

Producing Islamic philosophy: The life and afterlives of Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* in global history, 1882–1947

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Abstract

In recent decades, the trope that classical Muslim thinkers anticipated or influenced modern European thought has provided an easy endorsement of their contemporary relevance. This article studies how Arab editors and intellectuals, from 1882 to 1947, understood the twelfth-century Andalusian philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl, and Arabo-Islamic philosophy generally. This modern generation of Arab scholars also attached significance to classical Arabic texts as precursors to modern European thought. They invited readers to retrospectively identify with Ibn Ṭufayl and his treatise, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*. Comparisons of Ibn Ṭufayl to European thinkers, and re-presentations of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* as the precedent or genesis of European thought, facilitated these editors' global imaginaries, anti-colonial projects and political fantasies. This article tracks these projects and fantasies through the afterlife of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* from early printings and generalist surveys to later editions and studies, as Ibn Ṭufayl's significance became sutured into his imagined importance for Europe, and for going beyond Europe.

Keywords

Ibn Tufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, reception history, editions, modern Arab thought, Islamic philosophy, imperialism, anti-colonialism, Easternism, Orientalism

Editing *falsafa*, writing empire

In recent decades, the trope that classical Muslim thinkers anticipated or influenced modern European thought has provided an easy endorsement of their relevance to the global humanities. This trope has an important but neglected precedent: late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonised Arab scholars also attached

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significance to classical Arabic texts and to their European translations as precursors to modern European thought. One such text is the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl's (d. 1185) allegory *Risālat Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, which narrates the life of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān (lit., 'Living, son of Awakened') on an island, how he attains knowledge of God and the universe, then fails to disseminate it. For these writers, Ibn Ṭufayl became the Arabo-Muslim herald of European modernity. Why did these scholars identify with a twelfth-century text of *falsafa* (Hellenised Arabic/Islamicate philosophy), and why did they keep repeating the claim that it influenced European development?

This article studies how Ibn Ṭufayl was selectively written into the canon of Arabo-Islamic thought by Arab editors and intellectuals, from 1882 to 1947. With a handful of exceptions (Elshakry, 2014; El Shamsy, 2016; Massad, 2007; Salama, 2011), the modern Arab reinvention of an 'Arabo-Islamic intellectual tradition' remains understudied terrain. Such thinkers creatively misappropriated what they took as their past, constructing a classical tradition and its sources as civilisational documents. When they studied *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, they navigated the terrain of European empire and reflected on their colonial and post-colonial contexts. They confronted Europeans' access to the text since its 1671 Latin translation by Edward Pococke, and the historical and geopolitical implications of its transnational itinerary.

Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān's reception history in Europe formed the backdrop of its reception by modern Arab scholars and their production of *falsafa* as their intellectual past. This article, then, does not narrate 'Islamic philosophy', neither in the relationship of the philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl to other *falāsifa* like the formatively influential Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna; d. 1037) nor in its (real or exaggerated) impact on European thinkers, so much as to show how Arab scholars produced this very narrative for consumption by a (post-)colonial Arab audience. If Arab heritage (*turāth*), comprising civilisational documents 'said to have been passed down from the Arabs of the past to the Arabs of the present', is 'in a sense a time traveller' (Massad, 2007: 17; see also Gubara, 2012: 335), modern Arab scholars of the classics were the technicians of the time machine. They invited readers to retrospectively identify with *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, to displace cultural pride and anxiety onto the text's Andalusian matrix (Gutas, 1994; Hughes, 2003) and its reception in Europe (Hasanali, 1995: 276–356; see also Conrad, 1996: 275–284). To adapt George F Hourani's (1956: 40) question about the allegory, 'What is this book primarily about?' we might ask: What has been facilitated by making this book about modern Europe, about an 'Islamic philosophical heritage', and about how the colonised engendered or anticipated the coloniser's modernity? What projects and global imaginaries were served in such re-presentations of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*?

I examine the social afterlives of Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* through *paratexts* – that is titles, editorial notes, introductions and commentaries. I argue that the authors of these paratexts insist upon *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*'s centrality to an Arabo-Islamic tradition in an ambivalent, anxious fashion. According to these paratexts, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* is part of a heritage worthy of recovery; however, they locate its value in *transcending* this identity, in its participation in or

contribution to European ideas or liberal universalism. Ibn Ṭufayl's place in an Arabo-Islamic tradition was thus sutured into his imagined importance for Europe. With this ambivalence, Ibn Ṭufayl emerges as an object of admiration and guidance, through whom the colonised could claim ownership over their colonisers. Modern editors often directed readers to find value in the text as Europe's predecessor, as prefiguring trends in modern European thought or as having enabled or even caused them. Ibn Ṭufayl was their ancestral avatar, European thinkers inferior or derivative. Comparisons of Ibn Ṭufayl to European thinkers facilitated two fantasies against their colonisers: a fantasy of cultural superiority and a fantasy of historical genesis. And yet, the paratexts' perceived superiority, like their claims about Ibn Ṭufayl having come up with modern European ideas first, reinscribes the political dominance of the coloniser, with their modernist liberal idioms and a teleology of Eurocentric intellectual development.

However, the editors also imagine a different configuration of Arab and global power. At brief moments where the paratexts exceed their disciplinary sensibilities – *recontextualising* Ibn Ṭufayl in terms of world-historical power rather than the life of the author, or approaching *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* as object of *contemporary critique* rather than of antiquarian interest or historical guidance – they go beyond Europe. These moments lay bare how adopting a past can enable innovation (Jenco, 2014), and how *refusing* the terms upon which the coloniser adopts and reads the colonised's 'tradition' facilitates imagining alternative futures and anti-imperial geographies.

The next section briefly outlines discussions of Ibn Ṭufayl's influence and offers a defence of paratexts as sources and sites of political theory. I then study the reinvention of *falsafa* through *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*'s paratexts chronologically, from how three early printings and a popular historical survey situated Ibn Ṭufayl in relation to Ibn Sīnā and Europe, to the comparisons, disciplinary conventions and problems of authorial intent and contextualisation in later editions and studies. The editors' claims about Ibn Ṭufayl's importance for *falsafa* are pegged, on one hand, to their increasing insistence upon his superiority, precedence or genesis of Europe, and on the other hand, to the alternative worlds they imagine, beyond Europe.

Ibn Ṭufayl, whose past?

Texts by a number of *falāsifa* were read in Latin Europe since the twelfth century; it is well established that Aquinas, for example, adapted Latinised versions of Ibn Sīnā's and Ibn Rushd's (Averroës; d. 1198) metaphysics. *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*'s rich history of European translations, editions and commentaries is comparatively shorter. Its availability starting in seventeenth-century Europe is well documented and has led to 'interesting speculation' (Toomer, 1996: 222) about whether it 'influenced' John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and European liberalism (Russell, 1994; Attar, 2007; Ben-Zaken, 2011). Some provocatively, if tenuously, assert this 'influence' exists 'without a doubt' and that Locke's theories of toleration – and Spinoza's – were actually formulated by Ibn Ṭufayl, together

with modern understandings of empiricism, human nature, the individual and multiculturalism (Attar, 2007: 50–54). A related hypothesis holds that Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is inspired by *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* (see Pastor, 1930).

These theses of precedence, influence or 'cross-cultural exchange' have their own precedent in the *Nahḍa* (the self-described 'renaissance' of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonised Near East). Arab scholars in Cairo, Beirut and Damascus, often with institutional links to their teachers and counterparts in France, Germany and England, revisited the history of the sciences and humanities in the Near East, translated European knowledge and studied medieval Arabic texts, with an eye toward explaining or remedying their perceived inferiority relative to Europe. Numerous editions of Ibn Ṭufayl's text appeared during and after this period.¹

The text's European afterlife is thus fraught, not only because Andalusia had been part of Muslim Spain. Reading Ibn Ṭufayl's impact on liberalism would seem to write Arabo-Islamic thought back into European history, as Europe's constitutive but disavowed past. It might highlight how Islam has figured in the formation of early modern European identities (Matar, 1998) or as Europe's 'Muslim Question' (Norton, 2013) or liberalism's constitutive outside (Massad, 2015). But to locate Ibn Ṭufayl's *value* as pre-history to modern European liberal thought, in whether Europeans appreciated his ideas and whether his ideas can be read as agreeing with them, pleads for his significance with Europe as zenith and standard. Although Ibn Ṭufayl's concepts and arguments, if decontextualised, can mirror modern European ideas (e.g. of individualist autonomy), to search for or transpose (proto-)liberal understandings of individualism and autonomy onto *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* privileges resonance with the dominant lexicon (Jenco, 2007) and entrenches Europe as 'absent model' (Euben, 2006: 57–58).

I turn to paratexts to provide a genealogy of the reinvention of Ibn Ṭufayl. The study of commentaries – one kind of paratext – is common in related fields, like Aristotle's multilingual reception (Burnett, 1993), Greek thought in Arabic (Gutas, 1998) or Confucian interpretation (Makeham, 2003). Although such sources are peripheral in political theory, theorists are no strangers to them, when studying an author's editions and frontispieces (Baumgold, 2008; Springborg, 1995) or transnational reception histories (Bayly, 2010; Botting and Kronewitter, 2012).

Modern paratexts, as discursive and political artefacts, can show how historical texts coded today as 'non-European' are entangled with problems of identity and empire; texts exceed their original matrix, to inhabit other worlds and contexts. Standing before and after the text, paratexts constellate its meanings and value, by and for a specific audience. Like a preface, their 'chief function [is] to ensure that the text is read *properly*' (Genette, 1997: 197): that is, they direct readers toward a specific reading of the text. They train and discipline readers to produce the 'proper' reading, framing the text's place in history and the present; their selective emphasis, and what they exclude as 'unlikely' or 'unthinkable', can imply what it is to read a text *improperly*. Their descriptions, telegraphic labels and presentation can emblemise the ideological commitments that an editor may bring to the text.

Here, paratexts offer a view into the afterlife of an Arabo-Islamic archive, its discursive and material production, how it was reconfigured and *why* some editors studied Ibn Ṭufayl.²

In sum, by turning to paratexts as political artefacts, this article makes subsidiary interventions about sources. First, it troubles the way that comparative political theory is usually defined in terms of cultural/civilisational foreignness; modern Arab editors who claimed ‘Arabic’ or ‘Islamic’ thought as their tradition had to convert *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓān* into their civilisational document while navigating its disciplinary foreignness and transnational history. Second, paratexts index the changing identities and traditions to which thinkers are retroactively made to belong. Finally, against invocations of ‘cross-cultural’ analysis that take their objects of study for granted and neglect asymmetry and power, modern paratexts reflect the geopolitical concerns that guide the construction or reinventions of a ‘tradition’.

How *falsafa* became an ‘Arabo-Islamic tradition’ in the modern Near East is a question of the production and consumption of today’s ‘non-Western traditions’.³ Ibn Ṭufayl and his reception history disrupt these designations (Western/non-Western/Arabo-Islamic). Arab writers canonised him by acting *as if* he was their past, *and* Europe’s past. These writers agreed that Ibn Ṭufayl was germinal for—if not *the* origin of—European thought. Their remarkable claim is akin to a thesis that Jenco (2014) examines, about ‘Chinese origins of Western knowledge’. Posing native origins for putatively foreign pasts and knowledges, she argues, can make these bodies of thought constitutively transformative; they might discipline our thought, reconstitute existing practices and inspire, incense or chasten. Early twentieth-century Arabic readings of Ibn Ṭufayl, as a Western-Islamic past, parallel the China-origins thesis and its potential. They also show how origins theses operate differently in contexts marked by power inequalities and colonialism. The Ibn Ṭufayl-origins thesis reinscribed the contours of European empire and disciplined Arab readers into awe at the monumental.⁴ The paratexts’ critical political work lay elsewhere: they carved out space for bracketing Europe, for mapping alternate geographies and for counterintuitively *refusing* this past.

Ibn Sīnā and/or Europe (1882–1927)

Ibn Ṭufayl begins *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓān* in response to a request for the essence of Ibn Sīnā’s ‘Eastern’/‘Oriental’ philosophy – the reason that it was sometimes called *The Secrets of Eastern Wisdom*. Ibn Ṭufayl declares that he will present this philosophy, and after a critical survey of philosophical opinions about revelation and knowledge of God, he offers an allegory about Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓān, Absāl and Salāmān, characters whose names he draws from two of Ibn Sīnā’s allegories.

Ḥayy ibn Yaḳẓān, Ibn Ṭufayl says (1936: 20–30), was either spontaneously generated (alluding to Adam) or was left in an ark by his mother (like Moses). The two origins converge: on an uninhabited island, a gazelle finds Ḥayy as an infant and raises him (26). Upon her death, he dissects her in order to remove the cause of her immobility. While probing her heart, Ḥayy determines that her soul

departed (38–45), initiating his contemplation of existence and God (47–118). He learns to scorn corporeality and its passions, until he becomes capable of beholding God by the age of 50. Fearing for his soul if he should die whilst not in this state, Ḥayy makes every effort to elongate that rapturous ecstasy (119–135). A devout esotericist named Absāl lived on a nearby island and was a friend of its leader, the devout exotericist Salāmān. One day, Absāl leaves his island in pursuit of seclusion, but is shipwrecked on the island where Ḥayy, who had never met another human, was living. Absāl teaches Ḥayy language, and Ḥayy imparts philosophical wisdom to Absāl. They find that Absāl's religion is a lesser image of the pure truth that Ḥayy had discovered through contemplation (136–147). The two visit Absāl's island, in order to educate its inhabitants. Once there, the people flock to Ḥayy, but he thinks they misuse the tools of logic; as he incessantly preaches at them, their initial awe toward Ḥayy turns into bitterness that they conceal on account of Ḥayy's foreignness and their friendship with Absāl (147–152). Ḥayy becomes convinced that the majority of people are like irrational animals. He apologises for all he said, affirms the islanders' teachings and returns with Absāl to his island; the two worship together, until they die (153–155).

The paratexts of three early, Cairene printings of this treatise, from March 1882, June 1882 and 1909, are fairly sparse, but they emphasise Ibn Ṭufayl's opening sentences about Ibn Sīnā. Each printing was based on the one immediately prior. They share the same title, identifying the text as Ibn Ṭufayl's extraction of the essence of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy; they present as matter-of-fact Ibn Ṭufayl's claim that he reveals the secrets of Ibn Sīnā's 'Eastern' philosophy – a contentious claim at best (Gutas, 1994: 230–234; Idris, 2011). These printings' paratexts imply that Ibn Ṭufayl should be read *because* he invokes Ibn Sīnā. They blur the boundaries between the two philosophers, reading Ibn Ṭufayl as Ibn Sīnā (as Ibn Ṭufayl requests).

An editorial note in the two 1882 printings informs readers of Ibn Sīnā's text by the same title: 'Ibn Khallikān [d. 1282] mentioned in his biography of Ibn Sīnā that this treatise [his *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*] is among his works, and perhaps it is in Persian, and its copyist translated it' (1882a: 60; 1882b: 41). The March printing repeats that the text contains the ideas of Ibn Sīnā; the June printing praises the treatise's eloquence and wonders. The 1909 printing combines its predecessors' inclinations. In a postscript, it informs (1909: 78) the reader that what they will have just read is innovative, strange, useful, critical and brilliant. Its title page guides the 'interested' reader to *Ibn Sīnā's* biography (rather than Ibn Ṭufayl's) in classical sources; Ibn Sīnā's life stands in for Ibn Ṭufayl's, while the modern reader of Ibn Ṭufayl, it suggests, *is* or *should be* interested in Ibn Sīnā. The three printings situate Ibn Ṭufayl in a history of Arabo-Islamic knowledge-production. They single out his brilliance and associate his name with a famous thinker, in the manner Ibn Ṭufayl's introduction invites. Their shared insistence on the text's excellence encourages antiquarian admiration and esteem, not only toward *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, but toward the tradition that these brief notes enact for the modern reader.

Unlike later editions, these printings make no reference to Europe. The medieval Arabic philosophical tradition, however, was often constructed in ambivalent

relation to Europe and modern Arabs. While readers are implored to feel wonder, it is under the shadow of Europe. In 1905, the journal *al-Muqtataf* presented Ibn Ṭufayl in an offhand reference as one of the very select few ‘Arab philosophers’. As Marwa Elshakry (2014) demonstrates, this modernist journal was an organ of knowledge-production and social commentary through which Arab intellectuals navigated European sciences, Islamic knowledges and modern Arab identity. In the final forum section of the June 1905 issue, a letter from Athanāsiyūs Kalīla, a deacon in Damascus and future metropolitan, asked (1905: 491) about ‘The Philosophers of the Arabs and the Westerners [*al-Ifranj*]’: ‘Who among them are the most famous authors, Arabs especially, and Westerners more generally?’ The journal’s response is striking in its brevity and definitive tone. It only lists seven Arab philosophers: ‘The most famous Arab philosophers from the Mashriq are al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī; and from the Maghrib, they are Ibn Bājja, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. As for the Westerners’, it asserts, ‘well, their philosophers are innumerable’. The response names 17 European thinkers, including Hamilton, Hobbes, Hume, Locke, Descartes, Mill and James, whom, it says, are only ‘among the most famous’ (491). It is silent about any disjunctures between the Arab *falāsifa*’s projects and those of *al-Ifranj*, let alone about less ‘famous’ *falāsifa*, what fame metonymises, who assesses it and the civilisational anxieties and aspirations staged by the comparison.

The response draws upon Orientalist premises about a stagnant Orient as opposed to a developing, dynamic Europe. The lists’ comparative lengths and distinct time periods are blatant. European and American philosophers are more than double the number of Arabs. Arab philosophy is quarantined to the medieval, while *al-Ifranj* stretch into the present. This is a basic Orientalist story emblematised by Ernest Renan (1823–1892): intellectual history ‘in Islam’ dies with Ibn Rushd (d. 1198). It is a story in which the important Muslim philosophers are those who were read by or influenced European philosophy, and who were then said to have paved the way for Europe. The death of philosophy in Islam, in this story, is inextricably linked to Orientalist fantasies about an ‘Islam’ hostile to reason, in which such thinkers had to fight against the tide, seek the patronage of the powerful and conceal their teachings, either to protect themselves or to protect the Muslim masses from philosophical truths that would result in disorder. Ibn Ṭufayl is narrated in this tradition-as-list, which was never just a list.

Al-Muqtataf’s seven philosophers reappear with five more in Muḥammad Luṭfī Jum’a’s (1886–1953) 300-page popular survey of *falsafa*, *The History of Islam’s Philosophers in the Mashriq and the Maghrib* (1927).⁵ Jum’a was an Egyptian liberal political commentator, anti-imperial activist, lawyer, writer and translator (al-Ṭamāwī, 1993). Alongside his literary works (see Selim, 2013), he translated Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, excerpts about Napoleon, three Egyptian, Persian and Japanese texts as *Eastern Wisdom* (or *Oriental Wisdom*) and Plato’s *Symposium*; and he wrote books about European economic history, Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia (see Erlich, 2002) and early Islam.

Islam’s Philosophers devotes a chapter to each of the 12 thinkers. Its discussion of Ibn Ṭufayl and ‘Islam’s philosophers’ combines the two earlier impulses: the

production of an awe-inspiring canon and an Orientalist valuation of Ibn Ṭufayl and *falsafa* through Europe. In a third and otherwise curtailed moment, which I return to in the conclusion, Jum'ā imaginatively opens up an alternate vision of East-centric world history, intellectual production and geopolitics that brackets Europe and moves beyond Europe-and-Islam. This moment partially resembles his political tract, *Ḥayāt al-sharq (Life of the East/Orient)* (Jum'ā, 1932), which calls for Eastern nations' unity against Western imperialism (379) while foregrounding shared Eastern interests and culture (especially but not exclusively the 'Islamic East'); the book analyses inter-Eastern relations, imperial expansion and colonisers' tactics, including the 'instrumental' and 'weaponised' resurrection of peoples' ancient identities and customs to divide and conquer (246).

Jum'ā's Ibn Ṭufayl was a metaphysician who, in the modernist language of the individual and society, probed the idea of the individual as 'a blank slate'. He shows how 'a person cut off and removed from the affairs of life, untainted by its effects', and who 'knows nothing about life and developed his mind in absolute isolation on his own', came to understand the 'secrets of nature' and 'solved the most difficult theological questions' (Jum'ā, 1927: 98). Ibn Ṭufayl, he explains (107), actually created Ḥayy 'in his own image and in the image of the philosophers who preceded him'. Jum'ā's summary of the allegory (107–111) emphasises Ḥayy's scientific discoveries, his use of tools and animals and his attainment of knowledge of God; Jum'ā excises Ḥayy's meeting with Absāl, his journey to the islanders and his condemnation of the masses. Its value is its contribution to science, theology and a better understanding of philosophers.

If early editions treated Ibn Ṭufayl as an intellectual dependent of Ibn Sīnā, Jum'ā's Ibn Ṭufayl surpassed all others. It is evident, Jum'ā claims (105), that Ibn Ṭufayl charted an autonomous project or system (*khuṭṭa qā'ima bi-dhātihā*) independent of the thought of everyone else (*mustaqilla 'an afkār al-jam'*). Ibn Ṭufayl's uniqueness and genius are complemented by being

the first Islamic philosopher to pour his philosophy into a story, and to make his story's protagonist an isolated individual who creates himself and his thoughts by interacting with nature and with creatures that are lesser than him in rank – inanimates, plants, and animals – until he reaches the point of understanding and union. This fantasy story is to be considered in truth a kind of intellectual/rational beatitude [*tūbā 'aqliyya*] that many European [*Ifranj*] writers and thinkers imitated and the footsteps of which they followed. (Jum'ā, 1927: 105)

While Jum'ā does not say who these European thinkers are or how they mimicked Ibn Ṭufayl, he turns (106) to *Robinson Crusoe* to demonstrate Ibn Ṭufayl's originality. The latter story's 'child is the person most similar to Robinson Crusoe', though apparently 'Islamic and Andalusian'; he is to be further 'distinguished from that solitary sailor in that he was created in isolation, did not know any human, never met another person, and had no exposure to any material or practical aspects of life'. Jum'ā continues, in an allusion to Darwinism, that Ibn Ṭufayl first articulated the principle of 'a struggle for survival between humans and animals'.

Islam's Philosophers establishes the value of each thinker independently and reinforces the impression of a conversation among them. But for Jum'á, Ibn Tufayl's importance for the present is mediated by Europe, through the history of its alleged copies, its differences from popular texts like *Robinson Crusoe* and its alleged anticipation of scientific principles current in the twentieth century. The book's introduction is haunted by Europe from the start; Jum'á begins by addressing the dead Islamic philosophers, calling them forth into the present: 'Come forward, wise gentlemen!' He invites them out of the 'cave of the past' and a 'world of silence and quiet' to the present, to strike the Arab masses with the foreignness of their own past:

The majority of the people of this age have not had the honor of knowing who you are, and your names, titles, and ancestry shall fall on their ears like a new, foreign thing, and they shall argue over the truth of your existence and the value of your thought. They shall deny that your opinions were yours, opinions through which you brightened the dark nights of your ages, in their conceptions, transformations, education, and liberation. Some will pass by you, surprised at who these ancient philosophers are, who lived, contemplated, and explained the universe, who diagnosed events before Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Spencer, Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte, and Renan. (Jum'á, 1927: iii)⁶

These thinkers prefigure European philosophers – and made them possible:

It will not occur to the minds of these surprised readers that were it not for you, O dear philosophers! from al-Kindī to Ibn Rushd, it would not have been possible for any modern European philosopher to appear in the world of existence; and that it was you who preserved that divine flame that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle birthed in the caves of the distant past, you who added fire to the flame until you passed it on, brightly lit and ablaze, to Europe's modern philosophers, and you were to that holy flame gracious caretakers. (Jum'á, 1927: iv)

Jum'á, like *al-Muqtataf's* response to the reader, implicitly denies the existence of philosophy after Ibn Rushd 'in Islam'. The role Jum'á attributes to the *falāsifa*, as 'caretakers' or 'guardians' of Greek philosophy until it becomes European, relegates centuries of non-European thought to the status of a transit stop. Like *al-Muqtataf*, he writes Arabic and Islam into the history of Europe, but as a pre-history and middleman, a temporary location whose value is measured by its contribution to Europe; here, European philosophy and history is the sole site of validation. The presumption that the 'flame' of philosophy can be held by one group at a time is central to this discourse. By imagining a flame that was passed on, philosophy in Europe signals the end and impossibility of philosophy elsewhere. It homogenises 'modern European philosophers', treating Europe as a singular whole, just as it does with Arabo-Islamic philosophy, reducing the thinkers to a single shared project completed in modern Europe.

But Jum'á troubles the Renanian thesis in three ways. First, he presents 'al-Kindī-to-Ibn-Rushd' as the *forgotten* past of his Arab readers' present, not only of European philosophy. The philosophers cannot be 'alien' or 'foreign' *per se* to modern ordinary Arabs, whose surprise he imagines. Jum'á transforms the historical difference of an (alien or unknown) past into a problem of cultural alienation or the present's amnesia about its own past. He claims these thinkers for contemporary Arab Muslims, as Islam's philosophers.

Second, Jum'á constructs an idyllic setting out of Ibn Ṭufayl's Andalusian context: the philosophers of that age – Ibn Bājjā, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn – were driven by a thirst for knowledge against various difficulties. The demise of the *Muslim* state in Andalusia was the demise of Muslim philosophy as a whole; philosophy did not reappear in any of Islam's kingdoms until the *Nahḍa*. Thus, in Jum'á's Islam, philosophy grew *with* religion; when religious faith weakened, so did the intellectual inquiry that faith had produced. 'Islam', he proclaims

unlike all other religions, had nourished philosophy, strengthening and supporting it. Mr. Renan in some of his writings makes this remarkable observation, namely the decline of philosophy in Europe whenever religion's power increased, and the revival [*intīāsh*] of philosophy after that following the overturn [*tadahwur*] of religious convictions in Europe. (Jum'á, 1927: xvi)

In fact, Jum'á argues (1927: xvi–xvii), it was *European* philosophy that did not 'see the light of day' until the seventeenth century and only after the battle between science and religion in Christian Europe. Jum'á marks out the parochialism of Renan and 'secular' European discourses on religion, in order to claim a different Islamic exceptionalism, to dismiss Renan's thesis about the Near East and to surpass what he calls the stagnation of European philosophy after Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Bergson. Five years later, he would further argue (1932: 369) that Renan and other Orientalists function, 'when necessary, as tools of European imperialism': their Orientalism is 'a weapon for fighting the East and Islam'.

Third, Jum'á's construction of the globe also breaks with the Renanian narrative. He offers a version of his Easternism. *Islam's Philosophers* writes a bond of solidarity and resonance between the Eastern hemisphere's two corners. He contrasts the Islamic renaissance of the ninth and tenth centuries with Europe's 'ignorance and barbarism [*al-jahl wa-l-wahshiyya*]' during 'The Dark Ages' (in English), to think *beyond* Europe:

The renaissance of Islam, however, was not confined to those nations that had embraced this religion, but was all-encompassing of the entire East. It is as though the awakening shook the corners of this part of the globe, and so it arose from the slumber that numerous generations had experienced. It began to shake off the dust of previous generations' indolence. The Persians, Turks, Mongols, and Indians rose up, and even the people of China and of Japan, for they rushed toward humanistic reform during the 'Abbāsīd era [750–1258 AD] or shortly thereafter.⁷ The movement of Islam was like the tremors of an earthquake, going through particular areas and moving

within bounded arenas. Historians of the Chinese humanities continue to mention the renaissance of their master poets during the ninth- and tenth-centuries AD, during the reign of their emperor the “Son of Heaven,” Tang. The Japanese busied themselves during that age as well, with reforming the Japanese language and with organizing the social arts, and artistic genius appeared among them; some of them were poets, humanists, painters, and sculptors. (Jum’á, 1927: xiii)

Jum’á concludes, ‘In this way, it did not cease to be the case that the two Easts, the Near and the Far, were influenced by the renaissance movements that appeared in either, each having an echo in the other’. He implies an alternative future based on this other past of Islamic philosophy: ‘And what was true for the ninth century AD, is also true for the renaissance of the nineteenth century in the two Easts, Near and Far’ (1927: xiii).

Jum’á’s radically East-centric frame of world history is not entirely ungrounded in the text; the allegory itself is set on an island Ibn Ṭufayl imagines (1936: 20) not in the Mashriq or Maghrib, but off the coast of India. Jum’á pushes this geography further. He brackets Europe, imagining a future in which the coloniser is peripheral for intellectual movements. His Easternist contemporaries championed pan-Islamism and/or pan-Arabism, but he expands ‘the East’ to include China, Japan and the Asian continent. Jum’á’s vision carves out space for deimperial pan-Asian world histories and practices – akin to but broader than what Chen (2010) studies as ‘Asia as Method’. By imagining the East as an interconnected world and a frame already beyond Europe, Jum’á takes the geography of Orientalism’s *the Orient* and turns it back against Europe. Islam’s philosophers become the reservoir of a forgotten past that bypasses Europe, extends to the Far East and calls forth new renaissances *without* and *against* European empire.

His *Life of the East* (1932), however, displaces this vision with a different Easternism. Jum’á bemoans Japan’s indifference (373–375) and China’s cunning, hostility and opportunism (375–376) toward Muslims. He takes inspiration from European deference to Japan’s newfound power, calling for an ‘Eastern league of nations’ to unite, against European imperialism, and aim at equality with the West (379). The logics of *Realpolitik* and inter-governmental relations curtail the image of Easternist renaissances and cultural reverberations.

Tardiness and/or precedence (1931–1933)

The inter-Eastern comparisons and affiliations that Jum’á invites fall out of the other afterlives of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*. Later editions and studies extend ambivalence about the text’s status for Arabic and for Europe; the basic comparisons remained, as with Jum’á’s discussion of *Robinson Crusoe*, to Europe. The Orientalist scholar Léon Gauthier published his first and second editions of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* in 1900 and 1936, and a study in 1909. Between Gauthier’s editions, a scholarly Arab edition appeared in Damascus, and articles on Ibn Ṭufayl in the leading humanistic journals. The next decade saw one of the first Arabic book-length

scholarly studies devoted to Ibn Ṭufayl. Anxieties about European empire and knowledge-production frame these works, as we see below.

In 1931, the Beirut-based journal *al-Machriq*, run by philologist and theologian Louis Cheikho (1859–1927) out of the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, ran a three-part article on Ibn Ṭufayl. Two years later, the recently established Cairo literary review *al-Risāla* published a short commentary. The two articles mediate the allegory's significance by reference to *Robinson Crusoe*. The first, by Ferdinand Tawtal [Taoutel] al-Yasūī (1887–1977), begins (1931: 42–43) with Europe: 'Europeans [*al-Ifranj*] have exerted a lot of effort on the story of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, beating us in searching for that author and publishing him, translating him into their various languages, and explaining him'. *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, he explains, is the best synopsis of Islam's philosophers and their treatment of faith versus reason and religion versus philosophy, but Europeans, not Arabs, study it. Tawtal notes Pococke's and Gauthier's editions, as well as Latin, Dutch, German, English, Spanish and French translations and printings. The most recent European edition of this 'entertaining book' that has been 'lauded by Europeans', he announces, is by AS Fulton, and is part of a 'beautiful collection'.

Fulton's 1929 edition revises Simon Ockley's (1708/1711) translation. In his introduction, this Keeper of Oriental Books and Manuscripts at the British Museum is openly hostile toward Arabs and Islam. Arabic philosophy, he contends (1929: 18), 'means, of course, nothing indigenous to Arabia, but little more than Greek philosophy in an Arab dress'. Even so, 'men of Arab blood' neither made nor put on these garments, having 'had very little to do with the production of these translations' or with intellectual production in Islam – which only came down to the (impossible) task of harmonising the Qur'ān and Greek philosophy by explaining away the Qur'ān's 'lurid eschatology', 'anthropomorphic crudities' and 'hearty outbursts' (19–20, 28). Fulton's overwrought dismissal comes with flourish: 'The holy water of Zemzem had too much "body" in it to please the palates of these Muslim philosophers who had drunk deep at the more sublimated springs of pagan thought' (27–28). Tropes about Islamic hostility to philosophy explain the story: in Fulton's creative reading (32), Ibn Ṭufayl and Ḥayy (as his autobiographical avatar) were in a precarious position, each only being saved from the Oriental masses' 'herd instinct for heresy hunting' by the protection of a strong ruler and by the 'Oriental sense of hospitality' innate to Ḥayy's islanders and Ibn Ṭufayl's neighbors. Fulton's Ibn Ṭufayl wrote under the threat of Oriental ignorance, Islamic persecution and 'ruthless theology' (7).

Tawtal recasts (1931: 43) Fulton's dismissal of 'Greek philosophy in Arab dress' as a 'detailed introduction' to Ibn Ṭufayl's life and 'summary of the history of Arabic philosophy'. Whether he agreed with Fulton's assessment or sought to neutralise it with generosity, European scholarship imposes itself as an always more advanced standard to be imitated.

Tawtal frames the difference between Arab silence and European interest in the text as a race, in which, given European interest, the text ought to be canonical in Arab intellectual history. His article, he hopes, might pave the way for an edition in the Near East. In the last three centuries, Europeans 'have fallen madly in love

with the story of Hayy ibn Yaḡzān', reading, internalising and imitating it (1931: 42). This privilege, he writes, is evident when juxtaposing *Hayy* to 'similar' works,

like the story of Robinson Crusoe; the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the origins of man in isolation from social life, and the development of intellectual life through gradual discoveries about the conditions of the universe; and Descartes' claims about the sequence of demonstration and deducing conclusions out of premises. (Tawtal, 1931: 42–43)

One must conclude that the European authors 'looked through Ibn Ṭufayl's book, either in its Arabic form or in one of its translations, and took him as their guide'.

But Tawtal ushers Ibn Ṭufayl into his present through theological disagreements with his doctrines, presenting (1931: 192–195) four criticisms. Most importantly, he then offers a fifth criticism, noting Ibn Ṭufayl's consistent elitism and obscurantism, especially apparent in his introduction and in passages about spiritual life. When Tawtal takes Ibn Ṭufayl to task because these discussions are 'as though he withholds [alt. "begrudges"] the capacity for understanding it [spiritual life] from the majority of readers [*ka-anna-hu yaḡannu bi-fahmihā 'alā 'āmmat al-qurrā'*], Tawtal sides *against* Ibn Ṭufayl with an engaged readership, and perhaps *against* *Hayy* with the allegory's islanders (whom Jum'a ignores and whom Fulton describes as hospitality-wired heresy-hunters). Such moments of critique bring the past into the present not as a monumental canon to be admired or followed, but as a set of political claims and dispositions to be accepted or overcome. At this moment, Tawtal refuses the anti-egalitarian text because of its implications about the people, for the present.⁸

Like Jum'a's vanishing alternative geography, Tawtal's critique is curtailed. He drops his critical engagement to laud Ibn Ṭufayl's importance, returning to Europe. He concludes (1931: 195) by reaffirming 'what Europeans say': Ibn Ṭufayl's is the best summary of Arabic philosophy and is at the forefront of Arabic stories.

Declarations about the text's significance for Europe and *Robinson Crusoe* appeared two years later in *al-Risāla*. The Tartus-based author, Aḡmad al-Maḡmūd, implores (1933: 16–19) readers to mention Ibn Ṭufayl whenever *Robinson Crusoe* comes up, calling it his right by 'virtue of precedence [*faḡl al-asbaqiyya*]. Al-Maḡmūd borrows (18–19) sentences from Tawtal's article, extracting Tawtal's summary of his four theological criticisms (192) and duplicating his concluding sentence (195) that Europeans are right to value the text. But if Tawtal affirmed Ibn Ṭufayl's influence on European philosophy and fiction as the clearest indication of his importance, al-Maḡmūd presents Ibn Ṭufayl as *more* important because he accomplished equivalent literary feats before 'Defoe and his ilk among European storytellers'. While for Tawtal Ibn Ṭufayl's obscurities indicated unacceptable condescension, al-Maḡmūd praises Ibn Ṭufayl's accessible, easy, beautiful and attractive text, for it can only be described as important for

Islamic philosophy – a return to the monumental and an erasure of Tawtal's egalitarian critique.

Consolations and/or aspirations (1935–1947)

Ibn Ṭufayl's significance was mediated by claims about his relationship to European texts like *Robinson Crusoe*. These comparisons animate the first Arab-produced scholarly edition of *Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān*, prepared by Jamīl Ṣalībā (1902–1976) and Kāmil 'Ayyād (1901–1986) in 1935, and they also frame 'Umar Farrūkh's (1906–1987) monograph a decade later.⁹ When these renowned scholars quibbled over approach and authorial context, this was, as we'll see, also a disagreement about the status, history and future of the Near East.

Ṣalībā was a Syrian scholar of Arabic historical and philosophical inquiry. He was trained in Paris, wrote extensively on Ibn Sīnā, education, the history of Arab thought and science, and French thought and produced a two-volume Arabic-English-French-Latin *Philosophical Lexicon*. His writings reflect his concern with the Arab contribution to 'world civilisation' and its place in Arab self-understandings. His co-editor, 'Ayyād, wrote on Ibn Khaldūn, the history of philosophy, the lives of Orientalists, Japan and social and political issues. He was born in Libya, emigrated during the 1911 Italian invasion, studied in Berlin, then resided in Damascus.

Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād cast Ibn Ṭufayl as a singular contributor to humanity. They refuse (1935: xxv–xxvi; xvi, xxiv, xxx–xxxii) the two usual comparisons, one being to Ibn Sīnā. If early printings *fuse* Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl, Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād *distinguish* them to draw connections with other thinkers and to move Ibn Ṭufayl outside Ibn Sīnā's shadow. The other comparison they refuse is to *Robinson Crusoe*, because rather than being linked generically, thematically or historically, *Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān* is *superior*. 'We must also mention', they conclude their introduction,

the difference between the character of Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān and the famous character of Robinson Crusoe, for many previous writers have pointed to the great similarity between the two characters and have wanted to find a relationship of borrowing or imitation of the latter from the former. (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1935: xxxii)

They enumerate (xxxii–xxxiii) the differences, translating Ḥayy in the language of individualist modernism and highlighting his autonomy, independence, lifelong autodidacticism and higher understanding of the cosmos. While the two above-mentioned articles consider *Ḥayy ibn Yaḡẓān* important either because it 'influenced' or 'preceded' European classics, Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād conclude that Ibn Ṭufayl's allegory is the most philosophically *superior* story. They assess the text's virtues by the standards of modernist intellectual history and literary criticism – realism, precision, practicality, accessibility and organisation:

Just as Ibn Ṭufayl's story surpasses [*tamtāz*] de Foe's [sic] story from a philosophical angle, it also surpasses other stories of Eastern philosophy in its proximity to truth and reality and natural description, its precise details about practical life, and never

mind its elegant style, ease of expression, and that it is well-organized (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1935: xxxiii).

Ibn Ṭufayl's superiority signals an *Arab* contribution to humanity: 'With these virtues, it is to be considered without a doubt at the forefront of Arab literary works that deserve immortality in the history of human thought'. This monumentalisation appears *against* the two comparisons through which *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* had been made visible: Ibn Sīnā and *Robinson Crusoe*.

When *Robinson Crusoe* reappears in the final chapter of Farrūkh's (1946a) short monograph on Ibn Ṭufayl, Defoe is only the sixth European writer whom Farrūkh claims was influenced by Ibn Ṭufayl. This was one of Farrūkh's many books on historical Arab thinkers (e.g. Ibn al-Muqaffā', al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Bājja, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Khaldūn), with others on contemporary politics, histories of Arab thought, pre-Islamic literature and Greek philosophy. Farrūkh grew up in Beirut, studied at the American University of Beirut, then in Germany; he wrote this book while in Beirut, years before moving to Damascus.

Unlike Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād, who use contrasts to demonstrate originality and superiority, Farrūkh highlights similarity because he thinks it implies influence. Like Jum'a, and like Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād, he establishes (40–41) Ibn Ṭufayl's independence in an Arabo-Islamic tradition by distinguishing him from Ibn Sīnā and from the philosophers Ibn al-'Arabī and Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq. All similarities between their texts, he writes, end with their characters' shared names. But for Europe, Farrūkh writes (97), 'The influence of *Risālat Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* appears prominently in the story of Robinson Crusoe', and scholars agree that the former is

"a philosophical type of Robinson's story". Defoe had not passed away [*lam yutawaffā*] until the story of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* was copied into Latin, English, Dutch, German, and had spread greatly. *It is unthinkable [fa-lā yu'qal]* that Defoe wrote a book that is similar to *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* to this degree without having known about it (Farrūkh, 1946a: 97).

Farrūkh adduces (94–98) other traces of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* in Europe, as early as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, to editions, translations and stories seemingly based on it. He singles out Spinoza and Rousseau as two 'Ṭufaylian' philosophers. The origin of Spinoza's secularism, he writes (96–97), is Islamic philosophy: Spinoza is closer than Descartes to 'Jewish-Islamic philosophy – a philosophy which is actually Islamic at its foundation. It would appear that the revolution in Spinoza's soul was due to the influence of Ibn Ṭufayl in the first degree'. Some scholars speculated that Spinoza translated Ibn Ṭufayl into Dutch, which makes it 'unsurprising that Spinoza would say that the Holy Book itself must be made to submit to reason, or to see him respond harshly to those who tried to make reason subordinate in rank to religious tradition'. Meanwhile, Rousseau's *Emile* asserts that man is good by nature and called for a return to nature, away from the chains of society – 'just as Ibn Ṭufayl did, six centuries prior'.

Farrūkh treats Ibn Ṭufayl as the progenitor of European philosophy. While Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād's bibliography only lists various European editions, studies

and translations, Farrūkh's final chapter – 'Ibn Ṭufayl's Standing and His Influence in the East and West' – gives a comprehensive narrative, beginning with Pococke (92). Here, the colonised intellectual claims antecedence *and power* over the colonisers' intellectual production, as their haunting past: 'Islamic philosophy', he writes (91–92), 'controlled the European mind' for 'a few hundred years without interruption'. Ibn Ṭufayl alone guided European thought, which demonstrates Islamic philosophy's relevance for 'human thought'.

Whether by emphasising Ibn Ṭufayl's superiority or germinal status over Europe, these Arab editors and commentators elevate Ibn Ṭufayl by reference to Europe. Farrūkh (92) agrees with Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād that the treatise 'left a huge influence on the history of human thought', which makes Ibn Ṭufayl 'one of the great philosophers of the Middle Ages'. But while the three scholars extolled the history of *falsafa*, their disagreement about methods and what counts as Ibn Ṭufayl's context indicates a deeper disagreement about anatomies of power.

Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād situate (xxvi) *Ḥayy* in a lineage of thinkers who contemplate 'natural development' and 'social order'. While Farrūkh also deploys (1946a: 77–78) the language of 'the individual and society' (following De Boer, 1903: 182–183), as had Jum'ā (1927: 98), they approach (1935: xxvii) Ibn Ṭufayl's allegory as a theory of the natural development of the individual and the unadulterated/pure (*al-insān al-mahḍ*) human being 'stripped of social influences [*mujarrad 'an tā thīr al-ijtimā'*]. He is a blank slate: an everyman, not a prophet-philosopher super-human. Salāmān's island becomes the ideal type of 'a human association with traditions and inherited habits', a sociological experiment for 'the relationship of the individual to a society'. The literary and philosophical purpose of *Ḥayy*, they explain (xiii), is that he reached his level of knowledge 'without having been taught the sciences by anyone, for he was educated in a natural way [*tarabbā tarbiyatan tabī'iyyatan*]'.

Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād read Ibn Ṭufayl through modernist liberalism. Like Fulton, they use Ibn Ṭufayl's own life as an allegory for the relationship of religion and philosophy, turning *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān* into Ibn Ṭufayl's autobiography. They reassure (1935: v) the reader that because of Ibn Ṭufayl's close friendship with the Almohad caliph Abū Ya'qūb, he was well treated by the ruler – who 'loved him as much as he did because he enjoyed [listening to] Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophical tales in his hours of rest', they imagine. They call both principled philosophers:

Perhaps the union of these two men is the best indication of the union between wisdom and *shar'īa*: the king represents *shar'īa* while Ibn Ṭufayl represents wisdom, and each one of the two had felt that the other completed him (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1935: v).

Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād use *these very same terms* to describe *Ḥayy*'s relationship to Absāl; both indicate the harmony of religion and philosophy. The direct correspondence among author, character and concept reappears in their simplification:

Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān's failure in his attempt [to convert islanders] indicates the inability of the masses to comprehend the objectives of philosophy, and *Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān*'s

agreement with Absāl indicates that philosophy is in agreement with religion. As for Absāl's disagreement with Salāmān, it is akin to the disagreement between esotericists and exotericists. (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1935: xvi)

The two editors erase Ḥayy's (super)natural superiority, making the allegory safe and applicable to the ordinary. They erase his elite status and *abnormality*:

it is unlikely [min al-mustab'ad] that Ibn Ṭufayl intended from the first half of the story to say that a single, isolated individual can attain what Ḥayy attained without the aid of a group; indeed, his aim was to represent human development without needing divine revelation. (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1935: xxxi–xxxii)

With this normalisation of Ḥayy, Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād bracket the people whom Ibn Ṭufayl actually constructs *as normal* and ordinary, the islanders (Idris, 2011). When they consider Ḥayy and Absāl's journey to Salāmān's island, Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād adapt the Renanian fantasy of Islam's threatened philosophers veiling their critiques of religion:

As for the second half of the story, in which Ibn Ṭufayl describes Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān's journey to the nearby island and his residence among its inhabitants, it is nothing but a means of concealed social critique [*wasīla li-l-naqd al-ijtimā'ī min ṭaraf khafiyy*]. Ibn Ṭufayl wanted by this to dissect the social conditions of his age [*tashrīḥ aḥwāl 'aşri-hi al-ijtimā'īyya*], and to expose the corruption of regimes [*bayān fasād al-anzima*], the decay of morals [*inḥitāt al-akhlāq*], and the disappearance of religious principles [*tafassukh al-'aqā'id al-dīniyya*]. (Ibn Ṭufayl, 1935: xxxii)

In their creative reading, it is perhaps Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād who veil their critiques. Ibn Ṭufayl does not refer to regime corruption, moral decay or the withdrawal of religion; he consistently casts (1936: 136–137, 149–152) the islanders as pious, honest and the best among *ordinary* people, ultimately limited by nature and rank. In this curtailed moment, Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād bring Ibn Ṭufayl to their Near Eastern present, transposing the problems of the modern (post-)colonial state and corrupt regimes onto his context. On the one hand, if the problems are shared with Ibn Ṭufayl's age, then – with Renan – they are perennial and immutable. On the other hand, the editors harness this 'classical' text, out of which they level a critique, against the present.

They rely on European scholarship, Farrūkh mocks Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād, but poorly. 'Although the field of philosophy is far from comedy', he writes (1946a: 8), 'let me amuse you with the following observation': the two editors wrote the Orientalist Friedrich Überweg's name as 'Fredrich Ulerueg', having, Farrūkh surmises, misheard it or misread it in a footnote, so it is uncertain that they laid eyes on the books they list.¹⁰ Arab scholarship, he complains, has not progressed and its authors behave like they are from a previous century (8–9). The backdrop of this frustration is that Farrūkh (6) was unable to obtain Gauthier's (1909) study (but consulted Gauthier's 1936 edition). He describes (6–8) how his scholarship suffers because of the miserable

condition of Beirut's libraries for philosophy. Given these constraints, he declares – in accord with Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād's mode of inquiry, against their momentary critique – 'Our efforts today must be confined and must come together toward analyzing the opinions of Islam's philosophers in the first place. As for our own philosophical production, it must be deferred'.

If Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād only momentarily critique the present, Farrūkh concurs that one must study the past prior to making present advances, because historical knowledge recasts the present.¹¹ When he considers (5) the 'truthful image' of Ibn Ṭufayl's context, it is 'an age full of political and social anarchy [*fawdā*]'. Nonetheless, he continues, philosophy rose to majesty, unburdened and uninfluenced by its surroundings; neither ignorant masses nor religious opposition could stop it. Farrūkh implies that since philosophy *rises above* context, it is panacea for his present, with its own political and social turmoil. Europe had overcome its turmoil through *falsafa* – and Arabs might too.

While Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād recontextualise *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* in terms of Ibn Ṭufayl's biography, Farrūkh's unconventionally broad context for a text foregrounds global politics. He paints (1946a: 13–27) a weak Maghrib, with small, unstable states, then discusses the Crusades, France, England, the Papal struggles, the Norman conquest of Sicily and the Byzantine Empire. Farrūkh does not say why he situates Ibn Ṭufayl in these contexts. Perhaps the expanded, multiple contexts mirror Ibn Ṭufayl's reception in *these* regions while anticipating colonialism in the Near East by *these* powers. He indirectly invites readers to understand Ibn Ṭufayl in world-historical terms that shape the geopolitics of his present. Indeed, his anti-colonial treatise, *Nahwa al-ta'āwun al-ʿArabī* or *Toward Arab Cooperation* (Farrūkh, 1946b), likewise reframes (8–10) Arab history within a perennial world-historical battle between West and East, Europe and Afro-Asia. While European colonisers revive Phoenician, Pharaonic and other ancient identities, using local movements to divide and conquer (21–22), Farrūkh appeals (10–30) to the commonalities among Arabs, from intellectual history to the imagined geological filiation of the Sahara's dunes crawling to the coasts of Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.

Like Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād, he diagnoses the present through Ibn Ṭufayl's place in history, as a forgotten past that had created Europe; both studies read Ibn Ṭufayl's context through their own, either transposing the present to critique it or demonstrating its geographic and historical entanglements with European power, then as now. But Ṣalībā's March 1947 review of Farrūkh's book refuses its recontextualisation in favour of disciplinary conventions that divorce past from present, Europe from Islam.¹² Ṣalībā reciprocates (156–158) Farrūkh's negative tone: the 'primary deficiency is Farrūkh's hastiness in making unqualified proclamations, and his non-adherence to the historical method'. He proclaims with scandalised disciplinary authority, 'intellectual historians are satisfied... with the immediate causes and events that impacted the man's philosophy. But talking about events that have no relationship to him, they would consider irrelevant to the topic'. Farrūkh's discussions of 'England, France, the Normans in Sicily, the Byzantine Empire', and others contribute nothing, he argues, to understanding Ibn Ṭufayl. This disagreement about context was not merely methodological (authorial intent vs. global/world

history).¹³ It was about *why* one studies the past, whose past it is, and its relationships to the present and an imagined future: either philosophy in spite of and against global empires and political disorder, or critiques of (perennial) corruption.

Thinking past the text

Jum'á, Tawtal, Ṣalībā, 'Ayyād and Farrūkh navigated how Europeans studied or borrowed from Ibn Ṭufayl. Progress, they imagined, required citing European empire, reciting a text celebrated by European translators, scholars and storytellers. They imagined a past that might surpass Orientalists and lead to future knowledge, power and unity. The histories in these paratexts, and the histories *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* was made to narrate, are about the Arabo-Islamic philosopher who made Europe possible, through whom the Near East might surpass the coloniser it imagines it engendered. To extend Jenco's (2014) insights about the China-origins thesis to a different political context, *falsafa* was posed as the past of Arabs and Europeans, or an Arabo-Islamic past that Europe had appropriated, but disavowed. But what some Arab scholars found 'unthinkable' and 'unlikely' – that Ibn Ṭufayl was *not* the 'source' of various European texts and modernity (Farrūkh), that *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* was *not* of practical use for or about the everyman (Ṣalībā/'Ayyād) – are, of course, both thinkable *and* likely. These denials turned to a past, as their own, to find comfort and inspiration. In their narrative, European empires that would dominate the Near East imitated Ibn Ṭufayl's text. The colonised intellectuals read Ibn Ṭufayl to catch up with what they thought he, their past, had made possible for others, as their past as well. This was a monumental narrative for replicating greatness, dissatisfied with its weakness.

Arab scholars refashioned this 'Arabo-Islamic' tradition as their own past. When they adopted *falsafa* as their own past, their unequal power relative to Europe underwrote their study. Indeed, the adoption of a past as one's own is not outside power. When Orientalists took Ibn Ṭufayl as their past or ascribed him to stagnant Arabo-Islamic tradition, it was partly an expression of power. When Arab scholars of Ibn Ṭufayl imagined continuity between their past and their colonisers' past, they found promise beyond their subjection. When coloniser and colonised imagined sharing a past in Ibn Ṭufayl, this may have unsettled and transformed both, but the asymmetry in power remained and reinscribed the contents and contours of Orientalist and liberal fantasies.

On the other hand, each paratext pushes beyond Europe and beyond disciplined awe: Jum'á's geography turns East, Tawtal's criticism of Ibn Ṭufayl demands equality, Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād's regard present-day corrupt states, colonies and metropolises and Farrūkh's recontextualisation re-reads knowledge through world-historical power politics. These moments, although curtailed, bring the allegory into the authors' presents, against these presents. As interpretive techniques rather than principles, these moments are not exhausted by these scholars' ideological and disciplinary programs. They invite political theorists to approach these sources and histories for critiques of the present and its normative ideals, for their reimaginings of its formations and entanglements, with and beyond Europe.

At these curtailed moments, the past is a problem of power *in* the present – and a source of anti-disciplinary inspiration.

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Notes

1. For a bibliography of editions and studies, see Conrad (1996: 271–275).
2. I do not mean that Ibn Ṭufayl should not be studied (he should be) or that theorists working on non-European thought have an added burden of contextualism (they do not). Such texts can be approached textually (e.g. Idris, 2011). I am aware that demands for context are often weaponised against theorists who study non-European thought. Indeed, what I mean is that why we read certain texts and on what terms is a political question about the presence of the past. Modern Arab editors of *falsafa*, like theorists today, attempted to make these historical texts ‘relevant’ to their past and colonial present; their writings are nodes and sites of political theory, not only sources for intellectual history.
3. See Humeira Iqtidar in this special issue.
4. I adapt the language of monumental, antiquarian and critical history from Nietzsche (1980).
5. These additional thinkers are Ibn Khaldūn, the Ikhwān al-Safā’, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn al-‘Arabī and Ibn Miskawayh.
6. The preface to Jum‘a (1927) is paginated with *abjad* numerals (where Arabic letters represent numbers) in sequential value. To avoid confusion, I’ve translated *abjad* into the corresponding roman numerals. This is also the case for the pagination of the editors’ front matter and introduction to Ibn Ṭufayl (1935), the first printing of Ṣalībā and ‘Ayyad’s scholarly edition.
7. The ‘Abbāsīd dynasty established a Muslim caliphate. It is often understood as a ‘golden age’ of literature, science and the arts, with an emphasis on the eighth to tenth centuries.
8. This should be distinguished from previous Anglophone editions, which disagreed with Ibn Ṭufayl because of his text’s ostensibly Arab or Muslim *identity* or agreed *in spite of* its ‘Mahometanism’ (Ashwell, 1686: xviii–xii; Keith, 1674: i–iv; Ockley, 1708: viii–ix, 168–188).

9. Ṣalībā and 'Ayyād used a Damascus manuscript as their edition's new authority. I consulted the first (1935), second (1939), and fifth printings (1962). Later printings included typographical and bibliographic corrections and updates. They list (1935: xxxvii) Jum'ā (1927) as one of two Arabic sources, but not in later printings (1939: 12; 1962: 6).
10. Ṣalībā/'Ayyād's error (1935: xxxviii; 1939: 12) was partly corrected in later printings: 'Frederich Uberweg' (1962: 7).
11. But Farrūkh nonetheless reads (6) Ibn Ṭufayl's absence from classical Arabic histories as grave 'mistakes'.
12. Ṣalībā complains (156–158) that Farrūkh had not taken account of Gauthier and Asín Palacios (which Farrūkh says), and his general claims are 'not too different' from well-established historical facts.
13. Farrūkh's second printing (1959) excised this world-historical introduction, and the criticism of Ṣalībā/'Ayyād's misspelling (1946a: 5–11, 13–27).

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