Translation is a central axis of both colonial and national culture projects. At the same time, translation histories tend to trouble the waters of the dominant discourses produced by these projects. Adaptation, in particular, represents an unsecured zone of literary and cultural production that challenges culturalist discourses and the authorizing institutions of the nation-state. My talk will explore the tensions between popular practices of literary adaptation in Egypt in the formative early years of the 20th century, and reformist attitudes towards cultural authenticity and sovereign identities that have come to form a cornerstone of today’s postcolonial state.

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