (d. 1934), who is traditionally referred to as the first Muslim Egyptian intellectual to visit Spain and to describe its historical monuments—is rather brief with ten pages. It still provides a fine insight into the significant difference between travel books of the Middle Ages and those of the time of the Nahḍa, that is a certain whiff of inferiority—politically, culturally, militarily, or technologically speaking—on the side of the “young Arabs” who travelled to Europe. Apart from that, Dyakov’s chapter almost perfectly spans a bridge to Tramontini’s excellent revision of place and memory in the writings of two Iraqi poets, namely Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb (d. 1964) and Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb. Drawing on literary theories of memory culture, her article deals with some very different strategies of constructions of memory and place in modern Iraqi poetry. While al-Sayyāb eyed on imaging a territory of the past by delving into the region’s rich history right back to the times of Babylonia, al-Nawwāb challenges the memory of very recent events such as the massacre of Tel Za‘tar in 1976.

Thereafter, Hartmut Fähndrich gives glimpses of the idea of ‘home’ in a few modern Arabic novels in chapter 6, spanning a bridge from Imilī Naṣrallāh’s *Birds of September*, over Najīb Maḥfūẓ’ *Midaq Alley* and al-Ṭayyīb Ṣāliḥ’s *Season of Migration to the North*—one of the most

important novels of modern Arabic literature—to Ḥamīda Naʿnaʿa's *Who Would Still Dare to Dream* and Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *The Magus*. With Göran Larsson's chapter on the famous Egyptian novel *The Yacoubian Building* by ʿAlāʾ al-Aswānī, some of the most important novels and writers of modern Arabic prose have been addressed. In addition to that, Anette Mansson gives insights into strategies of realising place and home in two Palestinian novels. Quite generally, from the fact that more than four chapters of the present book focus on writings by Palestinian authors, it is obvious that the Arab-Israeli conflict and its literary processing serve as a main source for investigations on visions and representations of home in modern Arabic literature. Another historical event that must have triggered several authors to grapple with 'home' and 'nation' is the Lebanese Civil War lasting from 1975 to 1990. Furthermore, postcolonialism plays a major role in constructing home in the writings of authors from North Africa.

Having assembled renowned specialists in Arabic literature working in universities across the globe, including such countries as Australia, Denmark, Lebanon, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and Germany, the volume edited by Sebastian Günther and Stephan Milich can be viewed as a starting point in critical research on issues relating to home, homeland and nation and the far-reaching impact of these concepts throughout modern Arabic literature. One of the pleasures of this anthology is the discovery of connections between chapters here and there, even though the eleven articles with lengths ranging from fifteen pages on the average—with the first chapter on classical Arabic literature being quite extensive, though—are at best taken individually. The general index at the end of the book—listing not only toponyms and names of persons but also concepts such as 'future' or 'loss' or terms such as 'motif'—serves as a mine of information being addressed throughout this anthology; the term 'identity' for example appears in every single chapter except for chapter 1 (classical Arabic literature) and 7 (modern Arabic poetry).

The individual chapters offer very different approaches to the topic, some of them attempting a rather broad overview of modern Arabic prose and poetry (Fähndrich, Milich, Attar), others giving a detailed investigation of one or two authors or works (Dyakov, Tramontini, Guth, Larsson, Mansson) and again others focussing on whole genres, namely women's prison memoirs (Abboud) and Palestinian village books (Davis). With their focus on these two rather neglected genres of modern Arabic literature, Abboud and Davis breathe some fresh air into the current research of Arabic studies as presented in this book, being mostly concerned with the modern novel. Davis' investi-

gation of homeland, history, and stories of Palestinian villages is in fact the only article of this anthology that casts a glance on folklore, oral history and ideas of (collective and individual) memory in connection with *waṭan*. The chapter on grieving home with the rather dramatic title "A Mother or a Grave?" could have functioned as an introduction or a concluding overview rather than a simple chapter equal to the other ten, as it describes visions of homeland both in modern Arabic poetry and prose, not only addressing the matter of 'homeland' in Arab history, but also touching upon authors like Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Emīle Ḥabībī, Ghassān Kanafānī and Saḥar Khalifa but also Nizār Qabbānī, Tawfiq Yūsuf ʿAwwād, Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf, al-Ṭayyib Šāliḥ and furthermore ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, Mikhāʿil Nuʿayma and Rashīd Salīm al-Qarawī.

Summing up, Asma Afsaruddin, professor of Near Eastern languages and cultures at Indiana University gets right to the point when she describes the book at hand as "a cornucopia of delights for those who wish to explore the perennially haunting theme of 'homeland' in modern Arabic literature." Published in 2016, "in times of barbaric violence" as Asʿad E. Khairallah, professor of Arabic and comparative literature at the American University of Beirut puts it, the present volume sort of builds on studies rather focussed on politics and culture such as Ghassan Salame's *The Foundations of the Arab State* from 2013 or Bassam Tibi's *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State* from 1997, but presents an extensive literary approach. It is especially enlightening to receive an impression of the fluidity and polymorphism of all the very ideas mapped to the term *waṭan* in the Arabic and literature throughout modern times.