



Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost (Translation/Transnation)

Margaret Litvin

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For the past five decades, Arab intellectuals have seen themselves in Shakespeare's Hamlet: their times "out of joint," their political hopes frustrated by a corrupt older generation. *Hamlet's Arab Journey* traces the uses of *Hamlet* in Arabic theatre and political rhetoric, and asks how Shakespeare's play developed into a musical with a happy ending in 1901 and grew to become the most obsessively quoted literary work in Arab politics today. Explaining the Arab *Hamlet* tradition, Margaret Litvin also illuminates the "to be or not to be" politics that have turned Shakespeare's tragedy into the essential Arab political text, cited by Arab liberals, nationalists, and Islamists alike.

On the Arab stage, Hamlet has been an operetta hero, a firebrand revolutionary, and a muzzled dissident. Analyzing productions from Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait, Litvin follows the distinct phases of Hamlet's naturalization as an Arab. Her fine-grained theatre history uses personal interviews as well as scripts and videos, reviews, and detailed comparisons with French and Russian *Hamlets*. The result shows Arab theatre in a new light. Litvin identifies the French source of the earliest Arabic *Hamlet*, shows the outsize influence of Soviet and East European Shakespeare, and explores the deep cultural link between Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and the ghost of Hamlet's father.

Documenting how global sources and models helped nurture a distinct Arab *Hamlet* tradition, *Hamlet's Arab Journey* represents a new approach to the study of international Shakespeare appropriation.

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