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Utopia and Civilisation in the Arab Nahda

Exploring the 'Nahda', a cultural renaissance in the Arab world responding to massive social change, this study presents a crucial and often overlooked part of the Arab world's encounter with global capitalist modernity, an interaction which reshaped the Middle East over the course of the long nineteenth century.

Seeing themselves as part of an expanding capitalist civilisation, Arab intellectuals approached the changing world of the mid-nineteenth century with confidence and optimism, imagining utopian futures for their own civilising projects. By analysing the works of crucial writers of the period, including Butrus al-Bustani and Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, alongside lesser-known figures such as the prolific journalist Khalil al-Khuri and the utopian visionary Fransis Marrash of Aleppo, Peter Hill places these visions within the context of their local class- and state-building projects in Ottoman Syria and Egypt, which themselves formed part of a global age of capital. By illuminating this little-studied early period of the Arab Nahda movement, Hill places the transformation of the Arab region within the context of world history, inviting us to look beyond the well-worn categories of 'traditional' versus 'modern'.

PETER HILL is a Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow in History at Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; previously, he was based at Christ Church, University of Oxford. An intellectual and cultural historian of the Arab world in the long nineteenth century, he has lived and studied in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. He has published articles in journals including *Past & Present*, *Journal of Arabic Literature* and *Intellectual History Review*.

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Acknowledgements

To conceive of a study of Arab utopias in 2011 and complete it only in 2019 is to invite a certain irony. First sketched out during a moment of revolutionary aspiration in several Arab countries, this book has been written largely in the shade of the violent repression that formed that moment's aftermath. It bears, nonetheless, the marks of its first origin; and my first acknowledgement must be a tribute to the courage and vision of the utopians of 2011.

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Arabic text and names are transliterated using the conventions of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. All translations, except where otherwise noted, are my own; the Arabic originals of many of the passages can be found in my doctoral thesis, 'Utopia and Civilisation in the Arab Nahda' (University of Oxford, 2016). All dates are given in their *hijrī* (AD) form. In Chapter 4, the abbreviation *GḤA* refers to the 1865 Aleppo edition of Fransīs Marrāsh's *Ghābat al-Ḥaqq*; *GḤB* refers to its 1881 Beirut edition.

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