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The Nature of Influence: Fu'ad Rifqa's Wilderness Poetry at the Intersection of Nation and Modernity

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The Nature of Influence:
Fu'ād Rifqa's Wilderness Poetry at the Intersection of Nation and Modernity

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by

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Abstract:

Fundamental changes in the form and content of Arabic poetry occurred rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century, resulting in the development of free verse and prose poetry as well as the jettison of traditional requirements including end-stopped two-hemistich long lines, strict adherence to meter, and monorhyme. These changes draw from innovation within Arabic poetry, competing nationalist agendas, increased translation of European texts into Arabic, and the productive engagement of Arab poets with Western literatures. In 1957, Syrian poet Fuʾād Rifqa embarks upon a five-decade poetic project of intentional intertextuality that acknowledges these sometimes collaborative, sometimes competing narratives. Rifqa's poetry creates a dialectic between literary and cultural influences through shifting metaphors drawn from the natural world and Mesopotamian and Greek mythology while also reflecting the evolution of form and content from both Arab Romanticism and Modernism as well as his extensive engagement with German Romantic and post-Romantic poets Friedrich Hölderlin and Rainer Maria Rilke.

This dissertation examines the interplay between influence and innovation throughout Rifqa's self-aware poetry by first examining the development of Rifqa's preferred combination of landscape and character, the forest-philosopher, in Arab Romantic poetry. Romantic *Mahjar* poets writing from Lebanese and Syrian diaspora communities in the Americas quieted the declamatory tone of poetry as they transformed the poet from rational orator into questioning youth in the setting of the forest, rather than urban or desert settings of classical import. Alongside his avant-garde contemporaries, Rifqa's early work mobilizes natural and mythological metaphors from the first-person perspective in service of the ideological agenda of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. After breaking with the party in 1961, Rifqa's forest

philosophers complete the Romantic move away from the oratorical mode through their silence and narrative distance. Rifqa's revisions on this theme demonstrate the role of the poet as reflective mediator of modernity through the synthesis of influences from German Romanticism that resonate with his experience of transition. Engaging contemporary structural innovations in Arabic avant-garde poetry, Rifqa underscores poetry's role in individual and cultural transformation, and cultural exchange's role in poetry, through a poetic based largely in landscape.

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Through service at Tri Cycle Farms in Fayetteville during my period of study in Fayetteville, I learned about community organizing, sustainable urban farming, and food recovery programs. Working with Don Bennett and Kelly Bassemier was and continues to be extremely beneficial to my development as a citizen and scholar. Service at Tri Cycle Farms has provided me physical, mental, and social sustenance. I deeply value the long-term relationships and the shared vision of a better world that Tri Cycle Farms cultivates.

Central to my efforts has been the support of my parents, Larry and Karen Clark, as well as my sister Hope Cox, her husband Ty, and my wonderful nieces Cameron, Crosby, and Callan. Thanks are due to my father for instilling a sense of place in me. I thank my mother for consistently emphasizing the value of education, independent thinking, and pursuing goals throughout my life. My sister and her family have brought endless joy to my life, which keeps my spirits up during long periods of intense research. My lifelong best friend Addie Bressler's combination of comic relief and empathy has always lent balance to my life. I cannot thank my beloved and brilliant partner Brent Linsley enough for his support in both scholarly and personal capacities, for providing so much feedback, and for being a wonderful person.

Dedication:

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, Ted Heath, whose epic tales I recount to this

day, and Shirley Heath, whose love of reading and storytelling have enriched my life so much.

Contents:

Introduction

The Nature of Influence:

Fu'ād Rifqa's Wilderness at the Intersection of Nation and Modernity

Dramatic shifts in form and content of Arabic poetry in the twentieth century reflect similar large-scale changes in the internal and external conditions of social identity and political life in the Levant. In this period, the centuries-old convention of monorhyme in the *qaṣīda* evaporated, poetry expanded to include multiple meters within a single poem or rejected meter as a whole, and prosaic poetry bridged the previously broad gulf between these genres. National, supra-national, and regional political movements, such as Lebanese Nationalism, Syrian Nationalism, and Arab Nationalism, pushed forward cultural agendas that highlight poetry's importance in molding a national or regional identity within poetry, perhaps the most enduring Arab art form, and its readership alike. This dissertation will investigate local, regional, and global influence from the spheres of literature in Arabic, literature in translation from European languages, and nationalism on the Syrian poet Fu'ād Rifqa's long literary career. Rifqa creates a synthesis within his poetry that draws from and contributes to the development of avant-garde Arabic poetry, the arc of Syrian Nationalism, and the turn away from the party agenda, all while engaging European literature and translation toward the innovation of poetry in Arabic. Rifqa's encounters with all of these entities shape his experience and representation of modernity. His self-aware synthesis emphasizes the transformative power of poetry and context-based revision in a period of rapid cultural and political change.

Although this document will explore each of these three trajectories of influence separately—intratraditional development, political engagement, and the influence of European literatures—emphasis will be placed on the points of intersection and the interrelations of

influence in order to challenge the notion present in literary criticism that movements in modern

Arabic poetry are either derivative and imitative of the narrative of Western literary development

or subjugated to ideological agendas. This move speaks to the larger question at stake in current

discussions of the legacy of *al-Nahḍa*, or the Arab "renaissance" of the mid-19th century. Instead,

a balanced view acknowledges direct and indirect influences on the trajectory of avant-garde

poets and poetry in this period of decolonization, a period which brings with it a full

restructuring of poetry in Arabic, nations, and Levantine identities. Attention to influence and

response in Rifqa's case allows the space to consider a more thoughtful view of the development

of Arab modernity based on encounters, events, and institutional interactions.

These relationships will be examined through multiple critical lenses. The overarching

concepts of modernity, secularity, and representations of rural versus urban spaces provide

scaffolding for this discussion. Arabic poetry from the early to mid-twentieth century in general,

and Rifqa in particular, demonstrates characteristics identified by the Syrian poet and critic

Adūnīs to be contributing factors to the creative, transformative synthesis present in moments of

cyclical modernity. In his four-volume study of Arab culture, *Al-Thābit wa Al-Mutaḥawwil / The

Static and the Dynamic*, Adūnīs rejects the linear Hegelian view of a progressive history and

instead proposes a responsive model that is based on periods of productive engagement with

culture and poetry in multiple languages. This engagement allows the central tradition to

consider and synthesize content, style, and prosodic opportunities to innovate its own

productions. The productive synthesis of translation and critical engagement with external

literary traditions creates open space for innovation within the central tradition.

Adūnīs' modernity can be described as cyclical because he conceptualizes modernity as a

confluence of influence that can occur at points when cultures are particularly open, rather than

existing as an isolated, unrepeated moment on a linear historical continuum. Adūnīs cites two

prior periods, the ʿAbbasid period, characterized by interaction between Arabic, Persian, and

Greek languages, and the Andalusian period, characterized by Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and

Catalan interactions, as two significant moments of modernity. Like these periods, the twentieth

century experience of Romanticism and Modernism is strongly influenced by translation. Arabic

translations of English, French, and, in Rifqa's case, German poetry and prose, spurred change.

Literary and cultural influence from abroad invigorated poetry in the medieval golden

ages. Adūnīs does not limit use of the term "modern" to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

For Adūnīs, modernity is a condition under which a nexus of external forces elicits a creative

reaction that integrates information from these external forces into a critical questioning of

processes within the culture undergoing change. Rapid socio-political change, changing views

toward religion and tradition, and cultural input from abroad create a critical mass of new

conditions demanding representation. The pace of twentieth century avant-garde Levantine

poets' innovation of content and form mirrors the ʿAbbasid Period (750-1258 CE) in part

because of this critical mass of influences and the questions it raised.

The beginning of the ʿAbbasid period is marked by the relocation of the caliphal capital

from Damascus to Baghdad in 750. In the centuries following the Muslim Conquest of Persia of

651, many Persians newly converted to Islam relocated to Baghdad. In the classical period, many

prominent poets claimed full or partial Persian ancestry, such as Abū Nuwās and Bashshār ibn

Burd. Arabic prose benefitted from Persian and Indian influences as well; *Alf Layla wa-Layla /*

The Thousand and One Nights, perhaps the most globally well-known Arabic story cycle, has its

roots in Persian and Indian progenitors. Translation flourished in the ʿAbbasid period;

established in Baghdad by Caliph al-Maʿmūn, *Bayt al-Ḥikmah*, or the House of Wisdom,

facilitated and housed translations between Arabic, Persian, and Greek. Poetic innovations that resulted from ʿAbbasid poets' questioning the established order of society included Bashshār ibn Burd's development of *badīʿ*, or intentionally complex imagery, in the court setting; Abū Nuwās' decadent wine poetry; and al-Maʿarri's ascetic (*zuhdiyyah*) and irreligious poetry.

Adūnīs associates "modern" with change, movement away from strict tradition, and in tradition's relationship to religion, he cites moves toward secularism as an element of modernity. Poetic innovation in the ʿAbbasid period was viewed as a deviation from caliphal political power and a threat to unity under Islam. Adūnīs locates the etymology of terms used to describe modernity in the classical period in this religious framework:

> Those in power designated everyone who did not think according to the culture of the caliphate as 'the people of innovation' (*ahl al-iḥdāth*), excluding them with this indictment of heresy from their Islamic affiliation. This explains how the terms *iḥdāth* (innovation) and *muḥdath* (modern, new), used to characterize the poetry which violated the ancient poetic principles, came originally from the religious lexicon. (76)

Even though these terms emerge from the religious lexicon, they focus on the exclusion of innovation from poetry as a matter of identity maintenance. Any deviation from the *ancien regime* of structure, rhyme, meter, and balance would suggest that the old paradigms are no longer adequate for the expression that needs to take place at that moment. Tensions exist, though, based on the nature of the encounter. *Al-Aṭlāl,* the traditional introductory lament over the abandoned desert campsite of the poet's lover, wouldn't have the same impact ringing through the densely populated urban streets of Baghdad as it would have in seasonal oral poetry competitions during intertribal gatherings at ʿUkāz. Bedouin life in the desert was no longer a reality for ʿAbbasid poets, and many shunned nostalgia for it. An entirely new poetic language was needed, but traditionalists who tied poetry to the divine revelation of the Qur'an responded with disdain. Roger Allen cites Bashshār ibn Burd's ʿAbdah poems, which were banned by Caliph al-Mahdī after their great popularity, as an example of changes to the genre of the

traditional *qaṣīda*: "ʿAbdah has an abode; it speaks not to us, but looms like lines of writing. / I question stones and a collapsed tent-trench, but how can such things give an answer?" (qtd. in Allen 179).

Tribes no longer needed their poets to be propagandists post-urbanization and after the spread of Islam promoted the brotherhood of religious affiliation rather than the extended family network of tribal affiliation; however, insults of one's tribe were paramount in the lampooning oral duel form called *hija*. Robert Irwin highlights Bashshār ibn Burd's defense of his Persian ancestry against criticism, in which he in turn criticizes the nostalgia for a non-urban life presented in ancient Arabic poetry:

> Where is there an emissary to chant to all Arabs?... / I am a person of high class, raised above others; / Chosroes is the grandfather through whom I claim precedence, / and Sasan was my father... / Never did he sing camel songs behind a scabby beast, / nor pierce the bitter colocynth out of sheer hunger... / nor dig a lizard out of the ground and eat it.... (qtd in Irwin 57)

It becomes clear from these examples that Bashshār ibn Burd, among other ʿAbbasid poets, utilized new poetical forms and themes to negotiate the representation of a life that was for him significantly different than for the ancients. He clearly rejects harsh desert life as well as the traditional *atlāl*. Anxiety of influence, a characteristic shared with Romantic and Modernist European literatures, was prominent in the ʿAbbasid period. Instead of a ruined encampment, Abū Nuwās asked for a pub: "Some poor wretch turned aside to question a camp-ground; My purpose in turning aside was to ask for the local pub" (qtd in Allen 130). Encounters of modernity, whether based in the representation of a changing mode of life or creative self-defense in an era negotiating ethnic diversity, demanded new forms.

The morphology of the Arabic language is nonconcatenative. Words are derived from meaning-laden root letters (*jathr*) which are placed in patterns (*wazin*) that identify specific

meaning and grammatical function within the sentence. Within the triliteral Arabic root that terms for "the modern" are based, one can see both attention to an event and the communication of that event. In *Trials of Arab Modernity*, Tarek El-Ariss employs a similarly event-sensitive approach to analyzing modern Arabic literature in terms of lived experience. El-Ariss employs Adūnīs' discussion of the root letters of the Arabic term for modernity, *al-ḥadātha*, to event, *al-ḥadath*, and accident, *al-ḥādith*, to redirect overwhelmingly Hegelian conception of linear history as applied to the development of Arabic literature toward an analysis of Arab modernity as "a somatic condition, which takes shape through accidents and events (*aḥdāth*) emerging in and between Europe and the Arab world, the literary texts and political discourse" (3). El-Ariss's analysis suggests that "modernity emerges" from "asymmetrical and fleeting *aḥdāth*" (3).

Further etymological investigation extends Adūnīs and El-Ariss' discussion of the interrelationships of meaning in the Arabic root letters related to modernity. According to *Lane's Lexicon*, the root letters *ḥa-da-tha,* bear meanings related to bringing something into existence, innovation, and origination. There are also shades of meaning related to the communicative aspect of event and experience; as in the relationship between "making new" and "narration" inherent in this root, the related iteration, *taḥdeeth,* suggests narration or conversation. Within this root is the idea of genesis, of creating something entirely new, as well as the communication of it. At this intersection of tradition and genesis of something new, Adūnīs links the "problematic of poetic modernity (*ḥadātha*)" to a simultaneous double identity crisis: a crisis of self and a crisis of culture (77). In the ʿAbbasid period, threats to the established political order were cast as threats to Islam itself, and movement away from poetic tradition was viewed as a rejection of this nexus of venerated ancient practice, political order, and religion. Adūnīs characterizes nineteenth and twentieth century poetic modernity as not only carrying a similar

weight of threat to political and religious establishments, but also being divided between those who maintained a traditional or conformist view, *uṣulī*, which had its roots in religion and linguistics, and the innovative view, *tajāwuzī*, "which saw its base, by contrast, as lying in European secularism" (7). In the artistic-religious-political matrix evident in the ʿAbbasid period as well as *al-Nahḍa*, innovation in Arabic poetry has been characterized by a number of critics writing in English as influenced by non-Arab literary production, foreign political influence, and irreligious tendencies.

The level and effect of non-Arabic poetic influence, both intentional and subtle, has been brought into question throughout the criticism of modern Arabic poetry. Critics such as Shmuel Moreh give as much credit to the influence of Western poetry as he does to the medieval development of strophic forms, such as *mūwashshah* and *zajal*, as the two major elements that undergird the foundation of modern Arabic poetry[1]. Muhammad Badawī identifies the emergence of prosodic changes as emerging from within Arabic literature, yet suggests that western influences, such as wider reading in French Symbolist literature and English modernism, particularly T. S. Eliot's poetry and critical texts, contribute to further innovation in modern Arabic poetry in the 1950s and 1960s (224). Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi focuses on the dual influences of Classical Arabic poetry, particularly al-Maʿarri and al-Mutanabbi, and the translation of Western European and American works. He writes that translation "ultimately enhances intertextual density and negotiates its registers against others from the classical, the local and the mythical" (176). This creates a dialectic approach that has changed the nature of the

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[1] It is not my intention in this dissertation to open the ever-controversial question of primacy and influence between the *mūwashshah* and the *zajal*. For the purposes of this discussion, their co-relations to diglossic contexts are their reason for inclusion. The *mūwashshah*'s verses and refrains are in different languages, such as Arabic and Castillian, and the *zajal* exists in Arabic dialects rather than *al-fuṣḥā*. Their role as site of synthesis is the main focus.

Arabic poem in the modern period. According to Musawi, "The poem, in its modernist manifestations, offers its case in dialogue with Arab classical poetics and modern western readings" (176). Musawi's mediated vision credits multiple streams of influence.

The nexus of influence from different cultural pressures produces an environment of radical questioning of the nature of the poet's role in poetry and the wider world, which reflects the parallel questions that invigorated poetic production and translation in the ʿAbbasid period. The ʿAbbasid period's cultural and artistic response was necessitated by an influx of new cultural information from Persians who had joined court life in Baghdad, the transitions from nomadic lifestyles to the city, as well as the caliphate's attempt to unite its subjects under the brotherhood of Islam rather remain divided on ancestral lines. Radical questioning that occurs in twentieth century Arabic poetry responds to literary influences from the influx of Western cultural production in poetry, drama, and prose, to geopolitical changes such as the fall of the Ottoman Empire, European colonialism and the establishment of the state of Israel, and to internal uncertainty about the location and nature of identity in a rapidly modernizing and increasingly secular landscape, which was based in both Ottoman reforms and inspired by the French Revolution. Rifqa's career reflects major turns in modern Arabic poetry, particularly the relationship between reaching outward toward other literary traditions through translation and reaching inward to investigate ways to represent a changing Arab identity in the twentieth century through original poetry.

Twentieth century modernity, as opposed to the ʿAbbasid and Andalusian periods, begins with the secularization and the final fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire rather than the aggregation of Islamic rule in a particular region. Changes within the Ottoman Empire beginning during the mid-19th century *Tanzimāt*, or Reorganization, period lay the foundations for

governmental and cultural moves toward a larger secularism. Rejecting the historical narrative

that Arab cultural and economic awakening occurred due to Europe's interest in the region,

Stephen Sheehi contends that the move toward modernization, which he identifies as beginning

as early as the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807)[2], "was an internal, political, and uneven

impetus that had preceded intensified European economic, political, and military intervention

into the Ottoman's domain" (4). Intellectual roots of the Arab *Naḥḍa*, or cultural renaissance, of

the mid-19th century begin to take shape during the period of Ottoman *Tanzimāt* policies.

Tanzimāt officially began with the Edict of Gülhane in 1839, which declared Muslims and non-

Muslims equal before the eyes of the law, emancipated minorities, and created a system of

taxation based on means rather than a flat-rate system (Cleveland and Bunton 83). Non-Muslims

became eligible for conscription into the military at this point, but they could avoid service by

paying the *jizya*, a tax directed toward the *dhimmī*, or non-Muslim population.

The end of imperial rule was becoming clear to all of the European dynasties; unification

of large and small groups of diverse people had to be achieved so that the empires could remain

intact and not fragment into self-determined spaces. To maintain subjects and territory, the

Ottoman state sought an identity that could act as umbrella to simultaneously create and unify

the Ottoman citizenry (Deringil 4). Benedict Anderson suggests that this tendency "can be best

understood as a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in

particular over the huge polyglot domains accumulated since the Middle Ages," or more

visually, "stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire" (86).

Anticipating upcoming fragmentation, the Ottoman state sought to unify its diverse population

under the banner of the Turkish language and the idea of tradition, which according to Selim

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[2] Historians tend to list the date of the entrance of the Arab world into the modern period at the Napoleonic invasion
of Egypt in 1798.

Deringil, had to be assembled through a bricolage technique of visual imagery that would simulate and reinforce a continuous, unified history of the Ottoman citizenry[3]. These did little to stem the variety of nascent nationalisms that had been forming since the mid-19th century.

The Ottoman Empire ended in the early 1920s, after the First World War partitions in 1918 and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922), which resulted in the abolition of the sultanate in 1922 and the abolition of the caliphate in 1924. The Arab Revolt that began in 1916 strove for Arab independence from the Ottomans and a unified Arab state from Syria to Yemen. This revolt, *Al-Thawra al-ʿArabiyya*, was ultimately unsuccessful, but illustrative in this case because it called for unification in part based on the Arabic language rather than unification based on sect. In the post-Ottoman period, regions break into areas of European colonial influence and eventually independent nations. The Levant, or *Al-Mashriq*, became the site of competing British and French colonial interests.

The proliferation of technology to disseminate texts and Arab poets' facility with European languages promotes an environment of creative sharing and eventual productive synthesis of styles and ideas. The rise of transportation, communication, and production technologies contribute to the accelerated pace of poetic innovation in this period. The arrival of the French in the Levant is often credited with the introduction of the printing press, however large-scale implementation was up to the local population. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European institutions courted Arab university students with study abroad opportunities. According to Götz Nordbruch, Arab public opinion treated those Arab students who were "European-educated" as "both the potentials and the threats of modern educational

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[3] Deringil's 1993 article, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808-1908," details visual imagery including the adopted coat of arms and laws mandating the wearing of the fez (which was a style imported from Morocco), as well as the introduction of nationalist music in the 19th century.

approaches." Threats included the fear of "Westernization and cultural domination by the colonial powers." Missionary schools located in the Middle East also drew similar criticisms (Nordbruch, "Students" 281). In contrast, Sheehi notes that

> If the actual implementation of the Tanzimat in the Arab provinces is in question, the ideological effects of this Ottoman reform movement undoubtedly grew deep roots in the soil of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. The intellectuals, literati, entrepreneurs, and activists responsible for establishing many of private schools, presses, and industry in Greater Syria, would define an identity and class culture to confront the challenges that modernity seemed to hold. (5)

Cities were the beneficiaries of these technological developments, spaces that facilitated the dissemination of information on a scale unheard of before the printing press. However, in Arab Romantic poetry, the role of the city as an intellectual center of exchange comes into tension with poets' representations of the city as the locus of corruption and stagnation. Escape from the city and its advocates of tradition becomes central to *Mahjar* and later Romantic poetry. The nuances of the responses over time to changing cultural contexts are evident in poetic representations of the country versus the city as well as in the changing role of the poet in his wilderness setting. Changes in the figure of the forest philosopher-poet in Arabic poetry, as well as the view cast on the city, provide an opportunity to consider a continuum of reactions to broad cultural and political changes through poetic representations of subjectivity.

It is in the Romantic and Modern periods of Arabic poetry that the forest, rather than the desert or the shining caliphal city, rises to prominence as a philosophical landscape. Poets of the Northern *Mahjar*, Tunisian poet Al-Shābbī, and Lebanese writers often created forested settings reminiscent of their childhood landscapes and engaged forested landscapes present in the period of their writing. Though this setting remains important to poets of both periods, the nature of the philosopher-poet and narrative access to his subjective experience change drastically through the Romantic period, from *Mahjar* dialogues and monologues in rustic settings to Fu'ād Rifqa's

distanced, third-person representation of silent hermits in the wilderness. A negative view of the city is evident when Rifqa's Woodcutter, who in the third chapter I will argue is a representative of "divine" or "eternal" time, as opposed to "secular" time, finds himself in visiting Washington, DC, as did Rifqa himself while translating *Shʿir Amīrkī Muʾāṣir / Contemporary American Poetry* in 1985:

The woodcutter emerges from his hovel,	من وكْرِهِ يَخرجُ الحطّاب،
His feet are two chimneys,	قَدَماهُ مِدْخنتان،
His head a whirlpool,	رَأْسهُ دَوّامةٌ،
His body a dusty stone.	جَسَدُهُ حَجَرٌ أَغْبر.
He closes his eyes:	يُغْمض عينيه:
a forest wakes up,	غابٌ يستفيق،
it glows in the heart	يَتَوهّجُ في القَلبِ
across the swaying boats.	عَبْر المراكب المتأرجحة.

(*Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb* 25)

A key to reading through these changes can be found in Raymond Williams' cultural analysis of the pastoral mode through the long trajectory of representations of the country and the city in English poetry. Williams' analysis, although it must be lightly applied due to the vastly different cultural contexts, provides a scaffold upon which to examine what Williams calls the "structure of feeling" undergirding innovation in art and literature. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams emphasizes the necessity of analyzing the historical processes that contribute to the creation of a text in terms of the maker's lived experience, rather than investigating only the finished product. Structure of feeling is "a specific structure of particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions, and in what are often its most recognizable forms, particular deep starting-points and conclusions" (Williams *Marxism* 134). Analysis considers "characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone" (132) which are loosely

defined as "a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension" (132).

Structures of feeling under investigation in each chapter of this dissertation build on each other to support the larger arguments of this dissertation, that innovation in modern Arabic poetry reflects both intratraditional development and critical synthesis of foreign influence. The structure of feeling under investigation in the first chapter is the perspectival arc of the forest-philosopher, which moves from the diasporic experience of the *Mahjariyyūn* to the later Romantics writing from Arabic speaking countries during the establishment of postcolonial nations. Rifqa's transition to Modernism comes at a moment of competing nationalisms within the newly established state of Lebanon. Rifqa's creation of narrative distance through the use of an observational, disengaged third person narrative perspective, as opposed to prior poets' use of the first person or an oratorical third person perspective, results from his complex experience of modernity. This diachronic view spans the majority of the 20th century, from the *Mahjar* to Rifqa's later work.

The second chapter synchronously explores the structure of feeling of oratorical certainty toward the Syrian national cause prior to 1961 that quickly turns to disillusionment for Rifqa and his contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to the failure of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party / *Al-Ḥizb Al-Sūrī Al-Qawmī Al-ʿIjtimāʿī* (SSNP), geopolitical setbacks for Arab countries in relation to the establishment and expansion of the state of Israel also influenced the production of poetry. The piecemeal loss of Palestine and the displacement of millions weighed heavily in poetic reactions to conflicts ranging from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the associated *Nakba* ("the disaster") displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians, the June 1967 War (*Al-Naksa*, or "the setback"), and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

The third chapter's focal structure of feeling relates to Rifqa's representations of time vis-à-vis the German poets who he both translates and synthesizes into his own original poetry. His response to the disenchanting experience of modernity is evident in his simultaneous representation of and distance from "eternal time" or "sacred time." Taylor contrasts "higher time," time that "gather[s], assemble[s], reorder[s], punctuate[s] profane time" with "profane" and "secular" or "ordinary" time (*A Secular Age* 54). Rifqa engages with German poetry and philosophy, particularly poets Rainer Maria Rilke and Friedrich Hölderlin, as well as the philosopher Martin Heidegger, in order to expand the relationship between poetry and philosophy in Arabic theoretical discourses. Rifqa's spectator-narrator silently observes iterations of the hermit, whether he is a Sufi in his isolated hut, a sailor alone at sea, or a woodcutter, from a distance. Rifqa's disengaged hermit is a vestige of an experience of eternal time; his intentional use of a third person limited narrative perspective reflects his and our access to higher time in a rapidly secularizing world. We no longer have access to eternal time or the subjectivity (through narrative strategy, through our distance from the hermit) of those who exist outside of secular time. From a distance, Rifqa watches the few who remain in the last space of the eternal, the wilderness, as they quietly live out their lives in labor and solitude. Readers experience the death of every focal character in virtually every continuous text, suggesting the impossibility of experiences of eternal time continuing in the future. Yet, each focal character experiences a form of resurrection in which some form of his consciousness is dispersed to the winds as leaves of poetry, the ringing of a bell, or an echo.

Williams describes a structure of feeling as an "articulation of *presence*," as evidence of the existence of a particular mood, tone, or movement (*Marxism* 135). As this investigation moves into Rifqa's later work, the articulation of presence begins more and more to engage

absence. Rifqa's poems become shorter, his vocabulary limited to a carefully selected set of words with roots (*juthūr*) that resonate between meanings that relate poetry with the natural world. When eternal time has ended, when the dust of last rustic individual has been dispersed to the winds, poetry and song remain.

In total, changes in the arc of representation of the forest-philosopher in modern Arabic poetry reflect experiences of Arab modernity informed by *Al-Nahḍa*, European literatures, shifting global and regional economies, diaspora, decolonization, competing nationalisms, and a growing sense of alienation resulting from internal and external conflicts. The twentieth century is characterized by transition in modes of living, worldviews, and poetic representation, all of which take place on a timescale much more condensed than comparable movements across Europe. For Williams, the crucial moment of emergence of a new structure of feeling occurs during times of transition, either with the rise of a new class or "mutation within a class […] when a formation appears to break away from its class norms, though it retains its substantial affiliation, and the new tension is at once lived and articulated in radically new semantic figures" (*Marxism* 134-5). Bound to these conditions is the rise of the middle class in Lebanon.

Like Williams' discussion of English poetry, Taylor's discussion of the rise of secularism in Europe must also be tempered to a non-Western cultural, religious, and literary tradition. Charles Taylor's landmark analysis of secularity, *A Secular Age*, will be tempered to a non-Western context through the inclusion of concepts from Akeel Bilgrami's collection in response to Taylor, *Beyond the Secular West*. Integrated into this model will be considerations of the lasting effects of secular Ottoman reform as well as the position of the various groups of Christians in the newly opening spaces of intellectual discourse springing from *al-Nahḍa.* It is in this expansive context of competing influences and agendas that this study investigates the

specific iterations of one modern avant-garde Arab poet's expressions of experiences of modernity across the development of a poetic genre, the rise and fall of a nationalist movement, and boundaries of language and time.

Fu'ād Rifqa in Context

Fu'ād Rifqa was born in 1930[4] in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian village of Kafrūn in the Ṭarṭūs region of western Syria. After moving to Lebanon in his youth, Rifqa pursued a master's degree in philosophy at the American University of Beirut (AUB), where he became acquainted both with German literature, Rainer Maria Rilke in particular, and the Romantic nationalism of Antūn Saʿādeh, the founder of the SSNP. Rifqa's first major publications were three poems in different issues of the journal *Shiʿr* in 1957, and his first book of poetry, *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj / An Anchor on the Gulf*, was published in 1961.

He continued his studies in Tübingen, Germany, where he completed a Ph.D. in philosophy in 1965. Rifqa's dissertation focused on the aesthetic theory of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. He returned to Beirut to teach at the Lebanese American University (LAU)[5] in 1966, where he continued to teach throughout his career. LAU's library currently houses a special collection containing Rifqa's personal papers, publications, news clippings, and photographs. Rifqa published twenty volumes of original poetry, a novel, at least twelve translations of German poetic and philosophical works into Arabic, and one collection of poetry translated from English. Complete or collected volumes of Rifqa's poetry have been published in German, French, and Dutch, and individual poems in English translation have appeared in

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[4] Rifqa was born one year before the 1931 death of Jubrān, four years before Al-Shābbī's 1934 death at the age of 25, and in the same year as the birth of Adūnīs.

[5] Prior to becoming the Lebanese American University in 1994, LAU's had two previous incarnations: Beirut Women's College (1955-1973) and Beirut University College (1978-1994).

anthologies and literary journals. However, no full volumes are widely available in English translation.

Virtually all of Rifqa's poetry volumes center on the experience of a solitary male character living in a rural or wilderness setting and participating in land-based labor or ascetic meditation. The focal character is often referred to by a generic term related to his role, such as occupation-based titles like the Woodcutter (*Ḥaṭṭāb*) or Fisherman (*Siyād*), or titles referencing spiritual occupation like the Sufi (*Ṣūfī*) and the Samaritan (*Sāmirī*). Even if a focal character is named, such as Baydar in the poetic novel *Baydar*, his name eventually disappears in favor of a generic term. In Baydar's case, his given name, which translates to "threshing floor,"[6] dissipates and he is referred to as Woodcutter. All that remains of his given name are "echoes in the fog" (*Baydar* 7). Each focal character's experiences of seasons, aging, and loneliness are communicated by a distanced third-person narrator, and all characters experience a cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

In the early part of Rifqa's career, particularly during the early SSNP period, each focal character participates in a mythic cycle based on the Mesopotamian myth of Tammūz. As his career progresses, rebirth cycles involving Tammūz take on a tri-partite form that includes equal emphasis on Hellenic and Christian death and rebirth cycles, particularly Adonis and Christ. Rifqa utilizes mythological references throughout his poetry, but his specific uses of mythology suggest a trajectory of ideological association that begins in Syrian Nationalism and finally rests on an interconnected global model of influence that draws context from philosophical and stylistic elements from German poetry. Due to the similarity of content, style, and language,

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[6] Rifqa's use of "threshing floor" may be in response to Khalīl Hāwī's 1965 diwan, *Bayādir al-Juʿa / The Threshing Floors of Hunger*.

which is communicated largely through Rifqa's intentionally minimal vocabulary, these volumes will be referred to as "seasonal revisions" throughout the dissertation.

Each seasonal revision maintains the same cycle: balancing of the static and the moving elements of life which ends in the death and resurrection of the focal character. The newly reborn form exists as an extremely porous subjectivity that manifests as echoes across a landscape or wind that sways grasses. This constant cycling reveals an underlying relationship rooted in each text that strives for organic unity within and between texts. When these elements are in balance, the poetic subject can be simultaneously enduring and changing; he is both eternal and in flux. The death of the focal character does not close these texts; the focal character experiences resurrection into a more dispersed form than a single individual. Rifqa utilizes sound imagery, particularly echoes, to suggest the constantly diminishing presence of something more eternal that remains after the death of the focal character. The sound that remains, when combined with Rifqa's consistent parallels between natural cycles and poetry, suggests that traces of the individual continue to be present in the world after death by way of language and poetry. The meaning of this presence and its lasting effects, however, continuously shift throughout Rifqa's career as he moves toward a broader and potentially more uncertain worldview.

Within this context of seasonal revision, Rifqa ties the concept of rebirth and living anew directly to poetry. Rifqa relies on etymological echoes present in root letter combinations to emphasize the relation between landscape and poetry. His use of the root *wa-ra-qa*, for example, dually suggests the leaf of a tree and a sheet of paper. The intentionally narrow range of vocabulary in his poetry at first seems repetitive, but upon further study of shared root letters and the range of meanings their relationships make possible, Rifqa's etymological curation becomes evident. Key words used in Rifqa's poetry have been selected because their root letters share

meaning with concepts that he wants to present as interconnected, such as "page" and "leaf."
Rifqa's attention to etymologies reflects the structural nature and derivational capacity of the
Arabic language as well as his extensive engagement with Heidegger. However, before
discussion arrives at Rifqa's lifelong engagement with German poetry, it is necessary to establish
his roots in modern Arabic poetry and his participation in a trajectory of thought that began
synthesizing internal innovation and foreign literary and intellectual influence beginning in the
mid-nineteenth century.

The Rebirth of Levantine Poetry

The birth of modern Arabic poetry begins with the period called *al-Naḥḍa*, or Rebirth, of
the mid-nineteenth century. *Al-Naḥḍa* began as a Neo-Classical movement seeking to revive
prior forms and reinforce poetic tradition to bolster Arab identity against colonial powers and
foreign influence, yet it also depended on western literary innovation "to compensate for the
failure to invent and innovate by intellectual and technical adaptation and borrowing" (Adūnīs
80). Muḥammad M. Badawī describes the period immediately prior to *al-Naḥḍa* as one of
stagnation:

> One can safely say that until the first third of the nineteenth century Arabic poets and
> prose writers and their reading public were alike utterly ignorant of what was happening
> outside the ever narrowing circle of Arabic letters. The healthy curiosity which marked
> the golden age of Arab culture and which rendered it susceptible to the enriching foreign
> influence of the Greeks and Persians had long disappeared, and the Arab's pride in his
> cultural achievement had by the eighteenth century hardened into a sterile feeling of
> complacency and self-sufficiency. The vitality had given place to stagnation and
> isolationism. This was particularly noticeable in the case of poetry, because of the
> extraordinary degree to which Arabic poetry tended to adhere to conventions. (2)

According to historian Fawwaz Traboulsi, the cultural and population exchange between Mount
Lebanon and Beirut has facilitated both deeper exchange in Arabic and closer contact with
Europe since the days of the Emirate of Mount Lebanon (1523-1842): "The contribution of

Lebanese territories to the renaissance of Arab letters and culture, the *Nahḍa*, was the product of

a singular symbiosis between Beirut and Mount Lebanon in the wider context of the opening of

both to Europe and the Syrian interior" (63). This contribution has significant roots in the

Levantine Christian community. Traboulsi continues:

> Book publishing in Arabic in the Arab regions of the [Ottoman] Empire did not
> Start until after 1727, when the Porte lifted the ban on printing in Arabic. Before
> then, books in Arabic were produced in Italy and France, although presses in
> Mount Lebanon had been established at an earlier period. The first known
> printing press in Mār Quzḥayyā monastery (in the north) began printing religious
> books in Syriac script as early as 1610. In 1723, Deacon 'Abdallah Zākhir started
> a new Arabic press in the Greek Catholic monastery of Mār Yuḥannā,
> al-Shuwayr, including printing the first book in Arabic in 1734. The Protestants'
> concern with spreading the Bible in Arabic provided Beirut with its first printing
> press. In 1834, Eli Smith moved the American Press from Malta to Beirut and
> donated a new set of elegant Arabic letters. (61)

The poetry of the period immediately preceding *al-Nahḍa* was prone to convention

and artificiality, as well as empty nostalgia for a proud past. As in many other traditions, direct

revival of ancient or classical themes in Arabic literature tends toward a nostalgic and the

romanticized vision of the past, often with a view to instill something "historic" or "originary" in

contemporary identity. Neoclassicism began to change into Romanticism when poets left behind

emulation and imitation for reimaginings:

> The generation of Shauqi and the neoclassical poets had found great relief from
> their feelings of inadequacy in the face of the colonizing West when they praised
> the time-honored figures of Arab history. These figures, however, were not used
> in their mythic sense, to emphasize the continued presence of great qualities in
> contemporary Arab life. On the contrary, such figures were used to emphasize the
> contemporary absence of these attributes which had once made them and the Arab
> world great and important. They were proposed as noble but
> *discontinued* examples that needed now to be revived and emulated. (Jayyusi
> *Anthology* 25)

An Arabic translation of the Bible under the direction of Sergius Risi, Archbishop of

Damascus, first became available in 1671 by way of the Catholic Church. The Shidyāq-Lee

translation, a collaboration between Samuel Lee, an Orientalist, and Lebanese scholar Aḥmad

Fāris Shidyāq, was published in Beirut in 1857. And perhaps most pertinent to the rise of *al-Nahḍa,* the Van Dyck translation of the Bible, was published in two parts: New Testament in 1860 and Old Testament in 1865. This translation commissioned by the American Bible Society sought the assistance of Lebanese scholar-translator-poets Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Yūsuf al-ʿAsīr, and Nasīf al-Yazīji. Al-Bustānī is credited with calling for the intentional beginning of *al-Nahḍa* as well as promoting Syrian (proto)nationalism, secular education, publishing an encyclopedia, and engaging translations in poetic culture. Al-Bustānī's national vision emphasizes the value of shared language, poetry, and culture (Traboulsi 67). The Bible's translation into Arabic not only allowed Levantine Christians to access this text in Arabic rather than Syriac or Latin, but it also allowed non-Christians access to the Bible in Arabic. Christian influence becomes particularly strong in this region and time period. Through the end of Neoclassicism and the beginning of Romanticism, more Christian imagery began to appear in formal Arabic poetry. Translation and the necessity of maintaining poetic qualities between differently structured languages set the stage for the beginnings of poetic innovation that would crack the veneer of tradition, which would eventually allow for formal innovations like enjambment, prosaic or prose poetry, and a different relationship to metrical units.

Echoes of the prosodic developments present in these biblical translations appear in later Arabic poetry, running counter to the metrical system of elite Arabic poetry described by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdi in the 8th century CE. Al-Farāhīdi described fifteen acceptable meters for use in *fuṣḥā* poetry, and since the addition of the *mutadarrik* meter by Al-Akhfash al-Akbar in the same period, the list has remained largely static. This science, ʿ*arūḍ*, strongly influenced all *fuṣḥā* poetry through the dawn of the modern period. Although the Neoclassical

poets in the 19th century faithfully maintained traditional prosody in the Khalīlian system, they are differentiated from prior poets in questioning rather than lauding their predecessors.

While maintaining the importance of the Bible's translation into Arabic to the structural and metrical changes that followed, Traboulsi reminds us that this influence was more structural than spiritual: "Christian intellectuals did not turn to Christian Europe for inspiration but to the secular Europe of the Enlightenment, of English liberalism and the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789" (66). However, "European concepts were not uncritically assimilated" (66). The nineteenth century translation of the Bible into Arabic provided new opportunities for the language styles and imagery of the Christian tradition to enter more broadly into the poetic lexicon, as well as metrical patterns that were not within the accepted Arabic elite corpus. The prosodic changes that launch the twentieth century revolution in Arabic poetry enter the scene through diasporic writing from the *Mahjar*, or émigré poets, who emigrated from Lebanon to the Northeastern United States or to South America, particularly Brazil and Venezuela. The *Mahjariyyūn* are widely credited with the rise of Romanticism in Arabic poetry. These poets begin to mix meters, rather than using a single meter as was traditional, and to experiment with content. Changes in prosody and content in the early Romantic period alter the trajectory of Arabic poetry that had been established as early as the Pre-Islamic period.

Within the Arabic tradition, revolutionary innovations in poetry emerge in the 1910s and 1920s from the Romantic *Mahjariyyūn*, émigré poets who left Lebanon for North or South America, often as economic migrants. Writing from the margins to the center brings with it a new vision of the poet as an individual seeker, differing markedly from the previous strictly formal and oratorical modes prevalent in Arabic poetry. Echoes of *Mahjar* innovation, such as

mixed meters, simpler diction, dialectic exchange, and the common setting of the forest spread through later Lebanese Romanticism and into the Modern movement.

Al-Mahjariyyūn includes such important figures as Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883-1931), Īliyyā Abū Māḍī (1890-1957), Mīkhāīl Naʿimy (1889-1988), and Amīn al-Rīḥānī (1876-1940) in North America, and Rashīd al-Khūri (1887-1984) and Ilyās Farḥāt (1893-1976) in South America. *Al-Mahjariyyūn,* the *Mahjar* poets, follow the Neoclassical poets chronologically yet develop innovations that oppose the Neoclassical poets in spirit and form. The *Mahjar* poets serve as one of the first major Arabic experiments with Romanticism. They composed in Arabic as well as English, although Jubrān's work in Arabic has had a wider radius of effect on the development of modern Arabic poetry than did his writing in English on the development of literature in English. Writers at the margins developed content and forms that returned to Lebanon as influential poetic innovation. Rifqa inverts the spatial relations of the *Mahjar* by composing formally innovative poetry in Arabic with Beirut as central physical location while influence comes from German sources. Virtually all settings in Rifqa's poetry are landscapes in rural areas or complete wilderness, which along with Rifqa's intentionally simple language, carries through the forest-as-philosophical-setting trope of *Mahjar* poetry.

This discussion of the development of the Romantic setting in Arabic poetry will make clearer the value of Rifqa's contributions, especially when considered through the twin lenses of the poet Adūnīs' concept of multiple modernities and Charles Taylor's analysis of the responses of modern poetry to the secularizing world. These approaches, in different yet ultimately converging ways, emphasize Rifqa and the Romantics' responses to a changing Lebanon, which in the period of less than a hundred years saw the end of the Ottoman Empire, British and French

colonialism, independence, and later a protracted civil war, much of which Rifqa lived through and responded to through his poetry.

Translation of western literature, particularly British and French, but also American, German, and Russian texts, have influenced virtually all modern Lebanese poets to varying degrees. Critical discussion of the extent of these influences will be examined at length in upcoming chapters, particularly because much of the discussion on this topic tends to either dismiss the important role of Western literature in the development of modern Arabic poetry or to assign Western literature as the progenitor of the developments of modern avant-garde Arabic poetry. Salma Khadra Jayyusi identifies an important point in the development of Romanticism in Arabic poetry, which she characterizes as differing greatly from Romanticism in the West. Western Romanticism emerged as a response to Enlightenment thinking, yet Arab Romanticism imitated and reacted to European Romanticisms rather than acting as a response to a parallel enlightenment period in Arabic scholarship in general. According to Jayyusi, the emergence of Arabic Romanticism was based on the translation of western works to a large extent rather than a full-on social revolution within Arabic culture that crafted a philosophical framework that in turn demanded a new kind of poetry (*Trends* 361). This extent is well debated in academic writing, as discussed earlier in connection to Moreh and Musawi, but it is unusual and even a little absurd for the influence of these translations to be either fully credited with the rise of modernity in Arabic literature or to be fully rejected. Modern poetry, Jayyusi adds, centers around investigation of the inner self and rejection of the *ancien regime* of Neoclassicism, rather than a full revolution of thought with related effects across different disciplines (*Trends* 361). My contention is that no single influence holds primacy: all the influences on the development of modern Arabic poetry, from global and regional politics to the history of Arabic poetry and the

translation of Western literature, contribute to a nexus of potential questions about subjectivity and new ways to express and experiment with language. The questioning and resulting innovation caused by this nexus characterizes Adūnīs' concept of modernity as cyclical and based on internal and external pressures working in concert to demand a new kind of expression, which is particularly evident in Rifqa's poetry.

Early instances of prose poetry emerged in Romantic period under the name *al-shiʿr al-manthūr*, prosaic poetry, and developed into the prose poetry genre called *qaṣīdat al-nathr* in the 1950s. Meanwhile, translations into Arabic of English and French poetry and prose, along with smaller proportions of German and Russian literature and philosophy, rise in prominence and popularity. The vanguard of poetic innovation in the Levant, the Beiruti literary journal *Shiʿr*, included translation in their mission statement. This journal published many writers who composed original work in Arabic as well as translated from European traditions. The political economy of poetry in the Arab world, a rapidly transforming Arabic poetic, and the proliferation of translations of western literature create an environment that demands expressive forms that attempt to look inward to find a new sense of self, outward at European and American literary works, forward to a new future, and back at the development of Arabic poetic tradition, at the same time.

Translation of Shakespeare's works and attempts to transmit comparable verse forms from English to Arabic resulted in experimentation with blank verse. The influence of poets from European and American traditions appears strongly in many of the poets under discussion in upcoming chapters: Lebanese Romantic poet Abū Shabaka translated works by Moliere, Voltaire, Bernardin de St Pierre, Alphonse Karr, and Lamartine (Badawī 146). Adūnīs translated Racine and Saint-John Perse into Arabic and drew inspiration from classical Arabic poets such as

Abū al-ʿAla al-Maʿarri as well as the *Mahjar* poet Jubrān. Other poets, such as Shawqī Abi

Shaqrā, published Arabic translations of French works from Lautreamont, Rimbaud, Apollinaire,

and Raverdi in the journal *Shiʿr*. Ideas from Romantic-era Europe, particularly individual

expression, integration of dialect, and creative rebellion from prior formal constraints, carry

through from Arab Romanticism and into the following period of Modernism, which strongly

rejected what was perceived as sentimentality and indulgences of the Romantics in both the

western and Arab traditions, yet continued to develop the role of the individual poet. Central to

the transition and aesthetics of Modernism, were translations of T. S. Eliot, whose influence

Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā called "eruptive and insistent" (6). Translations of Sartre's "Qu'est-ce que la

littérature?" and his concept of *littérature engagée* were foundational in the formation of the

Iltizām movement of politically committed poets between the mid-1940s and late 1950s.

Significant translations from European languages into Arabic will be discussed in conjunction

with poets under investigation in the second and third chapters.

Over the long arc of a fifty-four-year career, Rifqa's poetry demonstrates varying levels

of influence from *Mahjar* poets writing from the Americas, Romantic poets writing from the

Arab world, the cultural and political agenda of the SSNP, and his deep engagement with

translation and adaptation of ideas from German literature, Romantic and Modern, into Arabic.

The division of these influences into separate chapters should not suggest that these influences

exist independently at different periods in time. Rather, they intersect and influence Rifqa's

experience of modernity at different points in the arc of his long career and are necessarily

intertwined. Division of these influences into seemingly distinct categories is an artefact of the

writing process and the ordering of chapters should not suggest primacy of influence. The

organic interrelations of language, politics, and influence from other cultures and their effects on

poetry cannot be read in isolation, but for organizational purposes, these factors must be compartmentalized in order to highlight their independent contributions.

Chapter one, "Voices from the Forest," traces the development of wilderness settings as spaces for philosophical dialog about the poet's identity as represented by the Romantic Syro-American school prior to World War II and then through the Modernist fragmentation and alienation of the 1960s. While the *Mahjariyyūn* are credited with breaking with the declamatory mode of poetry that was dominant for centuries, traces of this mode remain. Chapter one engages changes in the figure of the philosopher-poet in a forested setting as signposts of larger socio-cultural, artistic, and political pressures. Jubrān's poetry and prose in both Arabic and English showcase monologues and dialogues of mystical outsiders in the forest proclaiming liberation while Jubrān's lived experience is that of economic migration from Lebanon to the United States. From the forested mountainsides of Tunisia, Al-Shābbī's narrator calls for revolution against French colonization, citing the desire of the land itself for independence and self-determination.

At the cusp of the transition from Romanticism to Modernism in Arabic poetry, the SSNP's cultural agenda engages poets in re/building a unified national identity for the new Syrian national they envision. Following the SSNP's failed coup of the Lebanese government in 1961, chapter two, "Writing the Nations," relates the SSNP's ideological project of a "blood and soil" identity to Rifqa's representation of landscape in his early poetry and chronicles Rifqa's movement away from participation in the cultural project of the SSNP. As in the experience other members of the *Shiʿr* circle, most notably Adūnīs, Rifqa's poetic turn occurred in the period shortly after he left the SSNP in 1961. Chapter two tracks the encounters Rifqa and his contemporaries have with Syrian nationalist ideology. Rifqa shows a preference in his early

poetry for the first-person perspective and direct correlations between a new Syrian nationalist identity and the land itself. After breaking with the SSNP, Rifqa's hermits don't say much, if anything at all; Rifqa's most consistent choice of narrative voice in his later poetry is that of a spectator observing the silent existence of a series of hermits in different wilderness settings through the seasons. Increasing alienation is evident in this shift of Rifqa's choices in narrative voice and revelatory strategies. These encounters with modernity leave traces throughout the rise of avant-garde Arab modernist poetry. Divergent turns away from the cultural agenda of the SSNP are evident in Rifqa and Adūnīs's shifting treatment of representations of landscape. Whereas Adūnīs's turn is toward reimagining Arab poets and historical figures from the ʿAbbasid golden age, Rifqa's transition from the "blood and soil" nationalist narrative to a more global vision that synthesizes Christian themes, Greek mythology, and German philosophy seeks renewal in a multilingual, multicultural framework.

Chapter three, "Orpheus in Arabic," examines Rifqa's turn toward German poetry and philosophy, both in his work as a translator and an original poet. Through this engagement Rifqa explores the rift between "eternal" and "secular" time in relation to his experience of modernity and consistent transition. Although it may seem counterintuitive, Rifqa's turn toward German literature, in the language he learned at AUB, facilitated Rifqa's structural and stylistic innovations in his original Arabic poetry[7]. Rifqa's productive synthesis of concepts and styles inspired by German poetry allows him to continually innovate poetic uses of the Arabic language in a more condensed form. This then allows the articulation of presence through the articulation

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[7] Antūn Saʿādeh, founder of the SSNP, tutored German language at AUB for a number of years, but his employment ended approximately 10 years before Rifqa arrived at AUB, and Saʿādeh was executed two years before Rifqa's period of study at AUB. It is unlikely that Rifqa interacted directly with Saʿādeh in this capacity, but strands of Saʿādeh's influence likely moved through others in this context.

of absence. In his attention to the German tradition, Rifqa works to establish a philosophical framework for the composition of poety in Arabic.

The conclusion, "He Returned a Woodcutter," returns to Adūnīs' argument that modernity is characterized by a critical mass of cultural and political conditions that lead to radical questioning. The influx of influence from abroad, rapid change in quasi-national and national institutions, and a feeling that expressive strategies of the past lack the ability to communicate the present all contribute to the artistic innovation characteristic of Adūnīs' condition of modernity as cyclical rather than existing singularly in the twentieth century. The conclusion also speaks to the problematics of adaptation of rhetorical and philosophical characteristics rooted in a different context.

The legacy of *Tanzimāt* reforms and *al-Nahḍa*, as well as the influence of secular European literature, all undergird the development of modern Arabic poetry, yet it is up to the individual poet to represent his or her experience of changing identities, politics, culture, and economies. Rifqa's encounters with Arab Romanticism, Syrian nationalism, and German literature all inform different points of his development as a poet and underscore the aggregation of *aḥdāth* / events that characterize a lived experience of modernity. The self-awareness and intertextuality of Rifqa's vast body of work emphasize the transformative powers of poetry on the poet as the role of the poet evolves in the post-colonial Levant.

Chapter 1

Voices from the Forest: Romantic Landscapes and Modern Arabic Poetry

The first chapter of this dissertation examines the co-development of the figure of the poet and the role of the forest as a primary setting for philosophical speculation in the poetry of Arab Romanticism and post-Romanticism, which spans approximately the first half of the twentieth century and reaches its heyday in the interwar years, as well as early Arab Modernism, which emerged in the late 1940s and developed through the 1950s. The central question of this chapter interrogates the transformation of poetic form, narrative voice, and setting as Levantine poets mediate the shifting landscape of poetry and nation from the 1910s through 1961. The poetry of the *Mahjar*, Syrian and Lebanese emigré poets writing in Arabic and English from North and South America in the early 20th century, demonstrates the first major phrase in the arc of Romanticism in Arabic poetry. The poet whose work perhaps most exemplifies this tendency is Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān[8]. The favored setting of the *Mahjar* poets as well as a number of later Romantics is the forest, a marked departure from desert settings codified in the pre-Islamic period and representations of the city characteristic of the ʿAbbasid period. Through their writings in Arabic and English, these members of the Syrian and Lebanese diaspora invoke forested settings based in memories of Levantine landscapes that merge with those of New England, as well as influence from the Lake Poets and American Transcendentalism. *Mahjar* poets, particularly Jubrān, imagine the world that could be built if young people with open minds left the restrictions of the city for a life of freedom, sometimes frolicking, sometimes suffering,

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[8] Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān is better known to English language readers as Kahlil Gibran. The spelling "Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān" will be utilized due to the focus here on his writing in Arabic and also for the purpose of accuracy in transliteration from Arabic. Other spellings may appear in quoted material.

in the forest. Visionary poets speaking from the forest pursue a more global vision through exploration of the individual.

Following the *Mahjar*, this chapter will examine two very different figures at the midway point of Arabic Romanticism, Abū Shabaka from Lebanon and Abū al-Qāsim Al-Shābbī from Tunisia, who both build on the *Mahjar* poets' structural innovations toward the different ends of emotional authenticity and a growing nationalism in each poet's regional context. Al-Shābbī, without a second language, voices the terms of the new nation from Tunisia, the nation he wishes to invigorate with his message. Regardless of narrative perspective, whether first, second, or third person, Jubrān and Al-Shābbī's respective focal characters vocalize what is collectively within reach. At this point in the development of poetry and nations, self-determination on the global stage for Arab states is still a promising dream and would remain as such until the mid-1940s and early 1950s, following the 1943 establishment of Lebanon as an independent nation.

Fuʾād Rifqa's early poetry from the late 1950s interrelates land-based imagery and Phoenician mythology with a growing sense of nationalism based in the ideas of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party / *Al-Ḥizb Al-Sūrī Al-Qawmī Al-ʿIjtimāʿī* (SSNP)[9]. Rifqa's first three published poems, one each in the first three issues of the avant-garde poetry journal, an irredentist nationalism. However, this short season ends in 1961, the same year Rifqa's first collection of poetry, *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj / Anchor on the Gulf* was published. After breaking with the nationalist agenda following the failed SSNP coup of the Lebanese government in 1961, Rifqa's poetry returns to consideration of the Romantic forest hermit, yet his use of a distanced narrative voice comes to reflect the sense of skepticism and alienation present in his contemporary political context.

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[9] This party is also referred to by the French term, *Parti populaire syrien*.

The concept of nation in Romantic poetry evolves through the Romantic and Modern periods. To facilitate these calls to gather around a new nation post-Ottoman Empire, poets must create an image of land in their poetry upon which to build this new nation. The interwar years were characterized "on a political level by a sense of frustration that the hopes of national fulfillment engendered by the break up of the Ottoman Empire had not been realised," and that former Ottoman holdings in the Middle East "had simply witnessed the replacement of the Ottomans by a new set of masters in the form of Western, European powers" (Starkey 61).

While early 20ᵗʰ century Romantic visions of the poet in the forest emphasized freedom from cultural, political, religious, and social restrictions, the transition from Romanticism to Modernism in the late 1940s and 1950s brought with it an initial redirection of land-based imagery in support of the ideological agenda of the SSNP. Poets associated with *Shiʿr* largely ended their direct support of the SSNP in 1961 following the failed coup. The trope of the forest and poet-philosopher evolves from the *Mahjar* ideal of pantheistic freedom into an ideological tool in the early period of the publication period of *Shiʿr*. Post-1961, many prominent poets associated with the inner circle at *Shiʿr* began to renounce interpretations of their prior work as written in support of the SSNP, stopped producing new ideological work, and distanced themselves from the group in general. A significant portion of the second chapter deals with this initial association in more detail and its transition to a collective turn away from the party and toward the new poetic directions of Rifqa, Adūnīs, and other contemporaries in modern avant-garde Arabic poetry.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Fuʾād Rifqa maintained both the forest setting and the character of philosopher-poet in his post-1961 writing. However, Rifqa altered the reader's access to the philosopher-poet through his use of the third-person point of view rather than

allowing this character to speak directly. Rifqa's engagement with German poetry becomes central in this period and carries on throughout Rifqa's long writing career. The co-development of voice and setting in avant-garde Arabic poetry demonstrates the resilience of the image of the philosopher-poet in the forest setting; movement over time away from vestiges of the oratorical mode and away from the first-person perspective emphasizes the evolution of the concept of nation in the post-colonial Levant. Rifqa's poetry reflects a response to modernity that also indicates the condition of alienation central to the transition from Arab Romanticism to Modernism. The vast majority of Arabic poetry produced in the Romantic period occurred prior to the self-determination of much of the Arab world, and the idea of nation held the promise of release from imperial or colonial control. By the time Rifqa publishes his first poem in 1957, Lebanon is in its twelfth year of independent nationhood.

Before delving into this short period of ideological poetry and its subsequent changes following the abandonment of the party and its ideals by Rifqa and many of his contemporaries, the subject of the second chapter, investigation into the evolution of the forest philosopher through the preceding period of Arab Romanticism will provide a window into the gravity of this combination of narrative voice and setting within modern Arabic poetry as a marker of the shape of both avant-garde Arabic poetry and nationalism(s) in each period.

What is Arab Romanticism?

To understand Arab Romanticism in context, it is important to identify points of similarity and points of departure between Arab Romanticism and Western Romanticisms. One of the foundational criticisms levied against Arab Romanticism and modern Arabic avant-garde poetry, basically all Arabic poetry after the mid-19th century that doesn't have strict traditional meter and monorhyme, is the claim of wholesale imitation of Western development due in part to

the lack of an internal Enlightenment period. A standard dismissal of the originality of Arab

Romanticism cites this lack of an organized philosophical enlightenment period within Arabic

letters as an initial failure that renders creative production in this vein sentimental and imitative.

The proliferation of translations beginning in the mid-19th century is the origin of this

imitation—Western texts were available in Arabic, and instead of absorbing and assimilating

ideas from these texts into a new, contextual product, Arabic authors simply regurgitated,

sentimentally at that, the burgeoning feelings of Romanticism.

Movements from within the Arab world in the mid- and late-nineteenth century sought to

mediate the contemporary and future effects of long-term interaction with European powers.

Among the early calls to intentionally update the structures and uses of poetic language,

Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) described his goals as such:

> I raised my voice in the service of two great causes. The first was the liberation of
> thought from the bonds of tradition and the understanding of religion as it had been
> understood by the forefathers of the *ummah*, and the second the reform of the style of
> Arabic writing…Arabic writing in Egypt was limited to two kinds, both abhorrent to
> good taste and incompatible with the language of the early Arabs. One was the kind in
> use in government offices and the like, and that amounted to stringing words together in
> an outworn, vile manner beyond the reach of understanding…The other was that of the
> men of letters and the graduates of the Azhar in which rhyming was maintained even if
> inane, and balanced periods and varieties of paronomasias were sought even at the
> expense of taste, clarity, euphony, and effective communication of one's purpose. (qtd in
> Cachia 422)

ʿAbduh, in his role as Sheikh of Al-Azhar in Cairo[10], developed the concept of Islamic

Modernism, sometimes referred to as Modernist Salafism[11], as an early Islamic ideological

response to engagement with the West, and even more, the West's engagement with Egypt.

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[10] Notably, this is the same institution that 'Abduh criticizes for producing stifled language typified by the privilege
of formal concerns over applicability to contemporary lived experience.
[11] This movement in its time was also referred to as Salafist Modernism, however in the current period, references to
Salafist Modernism point to more conservative religious movements, such as Wahabism. The term *Islamic
Modernism* is more accurate in light of this shift across the twentieth century.

According to Mansour Moaddel, "This new approach, which was nothing short of an outright rebellion against Islamic orthodoxy, displayed astonishing compatibility with the ideas of the Enlightenment" (2). Islamic Modernism addressed concerns of the nationalism and how to administrate a nation as well as human, civil, and gender rights, all in a non-secular context that sought to maintain Islamic values while interacting intellectually and economically.

Although the religious, social, and economic context in Egypt differed greatly from that of Lebanon, which was also negotiating its thoroughly multicultural identity in religious and secular terms, modernization of religious and non-religious regional entities accelerated greatly from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century in order to maintain political economy and survive large-scale changes in the world as a result of the end of the Ottoman Empire and the transition from colonialism to independence.

The Question of Mobility

This relates to a larger question of this dissertation, "Can secularism travel?", phrased aptly by Charles Taylor. Can Enlightenment travel? Was Europe homogenous enough to experience a sameness of response to the Enlightenment? If we can allow European diversity in response to what appears to be a philosophical movement with multiple inputs, then why can later Arab readers and translators not make the later reaction of Romanticism mobile as well? Looking back on the diversity of European thinkers who contributed to the Enlightenment, and the Romantic poets who followed them, a vast, heterogenous geography and chronology appears. Periodization becomes a problem. Did the Enlightenment begin with the scientific revolution? Is the legacy of Descartes' duality or Kant's universalism more characteristic of this period? France or Germany? What about England and later, America? Democracy or enlightened absolutism? Although the European century-plus of Enlightenment is not portrayed as particularly monolithic in studies of

Enlightenment itself, when comparatively applied to Arabic literature, it becomes a monolith that creates a barrier of legitimacy to traditions not linguistically or geographically in the center, even though here the European center seems to have be dispersed across an entire continent and its attached islands. Did Enlightenment thinkers and readers from multiple languages not benefit from translation, however fraught with shades of difference translation may be? Clearly, they did. Why then does this cross-pollination end when the discussion is extended to Arab scholars, authors, and translators? Although translations and readings appeared at different historical distances from texts' original publication dates, the pages of Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian literary journals in this period are well populated with translations of canonical Western, Western Romantic, and later Modernist literature and philosophy from Shakespeare to T.S. Eliot and Kant to Heidegger. Are we to somehow arrogantly assume that there was no way for educated, often multilingual readers of Arabic literary journals, to understand these texts? The technologies of exchange, such as translation dictionaries, international travel, and study abroad, facilitated translators who were often fluent in their languages of study to make mobile foundational texts of European traditions and bring them to Arab readers. Denying understanding to Arab readers reveals a double standard that allows the exchange of ideas between European languages and precludes the entrance of exchange between European and non-European languages into the discourse community.

If Romanticism can be conceptualized as a multifaceted reaction formation that creates a point of departure from prior thinking and a new lexicon in which to express a new affect altogether, then it would be difficult to deny the entry of non-European language traditions into the category of Romanticism. If we conceptualize Romanticism strictly as an outgrowth against the privilege of reason in the European Enlightenment, then we are binding a much broader

nexus of change that engages more than philosophy to a specific historical moment centuries ago. This erases the influences of emergent technologies, economic changes, transitions from empire to nascent nation-states, and contact zones between languages from the consideration as major movers of world history. If Romanticism can be conceptualized as a multi-modal, multi-centered reaction formation that responds to a critical mass of pressures, rather than a discrete historical moment, then our scope of study can be expanded into multiple language traditions with less danger of automatic dismissal.

However, I am not advocating for the annihilation of any kind of historical periodization or oversimplified aggregation of distinctions between world Romanticisms. The reaction formation view of Romanticism demands contextualization. Criticism related to each tradition encountering a Romantic moment should be thoroughly contextualized as to understand exactly what cultural producers are reacting to, whereas the model of Romanticism that depends wholly on the Enlightenment period leans toward decontextualization. Binding the concept of Romanticism to the European Enlightenment alone could produce critical responses that label Romantic movements outside of Europe as wholly derivative or flatly imitative. According to Jayyusi, the force of influence of Western Romanticism on Arabic literary development was in part due "to the fact that the literary moment, turning away from neo-Classicism, needed the particular liberating force of Romanticism, with its insistence on emotion and private experience" (*Trends* 424). Jayyusi highlights the needs of authors who were situated in a particular place and time and who utilized what was available to them to better express their lived experience. In the post-*Nahḍa* period, education in second, or third or fourth, languages, prompted by changing administrative, economic, and cultural conditions, became more necessary and more available to potential emigrants and students who would remain within the

Middle East. University study in Europe for Arab youths in wealthy or emerging middle class

families facilitated deeper engagement with European literatures in their original language.

Translation of these texts into Arabic allowed a broader readership to encounter new ideas and to

consider and adapt elements that seem relevant to the expression of a new experience of

intercultural contact and societal change. Consideration of ideas does not imply blind adoption.

In the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, Robin Ostle lists the following characteristics

of Arab Romantic poetry as

> (a) the desire not to conform to traditional social norms or institutions; (b) the celebration
> of scenes of natural beauty and intense emotional identification with such scenes, along
> with a tendency to regard towns and cities as centers of evil and corruption; (c) deep
> emotional introspection and a tendency to glorify in the isolated state of the poet who,
> like the prophet without honour, is shunned by his contemporaries; (d) a strong sense of
> the neo-platonic duality of body and soul; (e) a tendency to write amatory poetry which is
> ethereal and spiritual rather than physical. (qtd in Starkey 60)

Jerome Rothenberg and Jeffrey C. Robinson's introduction to *Poems for the Millennium*

challenges the characterization of Romanticism as a particular historical moment that emerged

only in response to Enlightenment thinking and ended with the rise of realism, naturalism, or

modernism. In Rothenberg and Robinson's view, conditions that defined the beginning of the

19th century—"nationalism, colonialism and imperialism, ethnic and religious violence, growing

extremes of wealth and poverty"—are prevalent again at the beginning of the twenty-first

century, and demonstrate "a virulence that calls up their earlier nineteen-century versions and all

the physical and mental struggles against them, struggles in which poetry and poets took a

sometimes central part" (1). This new view of Romanticism "rather than monumentality, has the

characteristic of mobility" (5). Rothenberg and Robinson outline this new definition through a

constellation of literary productions that challenge closure, defamiliarize, experiment, treat

individual emotion, feature a visionary or voyant poet, engage ethnopoetics, erase boundaries in

content and form, take uncertainty as a guiding principle, explore beauty and the grotesque simultaneously, question traditional religious forms, attend to details of the everyday world, transgress norms, encounter exile or dislocation, and experience accelerated change (Rothenberg and Robinson 9-14). Virtually all of these characteristics find multiple homes in modern avant-garde Arabic poetry. All in all, the goal is the development of an entirely new kind of language to represent a new kind of experience. Of the thirteen or so general guidelines for a globally mobile definition of Romanticism, this chapter engages the visionary poet, natural settings, challenges to form, and ethnopoetics. An arc of change emerges from early Romantic Jubrān to post-Romantic Rifqa, and this change highlights the importance of the changing role of the poet.

Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān: The First Voice in the Forest

Egyptian critic ʿAbbās Mahmud Al-ʿAqqād (1889-1964) identifies the changing role of the poet as perhaps the most important marker of poetic modernity. A poet is modern when "he has something to say which is well worth saying," particularly in terms of expressing his own thoughts and feelings (qtd. in Semah 6). The poet, according to Al-Aqqad, "teaches us to love beauty, teaches us to rebel against oppression" (11). The first poet in this study, Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān, exemplifies Al-Aqqad's description of the poet.

Jubrān was born in the village of Bsharri[12] on Mount Lebanon in 1883 to a Maronite Catholic family during a time of rapid political and economic transition. The Emirate of Mount Lebanon, which had been in place since 1523, came to an end in 1841. Jubrān and his family were about to take part in a mass emigration from Lebanon that was prompted by political and

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[12] Bsharri is alternately spelled Bsherri due to differential transliteration of vowels from Arabic to English. Arabic does not contain a differentiation between the short form of *a* and *e*, which results in transliterations into English that use *a* and *e* interchangeably. Likewise, Tunisian poet Abū al-Qāsim Al-Shābbī's name is rendered Abu al-Qasim al-Chebbi and Aboul-Qasim Echebbi due to the pronunciation of the Arabic letter ش / *shin* as *ch* rather than as *sh* in the Tunisian dialect. Additionally, differing division of sections of Al-Shābbī's name above are due to each transliteration's treatment of the vocal liaisons that connect the spoken words in Arabic.

economic conflicts that centered on control of land and the sericulture industry. The families of a number of others who would become *Mahjar* poets undertook this journey, and these young poets often found their educations shared between English-language instruction in the United States and Arabic-language instruction in Lebanon. Education in Lebanon often included instruction in French language and literature as a result of French colonial, religious, and mercantile interest in the Levant, particularly Mount Lebanon.

The silk industry had been of great interest to regional and European powers since its introduction to Mount Lebanon by Fakhr al-Dīn in the seventeenth century, who also encouraged an influx of foreign merchants to the area in support of international trade (Traboulsi 8). Sericulture was so valuable that Egyptian wali Muhammad ʿAli Pasha, Ottoman-assigned administrator of the region from 1831-1840, claimed the silk industry as a state monopoly and normalized silk measurement systems (12). The Kisrawan revolts, which took sericulture into peasant hands, began on Christmas Eve of 1858, gained ground by expelling the Khazin rulership by summer 1859, and maintained peasant control of the region for the following two years. Fighting in southern Mount Lebanon during the 'Events of 1860' was preemptively undertaken by landowners to prevent the spread of Kisrawan revolt outside of the Kisrawan region and into other administrative units of Mount Lebanon. The "events of 1860" were started, according to Traboulsi, "by the Druze leadership as a preemptive measure to ward off the possible repercussions of the Kisrawan revolt but, more importantly, to overcome the social and political agitation of their 'own' Christian commoners" (33). Other significant peasant revolts in response to living conditions include Lattakiya in Northern Syria in 1858, and the Aleppo bread riots in May and October 1859, the latter of which turned violent toward Syrian Christian merchants and foreign merchants (Traboulsi 28-9). Global economic activity in sericulture,

including the silk crisis in Lyons, coupled with reduced production due to drought and conflict, severely damaged silk exports in the late 1850s.

The *mutaṣarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon became a separate administrative unit from Greater Lebanon in 1861 as a result of a series of international conventions, the *Règlement organique*, negotiated from 1861 to 1864. Rising violence between Christian peasants and Druze officials and landlords who supported a *muqata'ji* system of land ownership,[13] which resulted in the Mount Lebanon Civil War of 1860, prompted French and other[14] European powers' intervention in the 1860 Lebanon Conflict. Emperor Napoleon III sent 6,000 French troops to Lebanon in August 1860 with contradictory goals "to cooperate with the Ottoman authorities, restore peace, help the Christians, contribute to the reconstruction of Mount Lebanon and get the silk workers back to work, as well as help create an autonomous Christian enclave in Mount Lebanon" (Traboulsi 37). Additionally, Napoleon III tasked scholar Ernest Renan with exploration of "the country's Phoenician past," which to Traboulsi, echoing Marx, seemed reminiscent of Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian project. Unrest preceded Jubrān's birth, and the collapse of sericulture on Mount Lebanon followed shortly thereafter. Competition between French forces in support of a "Catholic experience in the East" and British forces in support of the Ottoman Empire increased from this period until well after the end of the Ottoman Empire at the close of World War I.

The *mutaṣarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon, under Christian Ottoman administrators, remained largely free of communal violence after its tumultuous inception in 1861 until its

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[13] The *muqātaʿjī* land management system was one built on centralized land ownership and named for the *muqātaʿjī*, the "holder of tax farming concessions" (Traboulsi 255). Christian peasants paid rent as share-croppers to Druze landholders. Control of the majority of the lands in and around Mount Lebanon was split between the Maronite Church, who were not taxed, and Druze *muqātaʿjī* families. This period immediately preceded the rise of peripheral capitalism (Traboulsi 16-7).

[14] The *Règlement organique* granted Mount Lebanon relative autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, an autonomy undergirded by support from France, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and later Italy (Traboulsi 43).

dismantling in 1915 contemporary with Ottoman alliance with the Germans during World War I.

While comparatively more peaceful than before, Traboulsi notes that this period was

characterized by the regeneration of the silk industry, less direct intervention by foreign powers,

and "the exportation of the surplus peasant population beyond Mount Lebanon", the vast

majority of whom were Christian (41). Many immigrated to North and South America.

The regeneration of the silk industry did not bring income to the majority of the

population of Mount Lebanon. Rather, Mount Lebanon provided raw materials for export

through Beirut. Food production for consumption in the area was replaced by a monoculture of

mulberry trees, and the majority of Mount Lebanon's staple grains were imported from the Biqa'

valley region in Eastern Lebanon and *Bilad al-Sham*, the Syrian interior. Workers and their

families could not eat silk or live on mulberries, and labor availability was problematic at the

time. Traboulsi notes that in 1885, 14,500 workers, 12,000 of which were women and 8,500 of

which were Maronite, were employed in silk-reeling factories; women earned approximately one

third of the amount men earned, and child labor[15] was *de rigueur* (46).

The period following the 'Events of 1860' was marked by migration. From 1860 until the

beginning of World War I, roughly a third of the population of Mount Lebanon, including a large

percentage of Maronite Christians, moved abroad. At its height, foreign remittances from

émigrés comprised near 45% of total revenue for the region (Traboulsi 47). Jubrān's mother,

Kamila, took her four children and moved to the United States in the summer of 1895, following

a relative and others from Bsharri. Jubrān's father, also named Khalīl, had been imprisoned for

tax evasion in 1891 and then released in 1894, but he did not join the family in their move to

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[15] Traboulsi notes that the majority of children employed in silk-reeling factories were girls between the ages of 7 and 13, although he does not provide comparative wages. He further notes that children from local orphanages were exploited as unpaid child labor in silk-reeling factories (46).

North America. The Jubrāns settled in the Syrian-Lebanese community already in place in Boston's South End. In his teens, Jubrān studied English and then returned to Lebanon in 1896 to study Arabic and French. Soon after his return to Boston in 1902, his half-brother Peter, mother Kamila, and sister Sultana all died from tuberculosis. Jubrān and his remaining sister, Mariana, stayed in Boston and Jubrān began to build his career as a writer and painter. His early talents attracted the attention of Fred Holland Day, a prominent Boston photographer and publisher, and later these talents gathered the patronage of Mary Haskell, who funded his study of art in Paris from 1908-1910. Along with other *Mahjar* poets like Ilya Abū Mādī and Mikha'il Naʿimy, Jubrān formed *al-Rābita al-Qalamiyya*, or the Pen Society, in New York in 1920 for the purpose of forwarding the English and Arabic poetry, prose, and essays of Lebanese writers in the United States. With the continued assistance of Haskell as editor, Jubrān published his first English language collection, *The Madman*, in 1918. The untitled opening prose poem of this collection emphasizes the changing role of the poet:

> You ask me how I became a madman. It happened thus: One day, long before many gods were born, I woke from a deep sleep and found all my masks were stolen,—the seven masks I have fashioned and worn in seven lives,—I ran maskless through the crowded streets shouting, "Thieves, thieves, the cursèd thieves." […]
> And when I reached the market place, a youth standing on a house-top cried, "He is a madman." I looked up to behold him; the sun kissed my own naked face and my soul was inflamed with love for the sun, and I wanted my masks no more. And as if in a trance I cried, "Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks." (*The Collected Works* 5)[16]

The celebratory mode in this half-page prose poem does not last for long. In the same breath, Jubrān introduces ambiguity about the possibility of relating to other people. He concludes this

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[16] In another piece from *The Madman*, Jubrān describes the following seven selves: the madman, the madman's "joyous self", the "love-ridden" self, the "tempest-like" self, the intellectual self, the laboring self, and the "do-nothing" self (*The Collected Works* 14).

short piece on a tone of uncertainty about the level of freedom from reason which he may be able

to reach:

> And I have found both freedom and safety in my madness; the freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood, for those who understand us enslave something in us.
> But let me not be too proud of my safety. Even a thief in a jail is safe from another thief. (*The Collected Works* 5)

The privilege of imagination over reason as communicated through the voyant poet already had a

comfortable home in English and American Romantic literature. One only has to think of

William Blake's 1794 introduction to the figure of the Bard in *Songs of Experience*: "Hear the

voice of the Bard! / Who Present, Past and Future sees; / Whose ears have heard / The Holy

Word / That walk'd among the ancient trees" (87). William Wordsworth also draws much

attention as an influential poet on Jubrān's work, and as we shall see later in this chapter, also on

Rifqa's work. In Lebanese poet Khalīl Hāwī's dissertation on Kahlil Gibran, Hāwī likens Jubrān's

desire to reflect language in everyday use rather than a separate, elevated language to the same

urge in Wordsworth. However, like Wordsworth, Jubrān still maintained some distance in his

praxis from composing entirely in the vocabulary and cadence of colloquial speech (253).

Christopher Pearse Cranch's caricatures of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Emerson in Ecstasy

over Nature" and "Emerson the Mystic," portray the poet as a man frolicking through puddles

and as a massive eyeball in tailcoats taking in his bucolic surroundings, respectively (included in

Emerson 584-5). Ahmad Majdoubeh identifies American Transcendentalism broadly, Emerson,

and to a lesser extent Thoreau, as stronger influences on Jubrān than English and European

poets. This view of the poet as visionary was much newer and more controversial in Arabic

poetry; while Jubrān's English poetry may appear to follow in an already established tradition,

he emerged as a leader of the *Mahjar* poets as well as Arab Romanticism in poetry.

Jubrān's success writing in the English language came later than his notoriety as a composer of poetry and prose in Arabic. His early publications in Arabic include *Al-Mūsīqā / The Music* (1905), *ʿArāʾis Al-Murūj / Nymphs of the Valley* (1906), *Al-Aruāḥ Al-Mutamarrida / Rebellious Spirits* (1908), *Al-Ājniḥa Al-Mutakasira / Broken Wings* (1912), *Damʿa wa Ibtisāma / A Tear and a Smile* (1914), *Al-Mawākib / The Processions* (1919), *Al-ʿAwāṣif / The Storms* (1920), and *Al-Bidaʾiʿ wa Al-Ṭawāʾif / The New and the Marvelous* (1923). On the difference of topics between Jubrān's writing in Arabic and English, Nazik S. Yārid suggests that Jubrān's post-WWI turn to English accompanied a move away from the societal topics that populated his work in Arabic and toward a "Sufi spiritual style" in his English work (9). This chapter will focus largely on "Al-Mawākib" / "The Processions", a long poem, and *Al-ʿAwāṣif / The Storms*, a collection of short stories and parables. Jubrān demonstrates many aspects of a more mobile, global Romanticism listed by Rothenberg and Robinson: Jubrān's resistance to some traditional structures of Arabic poetry, such as monorhyme and monometer, as well as his open criticism of traditional social and religious structures, demonstrate a challenge to closure; experimentation and emotion feature heavily in his portrayal of the figure of the visionary poet located in a forested setting; he composes poetic prose, *al-shiʿr al-manthūr*, a predecessor to prose poetry, *shiʿr al-nathr*; his Arabic and English work feature dislocation; and finally, the pace of change in the early twentieth century accelerated greatly within Arabic poetry and in the rise of American and British modernism.

In a 1970 piece in *Mawāqif,* the literary journal that followed *Shiʿr* in avant-garde status and with Adūnīs at the helm, critic Khālida Saʿīd[17] describes Jubrān as a poet who "opened himself up to world cultures without any inferiority or superiority complexes" and who was able

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[17] Khālida Saʿīd is the wife of the poet Adūnīs.

to show that "Eastern Arab culture, with its elements of Islam, Christianity, and paganism, was fully able to meet with other cultures, to borrow and assimilate, and to enrich itself thereby" (qtd. in Allen *Modern* 172-3). Jubrān's unique position between cultures and his attitude toward an authentic representation of his experience of modernity in the diaspora led him to become the lead Romantic figure of Arabic poetry and main representative of the *Mahjariyyūn* while living in North America. The relations of poets to landscape within the *Mahjar* are fairly clear: for example, Jubrān, living in the Northeastern United States, weaves forest scenes reminiscent of Lebanon that are based in memory and imagination rather than direct observation. Jubrān's focus is the individual in a natural setting and his sense of freedom from the strictures of society. Much attention is given to the jubilant freedom of the poet in this setting, yet the landscape itself remains largely undescribed, lacking specific botanical or geographical references. Jubrān 's natural settings seem to exist somewhere in the imagination between his childhood home on Mount Lebanon and the setting of his adult life in New England, and fully as speculative philosophical space. The forest for Jubrān is a place where the individual can freely reject social expectations and restrictive politics. Adnan Haydar notes that in the North American setting, Jubrān was free from the pressure of writing from the center of the tradition to which he was contributing because he was free from "having to answer directly to the traditional dogma or suffer the censure of the traditionalists" (qtd. in Allen 176).

Throughout the long history of Arabic poetry, from the pre-Islamic to the nineteenth century Neo-Classical period, oration and declamatory speech constituted a significant section of poetic genres that skillfully crafted public rhetoric within strict prosodic rules. To the Arabic Romantics, marvel at the public orator's craft and command of traditional stylings had no place in a rapidly changing world.

The *Mahjariyyūn* developed a style of poetry called *al-shiʿr al-mahmus*, which translates to "poetry of whispers." This style is characterized by "the total absence of a declamatory tone" (Abu-Haidar 10). Jareer Abu-Haidar cites Mikha'il Naʿimy's poem "Akhī" / "Brother," a war poem written in 1917 about the recent famine[18] in Lebanon as a result of the Ottoman response to an Allied blockade of the coast, as a prime example of this style. Abu-Haidar follows esteemed Egyptian critic Muḥammad Mandūr (1907-1965) in citing this quiet poem, in which Naʿimy invites a countryman to mourn with him about the dead in Lebanon at the same time as the United States is still embroiled in World War I: "If a Westerner should march in pomp after the war / do kneel down in silence with me, brother, in order to mourn the fate of our dead" (10). This poem, in form and content, actively resists the traditional oratorical mode in that the speaker asks his companion to mourn with him in silence. However, elements of the oratorical mode persist in Jubrān's use of dialectic exchange and monologues. He often writes from a first-person narrative perspective and gives voice to his views directly.

The first poem that won Jubrān wide recognition in Arabic poetry was "Al-Mawākib" / "The Processions," a poem presented in the form of a dialog between an elderly sheikh and a young man in the forest. Jubrān equips the sheikh with traditional balanced two-hemistich long lines and monorhyme strictly on the letter ر / *ray* throughout the poem. Like much classically styled Arabic poetry, this poem contains no punctuation and relies on line breaks as caesuras. The youth's sections contain varied rhyme that occurs regularly but focuses on different letters and in different configurations, such as couplets, tercets, and quatrains. The length of two-

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[18] From a population of half a million, approximately one hundred thousand people starved to death in this famine in which an Allied blockade of the Lebanese coast was used as a "pretext" by the Ottomans to prevent the flow of foodstuffs and goods into or out of Lebanon (Abu-Haidar 10). Grain shortages began in 1914 as grain from the Syrian interior was redirected to Ottoman soldiers, and swarms of locusts arrived in 1915. The famine continued through the end of World War I in 1918, and over 100,000 people starved to death in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (Traboulsi 72).

hemistich lines in the youth's section is significantly shorter than those of the sheikh. In the opening of the poem[19], the sheikh emphasizes obedience and humility as virtues:

الخَيرُفي النّاسِ مَصنوعٌ إذا جُبِرُوا   والشرُّ في النّاسِ لا يفنى وإنْ قُبِروا
وأكثرُ النّاسِ آلاتٌ تُحرّكُها   أصابعُ الدّهرِ يَوْماً ثُمّ تَنكسِرُ
فلا تَقولَنّ هذا عالمٌ عَلَمُ   ولا تَقولَنّ ذاكَ السيّدُ الوَقِرُ
فأفضَلُ النّاسِ قطعانٌ يسيرُ بها   صوتُ الرّعاةِ ومن لم يمش يَندثُرُ

(Jubrān from Yārid 365)[20]

> Goodness in people is fashioned when they are pressured
>> but the evil in people does not perish even if buried
> And most people are machines driven
>> by fingers of fate for a day then they break
> So do not say this is a learned scholar
>> and do not say this is a revered gentleman
> The best people are marching herds led by
>> the voice of the shepherd and those who do not march fall
>> into oblivion

Using landscape as a space free from societal dogma, the youth counters each point made by the sheikh by noting the lack of hierarchical structures in the forest. In the youth's rebuttal, obedience becomes a sin that should be repented. In contrast to the sheikh's monorhymed sections, the youth's sections hint at maintaining a rhyme scheme by ending the initial quatrain of this stanza with rhyme on the letter ع / *ʾayn*, yet those expectations are defied by a final rhymed couplet using the letter ل / *lam*:

ليسَ في الغاباتِ راع   لا ولا فيها القَطيعْ
فالشّتا يَمشي ولكِنْ   لا يُجاورِهِ الرّبيعْ
خُلِقَ النّاسُ عَبيداً   للّذي يأبى الخضوعْ
فإذا ما هَبّ يَوْماً   سائراً سارَ الجَميعْ
أعطِني النّايَ وغَنّ   فالغِنا يرْعى العقول

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[19] Nāzik S. Yārid's 1992 full collection of Jubrān's works in Arabic lists this stanza as the first in the poem and the first oration from the sheikh. George Kheirallah's 1958 translation into English includes an Arabic recension, the first stanza of which is omitted from Yārid's work. Although they contain roughly the same number of stanzas, the recensions are quite different.

[20] All translations are my translations unless otherwise noted. My translations of Jubrān are intended to be literal translations that attend to content rather than form. Unlike George Kheirallah's translation, my renderings do not reflect the original's meter or rhyme. Two hemistich long-lines here are rendered as two lines, with the second half of the original line being subordinated to the first through indentation of the second line in the English translation. Due to the density and efficiency of meaning in the Arabic language, lines translated into English require more space than the traditional side-by-side presentation in Arabic allows.

<div dir="rtl">

مِن مَجيدٍ وذَليلْ   وأنينُ النّاي أبقَى

</div>

(Jubrān from Yārid 365)

> No shepherd is in the forest
>   nay and no herd is there
> for winter passes on but
>   spring does not follow it
> People are created as slaves
>   to one who will not yield
> If one day he walks
>   everyone would follow suit
> Give me the flute and sing now
>   for songs shepherd the mind
> The sigh of the flute outlasts
>   the glorious and the meek

Here, the flute symbolizes the freedom that can be gained from expression in musical form, particularly in an environment distant from expectations of conformity to social norms. The flute frees its player and listener from dualistic social expectations, from both "the glorious and the meek." Jubrān's phrasing for the flute's function, "for its songs shepherd the mind," encourages a worldview based on individual interpretation. By intentionally removing the organizing principle for his new world from the realm of language and characterizing it as music, Jubrān creates an interpretational framework that demands an individualistic reading at every occurrence for each subject who encounters it.

The poem continues for another thirty or so stanzas, depending on the recension, in a dialectical oratorical arrangement between the sheikh and the youth. The specter of a narrator is missing throughout; perhaps this is because, as Ahmad Majdoubeh suggests, "Al-Mawākib" is more akin to a "verse play" than a standard poem (479), or as Nadim Naimy suggests, the youth and the sheikh are the same speaker engaged in an argument between differing urges within himself (qtd in Allen 173). Whether due to generic conventions or a projection of selves, the youth and the sheikh both express themselves directly without the obvious intermediary figure of

a separate narrator. The youth regularly uses singular personal pronouns, for example in the consistent refrain "Give me the flute and sing now," whereas the sheikh avoids references in the first person throughout the poem until his capitulation in the final stanzas. In George Kheirallah's definitive 1958 translation, the sheikh refers to "we" in a societal sense rather than referring to a proximal group of people: "Happiness is a myth we seek, / If manifested surely irks; / Like river speeding to the plain, / On its arrival slows and murks" (91). Kheirallah's translation reflects rhyme and meter, a difficult undertaking when adapting Arabic poetry to English. In the Arabic original, however, the sheikh avoids any first-person pronouns, singular or plural until the final stanza:

<div dir="rtl">

وما السعادةُ في الدنيا سوئ شَبَح   يُرْجى فإن صارَ جسماً ملّه البَشرُ
كالنّهرِ يركضُ نحو السّهل مكتدحاً   حتى إذا جاءه يبطي ويَعتكِرُ
(Jubrān from Yārid 371-2)

</div>

> And what is happiness in this world but a specter,
> longed for, and when it takes form, people tire of it
> Like a river racing toward the plains
> That on arrival slows and becomes enmired

In the Arabic original, this avoidance continues throughout the poem. Kheirallah's translation introduces pronouns that did not appear in the original, thereby unintentionally obscuring one of Jubrān's expressive devices. Much of Jubrān's English writing approximates Biblical language, and it seems quite likely that Kheirallah took liberties in his translation of "Al-Mawākib" to appeal to a readership in English who were accustomed to the biblical tone. Kheirallah's translation also introduces headings for the youth and sheikh's sections, emphasizing the dialogic construction much more than Jubrān's original poem. All told, Kheirallah introduces singular or plural first-person pronouns in the sheikh's sections at least eight times throughout his translation. In the final stanza, which Kheirallah titled "The Capitulation of the Sage," the Arabic original introduces personal pronoun suffixes that denote possession into the sheikh's speech:

في قَبضَتي لغدتْ في الغابِ تَنتَشِرُ   العيشُ في الغابِ والأيّام لو نُظِمتْ

فكُلّما رُمتُ غاباً قامَ يَعتَذِرُ   لكنْ هوَ الدَّهرُ في نَفسي لهُ أَرَبٌ

والناس في عجزهم عن قصدهم قصرُوا   وللتَّقاديرِ سُبُلٌ لا نُغَيِّرُها

(Yārid 374, emphasis mine)

Life in the forest and if the days were arranged
In my fist they would be in the forest spread
But Fate has its own plans for my soul
When I yearned for a forest Fate apologized
And the roads of destiny do not change
People in their frailty fail to reach their goals

The sheikh adds the pronoun suffix ي- / -yah to *qabḍa,* which translates to *fist*, making it *my fist*. *Qabda* contains shades of meaning related to seizure, control, and authority. Jubrān's choice of *qabda* over the word for hand, *yad,* hints at the sheikh's transformation at the end of the dialog. The sheikh not only opens his hand, he releases control. Has the sheikh finally started expressing his personal subjectivity rather than discussing the conduct of humanity in general? Has the youth, as a visionary philosopher-poet in the forest, effectively opened the Self of the sheikh? This change is incremental--the sheikh still composes traditionally styled poetry--but it may represent a partial victory in raising the sheikh's acknowledgement of his own emotional self, crafted in verse. Through dialectic exchange in a largely traditional form, the youth foments a shift in the sheikh's worldview away from a generalized vision of humanity to one that considers the individual free from societal strictures, and even more specifically, one that causes the sheikh to examine himself and adjust his language accordingly.

The sheikh's capitulation to the youth is fleeting, however. The sheikh expresses feelings of yearning, longing, and affection only in the past tense within a subordinate clause; the main clause leads to failure and the frustration of his desire to have spent his days in the forest. The sheikh's statement of personal longing is buried in a conditional phrase surrounded by generalized references made in the passive voice. His only references to his own subjectivity are

in the suffixes (emphasized above); he does not use the word *anā / I*, active verbs in the first person, and only one past tense verb in the first person, *rumtu* or "I yearned." In the final two lines, the sheikh's language returns to a generalized third-person voice that signals his capitulation not to the youth, but to the ways of society. The sheikh may long for a life of freedom in the forest, but he closes off the possibility of a forest life as quickly as he voices it, invoking the unchanging ways of Fate as his reason not to pursue it. "Al-Mawākib" closes not on the voice of the youth, but of the sheikh, and not on the pursuit of freedom, but on the acceptance of restriction. Whether this poem is a dialog between two characters or two sides of the self, the final lines indicate the impossibility or impracticality of choosing life in the forest.

Another area of incremental change with Jubrān at the center is the movement toward prosaic poetry, *shiʿr al-manthur*, a move which eliminates the balanced two-hemistich long line in favor of punctuated paragraphs. Mounah Khoury describes Jubrān's style as one that is "essentially engaged in a struggle to achieve the organic unity required in the creation of all great poetry" and his creation of a "'language within a language'" served to "break down the barriers of form between prose and poetry" (qtd in Allen *Modern* 175). Khoury alludes to the differences of terminology between "poetic prose" and "prose poetry," yet ultimately points to Jubrān's "heightened language, subtly varied rhythmical flow, and fascinating imagery" as characteristics that make Jubrān's formal transgressions "some of the richest and most individualized free verse forms in modern Arabic poetry" (175). A differentiating feature of the prose poem is the difference in intentionality of its language from that of classical Arabic poetry; in classical poetry, the collection and employment of obscure or rare words, known as *gharīb*, was a feature of the cultivated poet. The Romantics' commitment to reflecting language more akin to everyday language rendered the use of *gharīb* ornamental. *Al-shiʿr al-manthūr* does not require the use of

meter or rhyme and appears on the page in a form that resembles prose more than poetry. Amīn al-Rīhānī is often referred to as the progenitor of *al-shiʿr al-manthūr*, and Jubrān's short stories and parables reflect this style in different measures.

Jubrān's 1920 collection of short stories, poems, and parables in Arabic, *Al-ʿAwāṣif / The Storms*, demonstrates his prosaic poetic range. Many of these texts appeared originally in the Arabic-language newspaper, *Al-Mohājer / The Immigrant*, between 1912 and 1918. Yārid describes these stories as *qiṣaṣ ramziyya* / symbolic stories (30). Of particular interest in this chapter is the short story "Al-ʿĀṣifa" / "The Storm," in which Jubrān's narrator seeks out Yūsuf al-Fakhrī, a young man who has left society for an ascetic life in the mountains. In the introduction to John Walbridge's translation of *Al-ʿAwāṣif*, Robin Waterfield points out that "Al-ʿĀṣifa" is a short story that suggests the terror in the narrator's understanding from the hermit that "any large-scale change is impossible, and that the only hope is for an individual to achieve 'wakefulness of the soul,'" a popular message of mystic-teachers contemporary to Jubrān, such as Gurdjieff and Krishnamurti, and that "it is to Gibran's credit that he is aware of the bleakness of his message: he does not portray his protagonists in these early works as heroes, but as heretics, madmen, hermits" (x). Jubrān's individual experiences much doubt.

The narrator, who has waited two years to meet Yūsuf al-Fakhrī, wanders close to the hermit's cell and is caught in a storm. The narrator's guiding principle is to understand the reasons why this thirty-three year old man has turned away from society. After reaching the cell and being hesitantly invited in to dry, Jubrān's narrator describes the storm: "the rain beat down until I imagined that the Flood had come a second time to destroy life and purify the earth of its filth" (13). After sharing a simple meal of bread, cheese, honey, and dried fruit, the narrator learns over coffee and cigarettes that Yūsuf al-Fakhrī left the city not because he wanted to

worship God in silence ("I might have worshipped God when I was among people, for worship does not require isolation and solitude" (14)), but because the city was a "diseased tree, ancient and strong, with roots deep in the darkness of the earth and branches rising beyond the clouds, but whose flowers were ambition, evil, and crime, whose fruits were care, affliction, and woe" (14). In another descriptive turn, he describes the city as "the great and awful palace called civilization, that building with its fine architecture standing upon a hill of human skills" (16). The narrator, following Yūsuf al-Fakhrī's explanatory outpouring, notices that "pride and willfulness and power shone on his [the hermit's] face" (16). The narrator continues to question Yūsuf al-Fakhrī's solitude: "How can I respect your ideas and purposes, sir, or respect your solitude and isolation when I know—and the knowledge brings sorrow—that by your renunciation and self-exile this wretched nation has lost a gifted man capable of serving and awakening her?" (18). Throughout the story, the narrator exhorts Yūsuf al-Fakhrī to use his contemplative abilities to help society.

The tone of the conversation between the narrator of "Al-ʿAṣifa" and Yūsuf al-Fakhrī contrasts the esoteric, celebratory mysticism of the monologues in Jubrān's later English-language collection of philosophical aphorisms, *The Prophet* (1923)[21]. This text's focal character, Almustafa, is bidden by a seeress, Almitra, to share his wisdom with all of the townspeople before he leaves the city of Orphalese, and for the remainder of the text, he obliges her request. The implied audience of townspeople was receptive to his messages and listened quietly without response. Few if any mentions are made of this audience. The narrator in "Al-

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[21] *The Prophet* is by far Jubrān's most well-known work, earning his compositions in English broader attention. *The Prophet* has been translated from English into more than forty languages, including Arabic, and has never been out of print. *The Prophet* is also an excellent example of Jubrān's use of biblical or archaic language in English: "Shall the day of parting be the day of gathering? / And shall it be said that my eve was in truth my dawn? / And what shall I give unto him who has left his plough in mid-furrow, or to him who has stopped the wheel of his winepress? / Shall my heart become a tree heavy-laden with fruit that I may gather and give unto them?" (*Collected Works* 98).

ʿĀṣifa" is much more interactive and much more critical. Yūsuf al-Fakhrī's true reason for leaving society is the search for wakefulness of the soul, which he describes as "a thought bringing sudden ecstasy in a heedless moment, clearing one's vision so that one sees life surrounded by songs, encircled by halos, raised up like a tower of light between earth and infinity" (20). The first half of Yūsuf al-Fakhrī's description emphasizes the feeling of organic unity in this instant and revels in the connection between "earth and infinity." However, his continued description of this state begins to hint at the alienation inherent in the pursuit of individual wakefulness; he describes it as "an affection descending into an individual's heart: he rises, astonished, and rejects all that is opposed to it, hating all that fails to conform to it, rebelling against those who do not comprehend its mystery" (20). When he awoke from his first experience of wakefulness of the soul, he had lost all social connection and asked himself of his friends and family, "Whose faces are these, and who are these people staring at me?" (20). The inherent contradiction that Jubrān highlights in this paragraph is that the individualistic pursuit of spiritual unity can sever existing relationships and cause further alienation from humanity.

When Yūsuf al-Fakhrī left civilization to pursue this new plain of consciousness, leaving all other relationships behind, he also left behind the desire to innovate through language. Central to his abandonment of society is a failure of language, because in his experience of this wakefulness, "whoever knows it is unable to reveal it with speech" (21). After this exchange, Yūsuf al-Fakhrī left the narrator in his hermit's cell to walk in the storm throughout the evening. He leaves when he is on the cusp of attempting to communicate and to some extent succeeding. The narrator is a willing listener; he had been fascinated with the hermit for two years before they conversed (7). The symbol of the storm within the short story points to inner turmoil, which is particularly evident in its closing paragraph: "I never again talked to Yusuf el-Fakhri, for at the

end of that autumn life took me away from the north of Lebanon. I went as an exile to distant lands, where storms were dark. But in those countries asceticism is a kind of madness" (23).

Jubrān's representation of the insularity of Yūsuf al-Fakhrī's experience alongside the larger contemporary trend toward individual consciousness raising suggests that Jubrān, or at least this narrator, prefers efforts that may elevate the consciousnesses of broader society over fully individualistic efforts. In this way, the narrator of "Al-ʿĀṣifa" directly rebuts the youth in "Al-Mawākib." If, as Nadim Naimy suggests in reference to the youth and the sheikh in "Al-Mawākib," Yūsuf al-Fakhrī and his guest are selves within the same person, then their discussion becomes a mediation of conflicting drives within a unitary self. The differences between the Jubranian character, the youth in "Al-Mawākib" and the unnamed narrator in "Al-ʿĀṣifa," also set up a dialectic within Jubrān's Arabic writings. In "Al-Mawākib," the youth garners agreement and causes incremental change in the thinking and compositional style of the sheikh, suggesting that the youth's worldview and persuasive style prevailed. "Al-ʿĀṣifa" on the other hand ends without changes in either character's worldview and without formal changes to the structure of the text. The marrying of prose with poetic dialog in "Al-ʿĀṣifa" also creates a dialectic of forms within the story. Even though Yūsuf al-Fakhrī pursued spiritual enlightenment without the distractions of urban modernity, his efforts stopped short of generating a new expressive mode capable of communicating his experience. Whatever he learns, whatever he gains from the wakefulness of his soul, is doomed to die with him and cannot benefit anyone else. The intransigence of his viewpoint is necessarily limiting and demonstrates a failure of imagination that renders him, in the narrator's view, an ineffective architect for the new world. The modern world needs a new kind of spiritual framework and language to express it.

The general thrust of Arab Romanticism in and following the *Mahjar* moves toward building a language that reflects individual experiences of expression in a rapidly changing environment. This is not to say that there were no moves toward Romanticism underway contemporary to the *Mahjar* within the Middle East. The Egyptian Apollo Society, founded by Aḥmad Zaki Abū Shādī (1892-1955) in 1932[22], had a mission "to promote the cause of Arabic poetry in general, to help poets morally, socially, and materially, and to support new, serious movements in poetry" (Badawi *Critical* 128). For a half century before the establishment of the Apollo Society, poets had been struggling to break free from the classical and later neo-classical molds which bound their language to the styles of a prior period. Perhaps the impetus for a moment of discontinuity had to be found outside of the Arab world, experienced in multiple linguistic contexts, and then synthesized into a new kind of written Arabic.

In spite of the negative criticism levied against the *Mahjar* poets by respected Arab literary scholars, the simpler, more accessible diction and loosening of prosodic rules established by *Mahjar* poets paved the way for more personal, less formal poetry to emerge in Arabic from within the Middle East. In this case, writing from the Lebanese and Syrian diaspora in North and South America that was published in the Americas made its way back to the Arab world and greatly influenced upcoming Arab writers. The periphery wrote back to the center and changed the neo-classical current. The innovations of diasporic poets returned from the periphery to the centers of Arabic poetic production in Beirut and Cairo to help guide poets in the Arab avant-garde toward a more individualistic and intimate mode of expression that contrasts traditional oratorical modes, and the setting of choice became the forest rather than the desert of classical and neo-classical import.

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[22] The founding of the Apollo Society occurred approximately one year after Jubrān's death in 1931.

The Interwar Years

The next pair of poets under discussion in this chapter, Abū al-Qāsim Al-Shābbī and Ilyās Abū Shabaka, are innovative representatives of the generation of Arab poets who are writing between the world wars and composing poetry in Arabic from their respective countries following the innovations of the *Mahjariyyūn*. In his anthemic poetry, Tunisian poet Al-Shābbī inhabits the role of visionary poet who speaks of contrasts between the country and the city to emphasize the necessity of both internal resistance to a strict traditional worldview and Arab resistance to French colonialism. Lebanese poet Abū Shabaka's (1903-1947) Romantic poetry, written from Lebanon, intimately expresses the conflicted inner world of an individual poet in language less ornate than the classical styles emphasized by supporters of traditional style in Arabic poetry and produced by neo-classical poets. Each of these poets demonstrates the synthesis of the poetic innovations of the *Mahjar* into new forms of expression that focus on individual experience in their poetry written from within the Arab world.

Al-Shābbī's Romantic Revolution

Abū al-Qāsim Al-Shābbī (1909-1934), whose verse served as a rallying cry nearly a century later during the 2010 Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, died at the tragically young age of twenty-five. Al-Shābbī's poetic landscape was bound to the forests surrounding ʿAyn Darāhim in northwest Tunisia and the forests of al-Mashrūḥa in Eastern Algeria. To Jubrān and Al-Shābbī, although in different respects, collectivity and an underlying organic unity figure prominently. Both poets speak directly and regularly to this concept, and both claim the support of "Nature," "the Earth," or "soil" in their ventures, and both express invitations for change in terms of worldview and national configuration, in terms of invitations for searchers to join the visionary poet in the forest. The need to envision a language for a new world grows more and more

pressing as sociopolitical contexts in the Middle East and an increasingly interconnected globe introduce new relations that must be voiced.

According to Badawi, Al-Shābbī has the most books written about him of any Arab Romantic poet (*Critical* 157), although he does not designate whether these publications are in Arabic, English, or both. While the anxiety of (western) influence characterizes much criticism related to this period, Al-Shābbī provides an excellent counterexample that takes us away from poets who have clearly engaged with western texts in their original languages or through living and publishing in the west, for a short period or permanently. Al-Shābbī, who spent his life in Tunisia, did not formally study any western languages and did not produce any translations of western poetry, prose, or criticism. Jayyusi notes in her introduction to Al-Shābbī's *Songs of Life*, "so many decidedly romantic elements that featured in Western romantic poetry also figured in Al-Shābbī's poetry, without his having had a chance of reading the major romantic corpus of the West" (11). He is reported to have read translations of some western writers into Arabic, such as Goethe and Lamartine (Al-Shābbī 9). Jayyusi also notes the dearth of poetic innovation in Tunisia prior to Al-Shābbī, as well as the tone of "despondency and melancholy" that characterized Romanticism in Tunisia (*Trends* 411).

Al-Shābbī showed poetic promise at a very young age; he published his first poem and his first collection, as well as delivered his now-famous avant-garde lecture, "Al-Khayāl al-Shiʿrī ʿInd al-ʿArab" / "The Poetic Imagination of the Arabs," before the age of twenty. In this lecture, Al-Shābbī skewers Arabic literary convention for its materialism, a tendency which he attributed to deficiencies in "the Arab spirit." To Al-Shābbī, Arabic poetry "is purely materialistic and treats only the external aspects of things." The convergence of the oratorical mode and materialism have "made the Arabs regard their poets, not as messengers of life, but as

orators." Al-Shābbī describes a large portion of Arabic poetry as "versified oratory" (qtd. in

Jayyusi *Trends* 415). In response to this growing feeling in avant-garde literary circles as well as

changing sociopolitical conditions, the oratorical mode continued its fall into disfavor. Roger

Allen attributes the transition from the communal declamations of the patronized poets of the

ʿAbbasid period to the more individualized confessional twentieth century poets to technology

and changing global interactions: "the emergence of new modes of publication, expanded

educational opportunities, and changing local and international configurations provided the basis

for a different readership and focus for literary texts. Nationalisms, pan-Arab and local, served as

a major standard under which the Arab poet sought to express sentiments both corporate and

individual" (*Heritage* 111).

 Al-Shābbī rose to prominence as a revolutionary Romantic poet in the remaining seven

years of his life. A few prominent examples of Al-Shābbī's Romantic tendencies relate to his

increasingly individualistic presentation of the poet, his call for the people to rise and enact their

own will, his pantheism, and his representations of nature. At times, such as in his most famous

poem, "The Will of Life," which was reinvigorated and recited during the 2011 Jasmine

Revolution in Tunisia, these elements merge. This poem is structured in a series of dialogues,

which is reminiscent of the *Mahjar* literature that also strongly influenced Al-Shābbī, with the

elements, like wind, the darkness of night, and the earth, about the future of humanity. The

opening lines illustrate the general thrust of the poem:

> If one day the people should choose life,
> Fate is certain to respond.
> The night will surely retreat,
> and fetters be broken!
> He who is not embraced by the longing for life
> Will evaporate in vacancy and be forgotten--
> Grief to anyone not aroused by the breathing desire for life!
> Let him beware the slap of oblivion!

>This is what life said to me,
>This is how its spirit spoke.
>   (Al-Shābbī 131)[23]

Al-Shābbī's narrator opens the poem relaying second-hand information from the first-person

point of view by paraphrasing what "life" said to him. This translation of the poem proceeds

through seven sections in which the narrator receives revelations from life, the wind, the earth,

and the forest, who all encourage the narrator to remember seasonal change, that plants grow

after lying dormant in the winter, and that nature favors change. Later in the same poem, seeds

are the loci of potential for movement into the future. The forest relates the cycle that moves

from the violence of winter to the promise of spring rebirth, he writes,

>All perish like a lovely dream
>Which shimmered in some heart
>Then disappeared.
>Only the seeds remain,
>Kernels of memory,
>Still embracing, even under
>The fog, the snows,
>The heaps of earth --
>The shadow of life that never palls,
>The green germ of spring
>Dreaming of birdcall,
>The musk of flowers,
>The tang of fruit.
>   (Al-Shābbī 134)

In this poem, Al-Shābbī uses seasonal cycles to communicate his desire for the rebirth and

growth of his people, who at the time were colonial subjects of the French government and

would be until Tunisian independence in 1956, nearly 20 years after his death. The forest is also

a setting for individual renewal. In Al-Shābbī's poem "The Woods," the narrator, presumably the

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[23] All of the translations of Al-Shābbī's poetry in this section belong to Lena Jayyusi and Naomi Shihab Nye and appear in *Songs of Life* (1987).

poet himself due to the shared woes and illness, expresses the intense sense of renewal he gains

from walking in the woods:

> Oh God! To think of the first day
> I went to the woods,
> wrapped in my woes,
> burdened by my illness,
> and entered alone, only to find
> a whole procession of visions
> around me.
>   (Al-Shābbī 95)

Renewal of Al-Shābbī's creativity, in addition to physical and emotional renewal, is evident in

the following stanza in which Al-Shābbī describes watching the distant city emerge from the fog

as he sits on a mountainside.

> Maybe it was an overcast morning
> hidden by a thin veil of mist and wind
> with the world exhaling a rolling fog
> onto the sky,
> that I took myself early into the woods.
> My body was weak, my steps uncertain.
> I sat under an oak tree, despondent,
> Staring at the bleak horizon,
> Seeing buildings carve their shapes
> Through the fog.
> They rose like ideas
> In a land of doubt,
> A world still spinning into form
> In the vast nothingness.
>   (Al-Shābbī 97)

The poet's distance from society and position as spectator is emphasized by his use of the first-

person perspective. Jubrān's representations of philosophers of the new utilize the first-person

perspective to make grand declarations about society, in contrast to his renderings of

traditionalists, who often speak in the third person. Al-Shābbī utilizes the first-person perspective

and writes as Al-Shābbī. He shares this element with Abū Shabaka, another major representative

of the interwar generation of Arab Romantics. This inwardness is compounded by Al-Shābbī's

search for solitude in the forest. The poet may choose to leave society and enter nature because

society does not accept his contributions; in "The Unknown Prophet," the title of which clearly

reflects this tendency, Al-Shābbī writes, "Oh, my people! I wish I were / A woodcutter / To fell

these trunks with / My axe!" (Al-Shābbī 87), and that

> I am going alone to the forest, my people,
> To spend my life in quiet despair
> […] Recite my songs to the birds,
> Confess to them my longings,
> For they are intimate
> With the pulse of life.
>   (Al-Shābbī 89)

One of the best examples of this mode in his poetry comes from the poem "A Poet's Dreams":

> I wish I could live in this world
> Happy with solitude and isolation,
> Spending my life in the forested mountains
> Amidst the swaying pines.
> I wish no cares could distract me
> From listening to my heart,
> Observing death and life,
> Paying attention to the speech of the ages,
> Singing with woodland nightingales,
> Listening to the valley's gurgle,
> Communing with the stars and dawn,
> The river and guiding light.
> My life, given to beauty and art,
> Far away from my people and my country,
> Unburdened by my people's sorrow
> for they live like stones!
>   (Al-Shābbī 65)

Al-Shābbī's rejection of society, lack of interaction with other people in his poetry, and desire to

commune instead with the natural world point to an emphasis on personal expression and

individual experience that grows throughout Arab Romanticism. Much of Jubrān's work in both

English and Arabic depends on a dialectic structure between speakers, dialog between characters in prose, or contextualized monologue delivered to an audience. Jubrān's characters voice their own positions, which may be related to Jubrān's conflicted selves. Al-Shābbī's poetry, on the other hand, reveals the poet's anxieties directly, particularly in relation to physical illness and the corruption of society. Al-Shābbī draws the poetic experience further inward than did Jubrān, work that is continued by Abū Shabaka as the Romantic era draws to a close.

Abū Shabaka's Emotional Landscape

The second poet of the interwar Romantic period whose poetry made significant strides in recasting the role of the poet as individual was the Lebanese poet Ilyās Abū Shabaka (1903-1947). Even though Abū Shabaka was born in the United States, he returned to Lebanon as a child and spent the rest of his life there. Abū Shabaka's poetry emphasizes the poet as private individual, not as public figure, and oscillates widely between sensual pleasure and spiritual guilt. Abū Shabaka's experiences are often outlined quite clearly in his poetry; personal references in his work include the four major romantic interests across his lifetime[24] and his consistent lack of monetary means. His exploration of private rather than public experience causes Abū Shabaka to speak as an "'outsider'" and feel as though his talent went largely unrecognized, a trait which he shares with Al-Shābbī. According to Badawi, Abū Shabaka "turns his back on humanity, and has to maintain the position of a rebel because he feels he must be true to himself and to his own feelings: sincerity must always come first" (*Critical* 151). Jayyusi

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[24] Jayyusi, following Abū Shabaka's primary biographer, Razzūq, notes that these four women include Olga Sarofīm, to whom Abū Shabaka refers to as Ghalwā. The second is an unnamed married woman from his village with whom he had an opaque relationship between 1929-1934 and who became "the beguiling snake-heroine of *Afāʿī al-Firdaws*" (*Trends* 427). The third was a singer who "played a minor role" and "had a calming and purifying influence on him" (427). Abū Shabaka met his final female inspiration, Laila, in 1939 and likely remained in a relationship with her until his death from leukemia at age forty-four. Jayyusi describes his interest in Laila centering around her "beauty, chastity, sincerity, Romantic idealism and a fine literary taste" (427).

credits him with "greatly liberating emotion" in Arabic poetry (*Anthology* 52). Abū Shabaka's

poetic representations of emotional trials in the light of his sincere belief in the teachings of the

Catholic Church allow for a personal interrogation of the continuum between pleasure and guilt

at a depth previously unseen in Arab Romanticism.

This move toward interior focus on the individual emotional and moral negotiations of

the poet characterizes the mid-point of the arc of Romanticism in Arabic poetry. Abū Shabaka's

engagement with French poetry and translation also reflects the productive synthesis of

translation in the Romantic period. In addition to the influence of French poetry, which receives

much focus in the scant amount of English-language criticism on his work, Abū Shabaka's

influences include classical Arabic poetry, such as ʿAbbasid poet Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī,

thematic and narrative allusions to the Bible, and simple, songlike diction inspired by both the

Northern *Mahjariyyūn* and rural Lebanese folk songs.

Abū Shabaka and a handful of his contemporaries form the literary circle *Uṣbat al-ʿAshra*

in the thirties and used the popular Lebanese periodical *al-Maʿrid* as their platform for

disseminating criticism and commentary on current events (*Trends* 427). Abū Shabaka's career

of poetry, criticism, translation, and journalism is cut short by his untimely death from leukemia

at the age of forty-four. Abū Shabaka's career spans the entire period of Arab Romanticism; he

dies within a year of the rise of Modernism. Abū Shabaka's lasting achievements in terms of this

discussion include turning the poetic gaze strongly inward, emphasizing inspiration over

conscious craftsmanship, mediating multiple influences, and synthesizing vernacular musicality.

Abū Shabaka's innovation of the role of the poet privileges personal moral negotiations

in response to lived experience. Badawi emphasizes two points strongly in his introduction to

Abū Shabaka's 1938 collection *Afāʿi al-Firdaws* / *The Serpents of Paradise*: "the high value Abū

Shabaka sets upon inspiration in poetry" and "the complete reversal of the traditional Arab image of the poet." Badawī describes this reversal as a case in which "the poet is no longer conceived of as a conscious craftsman: rather he is believed to be an inspired, prophet-like creature, who is in communion with a higher and mystical power" (151). Abū Shabaka is reported to have eschewed revision in his poetry in favor of what has been produced in the moment of inspiration (*Trends* 429). Robin Ostle investigates the relation between spirituality and sexuality in Abū Shabaka's literary corpus, citing his tendency to alternate between long moods of disenchantment and then reengage with the world through sensual pleasures ("Between Heaven and Hell" 188). Abū Shabaka's poetry draws the poet further inward and further distances the poet from occasional, oratorical modes preferred in previous eras. The revolution of the Arab Romantics turns the poetic gaze toward the private self rather than the public self.

Commenting on Abū Shabaka's first book of poetry, *Al-Qīthārra* / *The Lyre*, Badawī identifies formal points in Abū Shabaka's early poetry that demonstrate influence from the *Mahjar*: "In his predilection for simple diction, muted music, short metres and multiple rhymes, the influence of his readings in *Mahjar* poetry is unmistakable" (147). This follows Jubrān's representation of the youth in his dialogic poems, such as "Al-Mawākib," which negotiates between tradition, represented by a sheikh, and freedom, represented by a youth. The youth is presented as liberated from old knowledge and invigorated by possibility, however impractical it may be. However, in contrast to Jubrān, Abū Shabaka does not distance the poetic speaker through the use of third-person perspective or engage particularly oratorical tones. Ostle contrasts Abū Shabaka's tone with Jubrān's, characterizing Abū Shabaka's poetry as containing "no suggestion of moralizing on the part of the poet, or self-serving withdrawal from the world." Unlike "much of the ivory-tower speculation about the evils of man and civilization popular with

Jibran and the *Mahjar* poets," Abū Shabaka participates in fleshly pleasures and must negotiate

their fallout alone. According to Ostle, "He despairs on his own account as well as for others"

("Between Heaven and Hell" 189).

Jayyusi identifies Abū Shabaka's 1938 volume *Afāʿi al-Firdaws* as the text that

exemplified, during its period, a significantly modern and Christian contribution to Arabic poetry

(*Trends* 432). Abū Shabaka's poetry directly and indirectly emphasizes Christian themes.

According to Jayyusi, Abū Shabaka's Christian themes oscillate between the "use of Biblical

stories and traditions as direct themes" and "indirect references and the delineation of the

experience of a Christian who felt deeply about the teaching of the Catholic Church" (*Trends*

425). Examples of this tendency emerge in *Afāʿi al-Firdaws*, a volume of fourteen poems which

chronicles his affair with a married woman from his village. The poems "Shamshūn" / "Samson"

and "Sadūm" / "Sodom" utilize Christian imagery and allusion to emphasize the spiritual conflict

in a "self-rejecting" (433) confessional tone. This confessional tone is particularly important

because it reflects not only the Catholic act of confession, but it also draws experience inward

and directs the focus of the poem on the poet's negotiation of his past experiences. Based on Abū

Shabaka's romantic history, a significant part of this tone is the characterization of women as

either chaste and angelic or cunning and dangerous. His description of the character of Dalīla in

"Shamshūn" reads, "انت حسناء مثل حية عدن" ("You are lovely, like the serpent of Eden") (qtd. in

Trends 436). In "Sadūm", he writes "وجعلت غرغرة الافاعي كأسه / ليذوق منها كل قلب مصرعه" ("You

brewed the wine from the hissing of snakes, so that every heart should taste its death") (441).

Jayyusi suggests that Abū Shabaka's recasting of the Samson and Delilah story is more a result

of his "anger and incapacity to check the force of his passion" than his desire to relate a biblical

narrative. His selection of this story to lament his complicated relationships with women also

reflects his familiarity with French literature; Abū Shabaka's "Shamsūn" contains intertextual

links to Alfred de Vigny's "La Colère de Samson," which shares, among other things, Abū

Shabaka's disdain for women who were not absolutely chaste. Jayyusi maintains the originality

of "Shamshūn" in light of this comparison, crediting Abū Shabaka's original imagery and

representation of personal emotional crisis.

   In contrast, Abū Shabaka's next volume of poetry, *Al-Alḥān* (*Melodies,* 1941), takes a

specifically pastoral tone and contains initial sections of long poem, *Ghalwā'*, which would be

published in full in 1945. Bucolic poetry from *Al-Alḥān* attracted less critical attention than did

Afāʿi al-Firdaws, yet the poems from *Al-Alḥān* deserve a second look in that they demonstrate a

much freer structure than the majority of Abū Shabaka's rhymed, balanced, two-hemistich

poetry.

<div dir="rtl">

الراعي –

حقولنا   سهولنا

الشمس فيها ذهب   كلها طرب   كلها غنى

والسواقي منى

الحصادون –

الى الحصاد   جنى الجهاد   قلب البلاد   يحيا بنا

هيا احصدوا   وانشدوا   الحب قلب ويد

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> The Shepherd: Our fields, our plains are full of joy, full of wealth. The sun is golden there,
> their rivulets are hopes. The Reapers: Come to the harvest, the fruit of toil. The heart of the
> country lives in us. Come, harvest, and sing: "Love is [the union of] heart and hand."
> (Trans. Jayyusi *Trends* 443)

Jayyusi characterizes the poems from *Al-Alḥān* as Romantic and pastoral, but more closely aligns

them with the tradition of village-centric Lebanese dialect poetry rather than with the French

pastoral tradition (*Trends* 443). The title *Al-Alḥān*, meaning "the melodies," invokes musicality,

and poems contained within this collection move with the cadence of folk songs from Lebanese

villages. This sonic resonance with rural life invokes both the work songs of laborers and the

image of the happy peasant that may not adequately acknowledge harsher realities of labor.

Socialist critic Ra'īf al-Khūrī, Jayyusi notes, invokes an argument levied against pastoral poetry from Virgil to the modern period: poetic representations of village life do not reflect the realities of rural labor and hardship (*Trends* 444). *Al-Alḥān*'s achievement lies in its rendering of folk song as poetry and portrayal of the village through four seasons.

A contradiction characteristic of many Romantic texts occurs here as well: folk song and a year in the village is in *fuṣḥā,* or formal Arabic, rather than in dialect. Jayyusi notes that "to Abu Shabaka music in poetry is only one among severally equally important elements. Meaning in a poem must not be subservient to music, not image to meaning. The harp of the poet is Nature. However, he also insists that a poet must be the image of his age" (*Trends* 429). This view contributed to Abū Shabaka's rejection of Symbolism in Arabic poetry, which he viewed as obscure and accused of being flatly imitative of Mallarme and French Symbolism (*Trends* 429). He reflects his age by maintaining the diglossic nature of Arabic language. Abū Shabaka's choice to continue writing in *fuṣḥā* rather than experimenting extensively in dialect, particularly when representing people who would not have spoken *fuṣḥā* on a daily basis, points to his position in the continuum of rejection of traditional poetic conventions: he has introduced song-like cadences, instances of alternative line arrangements, and writes from and of his own experience, yet these songs are in *fuṣḥā,* he does not transgress the boundary of poetry and prose, and while he writes from his own subjective experience, his poetry often portrays individual women's subjectivities as oversimplified.

Dislocation from the Land and Committed Poetry

In a 2012 article in Beirut's *Al-Akhbār* newspaper, poet and critic Unsī Al-Ḥajj, a contemporary of Rifqa from the *Shiʿr* cadre, cites lines from this underappreciated collection in his discussion of the broader importance of the village in Lebanese poetry. Al-Hajj defends

poetry of rural areas as legitimate expressions of displacement rather than sentimentality. The experience of modernity across the spectrum of modern Romantic Lebanese poetry, of economic migration and conflicted engagements with urbanity, leaves poets grasping for something out of reach. Al-Ḥajj speaks to the actual space of the village that is now accessible only through memory due to changing economic realities: "It is not the mirage of the past alone that besots the poets of the village and the mountain […] Perhaps the lost paradise was found only in human imagination, but the Lebanese village was found in the world."[25] Dislocation from a rural background, whether through economically driven diasporic movement, as with the *Mahjariyyūn*, or development of an highly educated middle class within Lebanon, appears broadly in modern Lebanese poetry and extends into the period of the New Poets.

Changing economic and political conditions at the end of the Second World War and tumult surrounding the displacement of the Palestinian people during and after the 1948 conflicts accompanying the establishment of the state of Israel characterize the next phase of poetry and the role of the poet. The oratorical mode becomes ever more vestigial while ambiguity and inwardness comes to further dominate avant-garde Arabic poetry. Innovative poets' expressions of the mediations of conflict and a growing sense of existential crisis, particularly in regard to Palestine, gave rise to a school of poetry that centered on political commitment, or *iltizām*, an ideological formation made of up poets who were committed to social realism that came together in reaction to Romantic ideals and a changing world stage. *Iltizām,* or commitment in poetry, includes Yūsuf al-Khāl from Lebanon, as well as ʿAbd al-Wahāb al-Bayyātī and Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb from Iraq, coalesced in the 1950s. Badawī notes that although *iltizām* is now largely

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[25] "ليس سراب الماضي هو وحده ما كان يُجنّن الشعراء في القرية والجبل. اللبناني، وإنْ شاعراً، ليس ذاهلاً مخطوفاً بهذا القَدْر. ليس ميتافيزيكيّاً بهذا القدر. لا بدّ أن يكون المحنون إليه هذا الحنين الأحشائي، حقيقة واقعة أفلتتْ من الأيدي وغارت في المجهول. ربّما الفردوس المفقود لم يوجد إلّا في خيال الإنسان، لكن القرية اللبنانيّة وُجدت في العالم. معاينوها، مُغنّوها، ونَوّاحوها، شهودٌ حاسمون، ويجب أن ننحني لأناجيلهم .الخ." (Al-Hajj n.p.)

associated with Marxist poetry in Arabic, some non-Marxist poets tended to show commitment as well, even if they didn't call themselves committed: Adūnīs and Syrian nationalism; Hāwī and Arab nationalism; Yūsuf al-Khāl and Lebanese nationalism, for example (209). Although there is no longer a specific group of poets dubbed "committed," the effects of these poets' writings can be seen in a social realist strain running through much Arabic poetry to follow.

At the same time as the Palestinian people were becoming stateless, other Arab peoples and regions were becoming states. Fledgling Arab nations built economies and developed infrastructure. Lebanon declared independence from the French Mandate in 1943, joined the United Nations as a member state in 1945, and all French troops were withdrawn from the Levant in 1946. Syria's independence occurred in the same year, and other French colonies and protectorates followed in the years to come: Algeria in 1952, Tunisia in 1956, and Morocco in 1956. The British Mandate of Palestine, which had administrated the Emirate of Transjordan from 1920 until its independence as the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan in 1946, ended with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Arab students studied abroad more frequently and more broadly than before, which facilitated second language study in languages other than those of colonizers, French and English. Universities and governments in Germany and the Soviet Union courted Arab students with study abroad opportunities, and students were expected to use their European educations to benefit newly independent Arab nations. This vein of avant-garde poetry came from standpoint of middle-class mediation of both independence and existential crisis. Readers were changing too; as Roger Allen notes, "The topics to which their poems were addressed were the concerns and aspirations of an educated and mostly middle-class readership that found itself confronting the injustices and complexities of life in the newly independent societies of the Middle East" (*Heritage* 111).

Beirut in the 1950s and early 1960s remained a center of trade and commerce, and Beirut began to eclipse Cairo as cultural capital of the Arab world. Traboulsi mentions that as a result of Lebanon's liberation "from the confines of the franc zone and economic union with Syria, the Lebanese commercial/financial oligarchy established itself as an intermediary between Western markets and the entire Arab hinterland" including emerging oil economies in the Gulf (118). Financial capability and the presence of an international airport supported Beirut's role as a meeting point for Arab and Western business concerns.

Poetry Post-World War II

It was in the post-World War II period that Arab Romanticism began to transition into Modernism. Perhaps the most important development of this period was that of *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr /* free verse. Prior experiments with blank verse inspired by translation preceded free verse and were motivated by a Romantic current that sought to emphasize individual experience in a new kind of language. Critic Shmuel Moreh highlights the contributions of Iraqi poet Jamīl Sidqī al-Zahāwī (1863-1936) in the development of blank verse in Arabic, or *al-shiʿr al-mursal,* which abandoned rhyme.

> According to Zahāwī the trammels of rhyme in Arabic poetry are heavier than in Western poetry because rhyme in Arabic involves the vowel (haraka) preceding the consonantal letter of the rhyme (rawiyy) besides the vowel of the consonant itself. The fact that the *casus* (case ending) of the rhyme is part of it, dictates the grammatical structure of the verses. Therefore, the poets let their ideas be dictated by the rhyme instead of its being complementary to the sense. Thus, by neglecting rhyme the Arab poets will be able to concentrate upon conveying their thoughts and emotions and will not allow rhyme to enslave them. (Moreh "Blank Verse" 490)

In what appears to be the largest modern point of rupture with longstanding classical Arabic poetics, *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* or free verse, demonstrates the intersection between time, place, and both broad influence and interest. In the final ten years of the Romantic period, poets on the cusp of the transition to Modernism began to adjust the most basic cohesive unit of Arabic

poetry: the line. The traditional Khalīlian prosodic system, *ʿaruḍ*, treated each line of poetry as a two-part unit balanced by a caesura in the middle. The line, *bayt,* is made up of the first three or four metrical units, which make up the first half line, *ṣadr*, which means chest. The second hemistich, the *ʿajuz,* or belly, has the same number of metrical units in the same meter as the first hemistich. In *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr*, the metrical units are broken down to metrical feet, *tafaʿil*, rather than the line level, so meters can be mixed within lines and within poems. Another name for *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* is *tafʿila* poetry, or poetry based on a metrical foot, *tafʿila,* rather than line, *bayt*. This realignment allows for the composition of lines of different length, mixed meters, and rhyme scheme variations.

Although *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* came to prominence in 1949, it has its roots in experiments in previous decades. As with the history of many ideas, multiple points of emergence exist. Among the first publications cited as predecessors are Egyptians Muḥammad Farīd Abū Ḥadīd and Bākathir. Abū Ḥadīd published his drama, *Maqtal Sayyidina ʿUthmān*, in 1927, and Bākathir published his translation of *Romeo and Juliet* into Arabic using mixed meters. There are at least two points of contact here: the influence of drama on poetry and the influence of translations of western dramatic verse into Arabic. Early experiments with *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* were in drama, a form that has a comparatively short history of composition in Arabic, emerging in the mid-19th century with Mārūn al-Naqqāsh's plays in Lebanon. The western connection is even clearer in Bākathir's creation of a new style to more adequately reflect Shakespeare's form for readers of Arabic. These experiments are significant, but they were not the ones that broadly established this new form with its multiple influences. And even though Egyptian poet Luwis ʿAwad's 1947 *Plotoland* had demonstrated free verse, the radical freedom of his free verse may have led to his

experiment being passed over as the marker of free verse's arrival on the avant-garde scene.[26]

Credit for officially bringing *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* into avant-garde poetry is shared by two Iraqi poets,

Nāzik al-Malā'ika and Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb.

The example set by al-Malā'ika in the introduction and poems of her 1949 volume titled

Shazāya wa Ramad / Sparks and Ashes, as well as Al-Sayyāb in the same year, established the

parameters of this new kind of poetry. It was vastly different from traditional forms, but still

recognizably connected to Arab literary history. While the translation of the term *al-shiʿr al-*

ḥurr literally translates to "free verse," it does not equate to the concept of free verse in English.

The term *al-shiʿr al-manthūr* is used to describe English-style free-verse and will be discussed

shortly. *Al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* means something closer to metrical free verse (Jayyusi, *Trends* 631)

following the French *vers libre*. Although this form is not truly "free" because it does not

dispense with meter altogether, it differs from traditional prosody in significant ways. First, strict

monorhyme is abandoned. A rhyme scheme may be present, but unlike much poetry that

preceded it, more than one rhyme pattern may be established, or rhyme may be jettisoned

altogether. The metrical requirements of *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* differ from prior standards in that while

classical composition required adherence to one of the traditional meters (*buḥur*), made up of a

set number of metrical feet (*tafʿila*), free verse designated the metrical foot the basic unit of

poetry, rather than the primary unit being the interlocked feet that make up a line. This opened

the possibility of using multiple meters per poem. *Al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* is not free from meter, but

rather allows poets freedom to work with different particulars while remaining within the orbit of

traditional prosody. Because of this breaking of the long-line and the loosening of mono-meter,

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[26] For further discussion of this point, see Munaḥ A. Khouri's article, "Luwis ʿAwad: A Forgotten Pioneer of the
Free Verse Movement."

lines could now have different lengths. Although these changes may not sound exceptional to readers of English and American poetry, they were groundbreaking in Arabic poetry.

The Role of *Shiʿr*

The vanguard of poetic innovation in Lebanon and the wider Arab world gained a strong forum with the establishment of the literary journal *Shiʿr / Poetry* in Beirut. Founded by Yūsuf al-Khāl and Adūnīs in 1957, this avant-garde journal published poetry, criticism, and translations until 1964, along with a brief revival in 1967. Weekly meetings or *salons* attracted innovative poets of the 1950s and 1960s, including Adūnīs, al-Khāl, Unsī al-Ḥajj, Shawqi Abi Shaqrā, Fu'ād Rifqa, ʿIsām Mahfūz, and Tawfiq Ṣāyigh (Badawi *Critical* 241). These poets became known as the New Poets, and their revolution was one not so directly descriptive of the social, political, and economic situations of modern Arab life, but rather one of consciousness: the New Poets sought to revolutionize the way people envisioned themselves and poetry in Arabic. Prose poetry re-emerged with the avant-garde in the 1950s, represented primarily by Tawfiq Ṣāyigh, Unsī al-Ḥajj, Muḥammad al-Māghūt, Shawqī Abi Shaqrā, although al-Khāl and Adūnīs wrote in prose poetry on occasion (Jayyusi *Anthology* 13).

At the October 1961 Rome Conference, Adūnīs also set out the three main points of the New Poetry: "radical rebellion against traditional mentality," "a rejection of the old Arab conception of poetry which regards poetry as something static and as no more than emotion and craftsmanship," and "a rejection of the view that ancient Arabic poetry is a model to be imitated by all subsequent poetry, or that it is an autonomous and self-sufficient world independent of all the poetic heritage in other languages" (Badawī 234). Again, the question of innovation and the development of a new kind of language to represent life in modernity emerged. "With Adunis there is an incomplete process of modernity and renewal in tradition, which invites a further shift

beyond fixity in forms and values" which is demonstrated by his "framework for a nexus of modernity and tradition [which] elicits Jabrā Ibrahīm Jabrā's criticism at the Rome Conference, for Jabrā believes that modernism needs no historical context" (Musawi 182). The full content of Adūnīs's October 1961 Rome Conference statement can be found in his significant article *al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī wa Mushkilāt al-Tajdīd / Arabic Poetry and the Problem of Innovation*. In *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, he develops this idea further, characterizing modernity not as a single specific timeframe but rather as a "question" of innovation. He characterizes *al-Nahḍa* as one of these points, rather than the single instance of this condition. As with the *Mahjariyyūn* and poets of the interwar years, the New Poets continue to pursue renewal through language.

A sense of dislocation or alienation features prominently in the poetry of the New Poets. The closing statement in Al-Ḥajj's 2012 *Al-Akhbār* article reinforces Beirut's centrality to the confluence of influence that Adūnīs holds central in his model of modernity: "Beirut was, after World War I until the eve of the civil war in 1975, an island of freedom in the Arab milieu. It was to thought, literature, and arts more important than Al-Andalus. And the mountain [Mount Lebanon] was the beacon of that island."[27] In addition to the ʿAbbasid period, Adūnīs cites Al-Andalus as a second point in Arab artistic and cultural history at which translation, exchange, and productive synthesis occurred between multiple groups and languages in Islamic Iberia. Al-Ḥajj's statement that "the mountain was the beacon" of cultural production directly credits poets connected to Mount Lebanon, yet perhaps more importantly, implies two ideas in tension: that the productive synthesis of modernity extends to production from and/or representations of rural areas and not just to urban settings, and that the expression of displacement from rural life as a result of economic migration as a part of the experience of modernity creates a nostalgia for a

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[27] ‏"كانت بيروت، منذ ما بعد الحرب الكونيّة الأولى وتصاعديّاً حتّى عشيّة الحرب «الأهليّة» عام 1975، جزيرة الحريّة في المحيط العربي. كانت للفكر والأدب والفنون أهمّ من الأندلس".‏ Translation mine.

life that is no longer accessible. In the case of Rifqa's poetry, the arc of narrative perspective and attitudes toward the relationship between poetry and prose reflect a mediation of the experience of time and self. These mediations are informed by developments in Arabic poetry and language, German poetry and prose, and philosophy. Rifqa's mediation of his poetic influences demonstrates his mediation of modernity.

Rifqa's Poetry of Poetry

Rifqa, writing initially through the transition from Romanticism to Modernism, significantly alters the narrative perspective from the previous forest philosopher-poets of the *Mahjar* and the interwar years. Rifqa abandons first-person narrative perspective altogether as his poetry develops in response to the events and influences of his experience of modernity. The arc of nationalist sentiment continues in poetry even after the establishment of Lebanon and Syria as separate independent states in the 1940s, yet the perspective changes from looking forward to self-determination to a view that is more distanced and based in responses to fragmentation. Initially, Rifqa's poetry supports the ideological project of the SSNP, and in doing so, uses land-based imagery and direct statement to forward a nationalistic cultural agenda. His early poetry employs a first-person perspective and issues statements or questions directly to the reader or other implied subjectivities within the poem. This early poetry continues the evolution of the forest-philosopher from his Romantic predecessors, and in doing so, maintains the first-person perspective. The remainder of this chapter engages Rifqa's early forest poet. Additionally, Rifqa was a founding contributor to *Shiʿr*; his poems appeared in three of the four

1957 issues. These poems demonstrate his early use of the first-person narrative voice and occasional exploration of grotesque imagery reminiscent of Khalīl Hāwī[28].

The relation of song and poetry appears in his first poems in *Shiʿr* and his first collection, *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj / Anchor on the Gulf* (1961); this association is perennial in Rifqa's work. Rifqa's first widely published poem, "Ughniya Shāḥiba" / "Pale Song," appeared in the first issue of *Shiʿr* in the winter of 1957. "Pale Song" is dated November 30, 1956, which coincides with the end of the Suez Canal crisis. In the same month, Syria signed a pact with the Soviet Union, the results of which still resonate in the present through Russia's support of the Assad regime in the current Syrian civil war. The specter of past violence, whether in specific response to a regional military event or a personal response to trauma, appears in "Pale Song." Rifqa may have experienced this in the context of military service or civilian life. In an article in the Lebanese periodical *Al-Hayat,* ʿAbduh Wāzin comments on the double consciousness of Syrians in Lebanon during the push for poetic modernism in the 1950s and 1960s. He notes that Rifqa served in the Syrian military in 1958 to maintain his Syrian citizenship, which was in some jeopardy after Rifqa obtained Lebanese citizenship in the 1940s when his family moved from the village of Kafrūn in western Syria to Ṭarābulus in Lebanon. In "Pale Song," the narrator addresses an unnamed, disembodied second entity using the second person singular feminine pronoun *anti*, which could be in reference to another person or to the titular song, as *ughniya* is also feminine. I have translated the *ism al-fāʿil*[29] *shāḥiba* as the adjective "pale" because in this case, the active participle functions like an adjective that modifies the agent of the action, the song. This grammatical structure underscores the process the agent is undergoing. "A paling

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[28] Further iscussion of Khalīl Hāwī's role in modern Arabic poetry and his influence on Rifqa will be discussed in Chapter 2.

[29] *Ism al-fāʿil* is a nonfinite verb referred to as an active participle and denotes the agent of an action. In Arabic morphology, *ism al-fāʿil* can also function as an adjective that modifies the agent of the action.

song" or "a song of paling" is less economical but perhaps more reflective translations of the phrase *ughniya shāḥiba*. *Shāḥiba* contains shades of meaning including sober, wan, and indistinct.

In the first stanza of Rifqa's first published poem, the relationship between environment, light, personal emotion, and poetry is well established. Rifqa likens the deep internal source of poetry to "the silence of the seas," yet these seas are not tranquil; they hold within them anxiety and terror.

Why did you move the curtain	لماذا ازحتِ الستار
And let loose the light of day	وارخيت ضوء النهار
In these corners, in my heart,	يهذي الزوايا، بقلبي،
So I remember my love, and something deeply hidden	فاذكر حبي، وشيئاً عميقاً نوارى
In the silence of the seas	بصمت البحارْ
I open my eye, to nothing other than this wall	وافتح عيني، فلا غير هذا الجدار
That stares back at me	يحملق فيَّا
It marches in my eyeballs,	ويزحف في مقلتيَّا،
Like an excited yesterday[30]	كأمسٍ مثارْ
	(Rifqa, *Shiʿr* 1.1 45)[31]

"Pale Song" contains varying rhyme patterns, which he establishes with rhyme based on the letter ر / *ray,* and then moves between near-rhyme mutations of a final vowel sound that may consist of ي / *ya*, أ / ā, يه / īh, and اء, which is a combination of أ /ā and ء / hamza, a glottal stop.

Why did you move the curtain	لماذا ازحت الستارْ،
And let loose the light of day	وارخيت ضوء النهارْ
You murmured a wretched tune,	وغمغمتِ لحناً شقيًّا،
Like the depth of ages,	كعمق الدهورِ،
And so you awoke a yesterday steeped in indecision	فايقظتِ امساً بعيد القرار
A memory in which dust settles	وذكرى ترسّب فيها الغبارْ
	(Rifqa, *Shiʿr* 1.1 45)

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[30] The 1961 publication of this poem in *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* relies on different line breaks and does not include the final line of this stanza.

[31] Because Rifqa does not rely on the two-hemistich long-lines of traditional Arabic poetry, I have organized my translations to appear in a side-by-side format in which the majority of the English lines correspond directly to the facing line in Arabic.

In the next section of the poem, the "wretched tune" stops and the narrator asks the other

entity a question.

English	Arabic
Are you wretched?	أأنت شقيَّه؟
Are you wretched like me!	أمثليَ أنتِ شقيَّه!
Like the wasteland,	كأرض القفارْ،
like a night where light stumbles,	وليل تعشَّر فيه الضياء،
and a hidden memory,	وذكرى خفيَّه،
I fear! I fear the light in these corners	اخاف! اخاف الضياء بهذي الزوايا
light that gazes intently at me,	يحملق فيّه،
Why did you stop singing	لماذا وقفتِ الغناءْ
while in your eyes there were remnants,	وفي ناظريك بقيَّه،
delicious remains	بقايا شهيَّه
In which folly fossilized?	تحجَّر فيها الغباءْ؟

(Rifqa, *Shiʿr* 1.1 46)

In a call for calm in the final stanza, Rifqa's narrator calls for the song to begin again. Song acts

as a restorative practice to avoid the repetition of past traumas.

English	Arabic
Leave us, we're tired, tired of folly	دعينا، مللنا، مللنا الغباءْ
of a whole life in which winter exhales,	وعمراً تنَهَّد فيه الشتاء،
Shall we stay here?	أنبقى هنا؟
Shall we stay in a land where air's emptiness froze!	أنبقى بأرض تجمَّد فيها فراغ الهواء!
Let us sing together the calm of evening	دعينا نغني هدوء المساءْ
and forget the misery,	وننسى الشقاءْ،
for this folly will bring back to us the winter nights.	فهذا الغباء يعيد الينا ليالي الشتاءْ.

حلب ٣٠/١١/ ٥٦

(Rifqa, *Shiʿr* 1.1 46)

Aleppo, 11/30/56

Throughout the Arab Romantic period, song persists in poetry. Rifqa calls for his

companion to join him and "forget the misery" / "wa nansa al-shaqā'"; in this instance, the word

I translated as "misery" relates to the speaker's prior question, "Are you wretched?" / "Ā anti

shaqiyya?" The speaker asks his companion to forget herself[32] and join him in a new song that

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[32] The gender of the speaker's companion is indicated by the final consonant *tah* (ت) and vowel *kasrah* (ِ) of past tense verbs the narrator directs toward the companion, which indicate the second person feminine.

will dispel the misery associated with "winter nights" and the misery within each subject in the poem.

Rifqa's images of winter isolation oscillate between representations of death, aging, and immobility, as well as simultaneously anxious and inspired memories of rural writing retreats. Rifqa's engagement with German poetry and the relation of this volume to Rilke's concept of "the Open" will be explored at length in Chapter 3. In the current analysis, Rifqa's alterations of form and the poetic line itself within the Arabic language demonstrate his position in the continuum of poets representing modernity.

Rifqa's short lines make use of enjambment, a feature adapted from western poetry in order to resist traditional Arabic literary conventions. In "Ila Sīyāj al-Hadīqa" / "To the Garden Fence" from *Anchor on the Gulf*, Rifqa uses enjambment to problematize the relationship between the lines and obscure the difference between grammatical subject and object. In this poem, the first-person narrator experiences anxiety as he returns to a rural writing retreat. The tone of this four-stanza poem is dark, emphasizing fear, separation, and death in a winter wilderness. The poem opens with the image of the garden fence as a locus of division as well as unification.

As I walked back to the garden's fence	في رجوعي الى سياج الحديقة
My shadow kept narrowing	كان ظلّي يضيقُ
Hemmed by fear,	يحصره الخوفُ،
And in the recesses of my face	وفي قاع وجهي
The blaze of the hidden flame dissipates	لَهَبُ الشعلة الخفيّة ينحلّ
Because of the silence	من الصمتِ
In those deep mountains.	في الجبال العميقه.
	(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 66)

Like many of Rifqa's poems, this one is about poetic inspiration and the process of writing. The first stanza introduces the "hidden flame" emanating from silence, which is contrasted in the second stanza by the sun's absence. In the third stanza, the narrator creates a

space for a fire that "lit up the hut of frost" and causes the land to forget its borders. In the same

stanza, the narrator "opened to the tide" and his words "erased the magic in the ancient mirror."

The metaphor that suggests the spark of poetic inspiration shifts in this stanza to a water-based

metaphor that allows the narrator's words to flow. In the final stanza, the oceanic metaphor has

become a river. Rather than the vast and undifferentiated ocean, the narrator's inspiration now

has a course, and in that course must confront death.

My hideout remained locked	مخبأي ظلّ مقفلاً
The soil of secrets interred under the snow,	وتراب السرّ تحت الثلوج،
No sun rises	لا شمسَ يعلو
Above its noon, no sun leads the traveler to the spring	ظُهْرُها، تحمل المسافر للنبع وزاداً له وطريقَه.
As provision for him and as his road.	(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 67)

Prior experiments with enjambment came from symbolist Yūsuf Ghuṣūb (1893-1972),

who Jayyusi calls a "stepping stone between Romanticism and Symbolism," but Ghuṣūb did not

continue these experiments. He maintained the two-hemistich long-line form, and enjambment

did not balance well in this configuration. Rifqa dispenses with the long line entirely, resisting

the completion of a poetic sentence or thought on the same line and instead calling into play the

potential to manipulate meaning through line division.

In it I widened a hearth for winter	فيه وسّعتُ موقداً لشتاءٍ
Winter that surprises the hut with frost, and so	يبفجأ الدار بالصقيع، فتَنسى
every land forgets its borders. In it	كلُّ أرض حدودَها. فيه
I surrendered my days to the prophecy	أسلمت للنبوءة أيامي
I opened up to space, my words	تفتّحتُ للمدى، كلماتي
erased the magic in the agéd mirror.	محتِ السحرَ في المرايا العتيقَة.
	(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 67)

Rifqa uses enjambment in the last two lines of the stanza to reinforce the metaphorical

relationship between "the tide" and his words. The phrase "my words" also acts as the subject of

the next line, in which his words obscure the "magic" in the ancient "mirror." Words are released

as a tide in the moment of inspiration, and the result problematizes the prior reflective model of

poetry. This doubling of the phrase "my words" emphasizes both the oceanic nature of inspiration and its ability to wash away prior forms.

Punctuation is unnecessary in traditional Arabic poetry due to the logic of the long line and the linguistic structure and original orality of the Arabic language. Prior to the use of punctuation, conjunctions and supplementary diacritical markers (*tashkīl* and *ḥarakāt*) indicate the grammatical case (*īʿrāb*) of the noun to which it is attached. Rifqa's use of the comma is not unique, as adaptations of Western-style punctuation had been in use in the Arabic language since *al-Naḥda*. Dana Awad finds the first mention of this idea in writer Zaynab Fawwaz, who "was inspired by French punctuation and suggested including European punctuation into Arabic texts in an article published in the Egyptian magazine *al-Fatā* in 1893" (120). The Egyptian poet Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī is often credited with the introduction, as Awad notes, due to his use of punctuation in his book *Al-Dunyā fī Pārīs / Life in Paris*, a text predicated upon his 1900 visit to Paris. Although punctuation had become *de rigeur* by the time Rifqa entered the poetry scene in the late 1950s, his manipulations and doublings create relationships between natural phenomena and poetry itself.

In "Pale Song," Rifqa utilizes the period, the *sukūn* / ٠ , and line breaks to demarcate the end of a poetic sentence as well as stanza breaks to bound particular lines of thought. Rifqa's occasional use of poetic sentences that stop at the line's end is a nod to traditional poetic orientation, as is his use of a *sukūn* to end poetic sentences. The use of western-style punctuation becomes prominent in the modern period among Arab poets both to due to western influence as well as an internal call for more directional markers in written Arabic to facilitate reading without difficulty. The Arabic language's status as the divine language of the Qur'an in large part prevents adjustments; to conservative critics, changes in the Arabic language are akin to an

affront against God. Aḥmad Zakī characterizes traditionalists who resist the introduction of

punctuation into Arabic as those who "ignore the development that took place in the other

languages of the world" and risked the eclipse of Arabic by colonial languages, particularly

French (Awad 124-5). Zaki reasoned that the ease of reading allowed by punctuation would open

formal Arabic to a wider readership in Arabic; without punctuation, readers must pause between

sentences to parse the grammar of each phrase in order to identify the end of one sentence and

beginning of the next through grammatical markers, particularly markers of case, *iʿrab*.

Awad brings up an important point about the differential development of treatises on

punctuation in Arabic, like Aḥmad Zakī's, and in European languages: "in Europe, typographers

were the first to put treaties of modern punctuation in the 16th century […]. The main reason for

generalizing rules of punctuation in Europe was the rise of printing. In the Arab world,

punctuation was added about two centuries after the use of printing" and came into being due to

the need to "protect Arabic from the spread of foreign languages, especially French, due to

colonialism" (127). In this sense, progressive views of language, like those held by Aḥmad Zakī,

portray the adoption of western punctuation symbols as a way to strengthen and preserve the

Arabic language in the face of pressure from abroad, whereas Awad suggests that punctuation

guides in European languages emerged as a function of technology to facilitate consistency in

printing operations. Punctuation was adopted and adapted as a result of internal and external

pressures of sustained economic, political, and cultural contact with Europe.

Rifqa's use of enjambment is facilitated by this move toward punctuation and reflects the

synthesis of influence from abroad toward the purpose of expanding the expressive scope of

Arabic poetry. The logic of enjambment and punctuation differ in that enjambment is a doubling

or a sharing of meaning between lines, and punctuation, particularly in Arabic usage, indicates

pauses of varying intensities. Punctuation indicates closure and simplifies the reading experience, whereas enjambment creates multiple potential pathways of meaning for the relationship between enjambed lines to follow. Rifqa creates ambiguity through enjambment to both resist and emphasize traditional line-end closure of the poetic sentence. If the lines "I opened to the space, my words / Erased the magic in the aged mirror"[33] are read as end-stopped, the comma in the first line acts as a marker of the appositive phrase "my words" that renames "the space." If the comma functions more fluidly as a marker of caesura or relation between separate phrases, "my words" acts as subject and agent in the following line. When read in both of these contexts, "my words" become both grammatical subject and object. The manipulation of meaning created by this enjambed phrase resists closure further because it is followed by erasure; his words "erase the magic in the aged mirror", suggesting a sense of demystification or disenchantment. In the final stanza,

The path was a thorn	كانت الدرب شوكةً
And the river banks did not know children	وحفافي النهر لا تعرف الصغارَ
I smelled death in the riverbanks	شممتُ الموت فيها
I smelled the weight of my despair	شممتُ أثقال حزني
As I returned to the garden fence.	في رجوعي الى سياج الحديقه.
	(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 68)

The final stanza of the poem completes the metaphorical relationship between poetry and water to address the concept of inspiration in a way that both reflects and challenges Wordsworth's definition of poetry forwarded in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads:* "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is

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[33] "تقتّحثُ للمدى، كلماتي / محتِ السحرَ في المرايا العتيقَة" (Rifqa "To the Garden Fence" *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 67)

gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind" (273). In "To the Garden Fence," Rifqa's narrator journeys inward with both physical presence in space and subjectivity to compose poetry by cultivating a mental environment like the one Wordsworth describes. Wordsworth's description relates "pleasure" and "delight" with the musicality that comes from the experiencing "an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely, all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions" (273). The final stanza of this poem reflects the cathartic ability of poetry to engage death and despair through the process of writing.

As Rifqa's writing progresses through remainder of the twentieth century, he continues to reflect on inspiration in poetry through the consistent revision of poetry about poetry. Rifqa's synthesis of punctuation and enjambment, as well as his use of musicality in the absence of strict rhyme schemes, creates a sense of productive ambiguity, akin to Keats' negative capability. "To the Garden Fence," the penultimate poem in Rifqa's first volume, communicates the process of poetic inspiration through the creation of an environment, his narrative persona as poet as traveler, and natural metaphors. All of these elements contribute to a poem about a poem about death. The final poem in this collection, "Al-Munḥadar al-Akhīr" / "The Final Slope," may be the poem about death for which Rifqa was preparing both mentally and spatially to write in "To the Garden Fence." The order of these two poems at the end of the volume highlights Rifqa's attention to both process and product.

Our life is one	واحدةٌ حياتُنا
And after it we settle in its dust	وبعدها نحلّ في غبارها
We withstand the slow transformation,	نقاوم التحوّل البطيء،
A single time	مرةً واحدةً

We live in the houses	نعيش في البيوتِ
We seek refuge, we say no,	نحتمي, نقول لا،
And we raise the borders, for the distance alarms us	ونرفع الحدود، فالمدى يخيفنا
It hides our Fate.	يخبِّئ المصيرْ.
	(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 69-70)

The final stanza of "The Final Slope" questions the secondary entity as to why it wanders. Rifqa may be asking himself why he has the poetic drive, or he may be speaking to the figure of Rilke. The epigraph that opens *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* comes from the eighth poem of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and engages the figure of the spectator gazing into the Open. Chapter 3 of this dissertation will further explore Rifqa's allusions to Rilke and other German poets and philosophers, as well as Rifqa's synthesis of philosophical concepts in his original Arabic poetry. In the current analysis of Rifqa's poetic innovations within Arabic literature, it is most pertinent that here Rifqa questions the role of the poet.

Behind you are the fields and the seeds	وراءك الحقول والبذورْ
And your old home and the one you love	وبيتك القديم والتي تحبُّها
And you, what are you?	وأنت ماذا؟
You discover all of the chasms	تكشف المهاوي كلَّها
You unite the sky and the riverbanks and the visions	توحد السماء والضفاف والرؤى
And shatter the rind.	وتكسر القشورْ.
	(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 71-2)

What, asks Rifqa, causes the poet to depart from his beloved rural home to follow a vision of philosophical discovery? This closing poem of his first full volume of poetry ends on a question: "And you, what are you?" which parallels the question, "What is the role of a poet?"[34] The order of verbs used in the last three lines illuminates a process of poetry: discover, unite, and shatter. The poet's displacement from heart and hearth in his prior home facilitates a sense of estrangement that leads to discovery. This discovery reveals relationships between entities that are explored and then shattered in order to lay bare their constituent parts. This three-step process

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[34] Heideggerian references, the bridge and riverbanks, and allusions to Rilke, chasms and emptiness, in this volume will be addressed further in the third chapter.

can be compared to a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis model of poetry in which the author transforms image, idea, and influence into a poem that searches for a unity of experience.

Rifqa works toward this unified experience by carefully selecting words in Arabic that, through their root letters, resonate with contemporary and past poetic influences as well as philosophical inquiries into the nature of time. For example, the term *ghibār* / غبار, which appears in both "Pale Song" and "The Final Slope", means *dust*. Closer inspection of this term, however, reveals an etymological relationship with time. The triliteral root of *ghibār,* the letters *ghayn-ba-ray* / غ-ب-ر, point both to dust as the accumulation of particles and the passage of time. The initial entry in *Lane's Lexicon* for the Form I verb *ghabara* / غبر highlights its status as a contronym, a word that contains conflicting meanings, that suggests both "*remained, stayed, continued*" and "*passed, passed away,* or *went away*" (Lane 1.2223). Lane highlights an example of the merging of the two sides of this contranym in an example from *Lisan al-ʿArab*, one of the authoritative Arabic dictionaries: "*it healed externally while in a withering state internally*" (1.2223). Another derivation of this term, *al-ghābira* / الغابرة points to a morphological relationship between *dust* and "*the lasting,* or *everlasting, state of existence*" or *al-akhira*, "*the latter,* or *last, state*" (1.2224). The word *ghibār* appears at least seven times in *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* in the context of memory (10), travel (26, 40, 47), a gift of dust from a shadow (53), a metaphorical cloud of dust surrounding a herd stopping their forward motion (62), and death (69). The etymological relationship between dust and internally conflicting reflections of time is an example of Rifqa's creation of resonances between basic elements of landscape and philosophical concepts. "The Eighth Poem" / "Al-Qaṣīda al-Thāmina*"* in *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* contains a reference to dust / *ghibār* that connects this polysemic term to a discussion of poetry and inspiration. The term *farāgh*, or emptiness, is the first word of the fourth

line. This emptiness motivates the poet's consideration of death. Throughout the poem, the poet

mediates the transience of life and his accompanied anxieties through the composition process.

Long will I remain	طويلاً سأبقى
over the plains my shadow spreading	على سهل أنشر ظلّي
and over the mountains where I was	وفوق الجبال التي كنت فيها
emptiness, no wing flutters on high	فراغٌ، فلا جنح يعلو
knocks on my door	ويقرع داري
and says: strange,	يقول: غريبٌ
I have carried dust to you	حملتُ الغبار إليك
ahead of the wind.	سبقتُ الرياحْ.
Long will I remain	طويلاً سأبقى
onto the horizon casting my eyes	على الافق أرمي عيوني
and onto the movement	وما من قدومٍ
of the looming tide	عن المدّ ينبي
then I met my child,	فألقى صغاري،
and in the cave dances fire	وفي الكهف ترقص نارُ
and a door is opened,	ويُفتح بابٌ،
in the cave I cry	وفي الكهف أبكي
and the shrieking rises.	ويعلو الصياحْ.
With the spring I flow	مع النبع أجري
and at the bottom a snake's lair	وفي القاع وكراً لأفعى
for a star falling from the cave	لنجم من الغور يهوي
I part, I cast down my staff	أشقّ، وأرمي عصاتي
and before the morning	وقبل الصباحْ
alone with the horizon I depart	وحيداً مع الافق أمضي
alone I sing,	وحيداً أغنّي،
away from the earth I carry all the wounds.	عن الأرض أحمل كل الجراح.
Long will I remain	طويلاً سأبقى
on the stone I etch my face,	على الصخر أغرز وجهي،
and those bridges I crossed from	وتلك الجسور التي جئت منها
the emptiness will remain,	فراغاً ستبقى،
and wait for rain	وترقب غيثاً
with lightning	مع البرق
rising from the wrath of the sea	من غضبة البحر يعلو
sweeping away my shadow.	ويجرف ظلّي.
Long will remain	طويلاً سيبقى
my face on the stone	على الصخر وجهي
and long will remain the stars of morning.	ونجم الصباحْ.

(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 53-6)

What draws the poet through the tribulations of loss and fear is the process of poetic inspiration, which Rifqa often ties to water through images of springs, rivers, tides, and floods. In "The Eighth Poem," the speaker follows the spring to its source, and although the imagery surrounding the source of the spring is frightening, it provides a cathartic experience that allows the speaker to depart "alone with the horizon" and leave behind his anxieties about death to be addressed again through another instance of poetic inspiration, "rain / with lightning / from the wrath of the sea" to "sweep away [his] shadow" (55).

The poem's spatial structure parallels the pattern of poetic composition established in Rifqa's poem "The Final Slope": discover, unify, and shatter. Rifqa utilizes movement through landforms to represent the inward movement of his composition process. The speaker's initial position is in an open space, emphasized by the speaker's "shadow over the plains spreading" in the first stanza and the speaker's eyes being cast on the horizon in the second. Between the horizon and the speaker lies the sea. The speaker meets his child, which may represent his encounter with a creative urge moving toward fruition. A tone of fear or trauma accompanies the speaker's entrance into the space of poetic inspiration, as evidenced by the speaker's shrieks as he moves inward to the cave of dancing fire. In this cave, a door is opened, and although accompanied by the speaker's cries, moving further inward through this door leads the speaker to another water source, a spring.

The speaker traces the spring, his second encounter with inspiration, to its point of origin and finds yet another internal passageway that leads to "a snake's lair" in which a star falls. The poem draws the reader further into the earth to simulate the enclosure speaker's sense of descent into his anxieties about death. In the remainder of the third stanza, the speaker subtly alludes to the biblical narrative of Moses. The verb *ashaqq,* translated here as *I part*, is polysemic in that it

functions at the spatial level in the poem and at the temporal level, which works to emphasize the midpoint of working through inspiration for and composition of poetry. *Ashaqq* in this context suggests a splitting, halving, or cleaving. When paired with the phrase "I cast down my staff," *ashaqq* contains allusions in reverse order to the preparation God provided to Moses on Mount Horeb when God commanded Moses to approach Pharaoh about allowing the Israelites to walk three days into the wilderness to make sacrifices. The verb *ashaqq* does not have an object that is being cloven; instead, the verb engages emptiness through the lack of an object. The speaker does not cleave an object; the speaker simply cleaves. In this breaking apart, the speaker also casts down his staff in this space near the snake's lair. In Exodus 4.1-5, God, speaking through the burning bush, informs Moses of the signs he must use in order to convince the Israelites that God is speaking directly to Moses and that they should follow Moses out of Egypt. In the first of the signs, Moses casts down his rod at God's command and it becomes a snake; when Moses grabs the snake by the tail, it becomes a rod again. Rifqa invokes Moses' first divinely attributed persuasive act in the struggle to free his people as a parallel to the composition process under the weight of the emptiness, or *al-farāgh*. Through the first step of persuasion, Moses eventually led his people out of Egypt, during which he parted the Red Sea.

The speaker's allusions to Moses mark a turning point in the poem both spatially and creatively. Once invoked, these words implicitly lead the speaker back to the surface of the earth and motivate him to continue his spatial and creative journey. The speaker departs before the next morning and "away from the earth [he] carr[ies] all the wounds." God's words empowered Moses with the ability to perform miracles; the speaker's invocation of Moses' words allow the speaker to make his own exodus from the depths.

The speaker's experience of being drawn inward toward the suffering he associates with poetic inspiration is paralleled by his descent into and ascent from the earth. When he emerges from the earth in the penultimate stanza, he not only engages in a creative act—"on the stone I etch my face"—but also acknowledges the process of creation that he must necessarily re-engage in the future: "Long will I remain / on the stone I etch my face, / and those bridges I crossed from / the emptiness will remain, / and wait for rain / with lightning / rising from the wrath of the sea / sweeping away my shadow." Pathways remain to the depths which the speaker must explore prior to the catharsis of poetic composition, and they are read for the speaker's next encounter with inspiration. The final three-line stanza of the poem reaffirms the poet's position in relation to time. The line repeated throughout the poem, "Long will I remain," changes in the final stanza to "long will it/they remain," in reference to the stone etching of his likeness as well as the stars of morning. The stars of morning signify the imminent arrival of the sun, which bears the potential of illumination. The speaker moves through the darkness and trauma of the inspiration process to create something lasting, his etching on the stone, that will remain without concern about the transience of human life.

Much of Rifqa's early poetry utilizes a first-person point of view and often speaks directly to another entity in a conversational tone, which is equally as likely to represent another person, Rifqa himself, or a concept such as poetry. In the period of rapid transition between Jubrān and Rifqa, between a diasporic experience of economic exile from Ottoman-controlled lands to an educated, middle-class experience of selective language learning and study through periods oscillating between peace and war in Beirut and the Greater Levant, the role of the poet as mediator of modernity evolves through different personas.

Composed while Rifqa was in his late twenties and published when he was only thirty-one, the poems in this collection reflect the experience of a young poet from a village in Syria whose studies in Beirut led him to be a part of the vanguard of modern Arabic poetry. In this period, he also encountered Syrian Nationalism and, as like many others in the vanguard of modern Arabic poetry, participated in forwarding its cultural agenda. Rifqa and many of his contemporaries in Beirut broke with the party in 1961 following the SSNP's failed coup. By 1965, Rifqa completed a Ph.D. in Philosophy in Tübingen, Germany.

As Rifqa, alongside many of his contemporaries, distances himself from the escalating violence of the SSNP, he creates more narrative distance between focal character and reader. In the time between breaking with the party in 1961 and returning from graduate study in Germany, Rifqa's poetry undergoes a shift in perspective from the first-person point of view to the second. His second volume of poetry, *Hanīn al-ʿAtaba / The Threshold of Longing*, is directed almost exclusively to an unnamed second person who is sometimes addressed in the feminine, *anti*, and sometimes in the masculine, *inta*. Instead of the philosopher-poet stating his views directly as in *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* and his 1957 *Shiʿr* poems, Rifqa's meditative forest dwellers move to the second person before becoming largely silent in later works. Rifqa's move to a distanced third-person narrative voice does not provide access to the inner state of his focal character. Rifqa's narrators maintain anonymity and function as second-order spectators. This turn emphasizes Rifqa's persona of poet-as-reader and the ways in which he mediates rapidly accelerating socio-political and cultural change. Themes of isolation, aging, and alienation fade in and out of Rifqa's sparse, compact poetry, as does a preoccupation with death. Fleeting moments of indirect interior monologue fade as soon as they surface, leaving more questions than answers about the experience of Rifqa's characters. Rifqa's resistance to grand, direct statements of experience or

emotion creates a mood of ambiguity and existential distance between his focal characters and readers. Rifqa's intellectual experience of expanded linguistic and educational opportunities due to his reading of German poetry and philosophy contrast the emotional contraction caused by alienation resulting from conflict and shifting ideological landscapes in his lived experience.

Rifqa's major adjustments to Romantic representations of the forest philosopher expand the scope of philosophical experience as expressed through landscape. In Arab Romanticism, the forest serves as a space of inquiry in which seekers of a new truth outside of the strictures of society can voice a new world. Rifqa expands the geography of the nascent philosophical poetry present in Romanticism to other wilderness venues—the plains, the sea shore, the last slope, caves—in order to explore the whole process of poetry from inspiration to completion and the emotional journey the poet must take through his own anxiety of modernity. Rifqa draws inward the Romantic image of the forest-philosopher in order to explore the question of how a poet encounters inspiration and composes poetry in a world which is the traditional role of the poet has been all but abandoned by the avant-garde.

As Rifqa's poetry continues to evolve through the 1960s, multiple conflicts between Arab states and Israel, the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), and the final two decades of his career, he largely abandons the first-person perspective altogether in favor of a distanced third-person narrative standpoint. The next chapter in this dissertation, "Writing the Nations: The Modernist Turns," explores Rifqa's transition away from the first-person perspective toward a third-person or spectator perspective as a result of his movement away from Romantic nationalism and toward a productive synthesis of global influences. Rifqa's comparatively long writing career provides the opportunity to track his trajectory, as well as the trajectories of some of his

contemporaries, through different worldviews in a postcolonial context marked at times by

conflict and competing nationalisms.

Chapter 2

Writing the Nations: The Modernist Turns

For Arab Romantics, the forest provides a locus for speculation on the nature of freedom from societal expectations, a tendency often voiced from the first-person point of view. Landscape functions in Arab Romantic poetry as the setting for philosophical dialogue. Representations of landscape are functions of the mental environment within Romantic works and foreground the individual through his isolation in the forest. Following World War II, a significant change occurs in avant-garde poetic landscapes as a result of the activation of poetry for expressly political purposes by nationalist organizations, such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), which sought poets to enact its cultural agenda. *Nahḍa* discourses recognize the urgent need for cultural renewal, and Romantic poets respond by engaging in individualized reflection to criticize urban decadence and project ideas about the future onto a forested backdrop. The intentional activation of the political economy of poetry by the SSNP redirects the focus of poetry from the individual to the group and alters the use of non-urban spaces. The mythological mode replaces dialectic space as the structural purpose of landscape representations, although the first-person perspective common in Romantic poetry remains prominent throughout the nationalist period. This logic dominates avant-garde Syrian and Lebanese poetry of the 1950s and begins to wane in the early 1960s as it is replaced by the New Poetry, which reasserts the individual in poetry and shifts the subordination to landscape from nation to language. The nationalist period of the late 1940s and 1950s constitutes a transitional period that is neither fully Romantic nor entirely Modernist, due in part to differential development in form and content. Following the nationalist period, some of the same poets who had previously written adulatory poetry for political purposes wrest the main function of poetry

back from specific ideological agendas and redirect their foci to the individual's structuring of landscape, and all of experience, through language.

The Romantic wilderness setting is not unproblematic. Jubrān's writing in Arabic voices anxieties about tradition and independence through versified dialogues and first-person prose narratives that resist closure. Al-Shābbī celebrates the potential of national self-determination while at the same time expressing a sense of alienation from society. Abū Shabaka plumbs the depths of individual experience and furthers the transition of the role of the poet toward private reflection. The ascendance of *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr* in 1949 to the position of premiere avant-garde experimental form, the establishment of independent states in the Middle East and associated conflicts, and the continued participation of poets in the translation and synthesis of secular European writing contribute to the development of Modernism in Arabic poetry. The full turn toward Modernism does not happen, however, until poets shuffle off the prescribed ideological forms of nationalist political organizations. The poets of the *Shiʿr* group demonstrate the transition from promotion of the SSNP's political agenda to independent investigations of the Arabic language. Due to the struggle for representation of Arabic within the Ottoman Empire, during colonial influence between the world wars, and in independent Levantine nations, this shift to a logic of landscape representation in poetry that is centered around exploration of the Arabic language demonstrates a realization of the *Nahḍa* goal of cultural renewal through selective adaptation. When the turn in content necessary for a full transition to Modernism arrives in the 1960s, language emerges as the matrix of understanding the modern world.

Two poets from the *Shiʿr* group, Adūnīs and Fuʾād Rifqa, model reliance on mythological themes in their early poetry. Both poets then experience very different turns in the post-nationalist period—Adūnīs toward deep critical inquiry into the nature of history and Rifqa

toward poetry. Rapid acceleration of social and political changes in the mid-twentieth century is mirrored in the rapid series of aesthetic movements in which modern avant-garde Arab poets may have participated throughout their careers. When Adūnīs emerges as a young poet in the 1940s, forms that emphasize oral performance, such as platform poetry and occasional poetry, are still dominant in his rural region of Lādhiqīyya (Latakia) in western Syria. Adūnīs's early poetry evolves alongside the social and political climate surrounding him until he encounters significant ruptures—university education, political imprisonment, exile, and postgraduate education abroad—that cause him to pursue exploration of the modern poet's relationship to tradition. In doing so, he redirects the spatial logic undergirding his poetic production from one of political economy to one of linguistic innovation. Adūnīs heralds the arrival of Modernism and emerges as the leading voice of New Poetry in the 1960s with *Mihyār of Damascus: His Songs*. This poetic reimagining of an eleventh-century Persian poet introduces one of the first truly Modernist unifications of innovative language, critical exploration of the modern Arab poet's relation to the tradition of Arabic poetry, and the creative value of rupture. With *Mihyar*, Adūnīs breaks from poetic tradition through his knowledge of tradition, thus ushering in a period that shifts the subordination of landscape from political utility to consideration of language. His contemporary and collaborator at *Shiʿr*, Fuʾād Rifqa, moves through the same labyrinth of influences, yet undergoes a different turn toward language in his exploration of the modern poet's relationship to tradition. Rifqa's initial strategy of self-revision carries through his long career. However, instead of examining his direct relationship to the Arabic poetic tradition, Rifqa turns to engagement with German literature and philosophy in order to encourage the development of a closer relationship between poetry and philosophy within the Arabic avant-garde.

Rifqa was born in 1930, the same year as Adūnīs, in the village of Kafrūn in the neighboring Syrian governate of Ṭarṭūs. Rifqa's early poetry maintains the first-person narrative perspective characteristic of prior Romantic poetry, which he utilizes through the nationalist phase of the 1950s. The purpose of representations of landscape in his early poetry tended toward the espousal of a blood-relation to the physical land of the geographic nation. Following the end of this period of ideological participation with the SSNP, Rifqa's poetry all but abandons direct commentary and instead adopts a distanced third-person perspective to return to the poet-philosopher in the wilderness. This intentional distance creates an environment in which relationships between concepts rely on landscape as an expressive device. Rifqa constructs poetic landscapes through careful selection of etymologically resonant combinations in Arabic that link aesthetic concepts directly to elements of the natural world through shared root letters. Rifqa's use of seasonal and vegetative cycles alongside shifting landscapes resembles both T. S. Eliot's objective correlative and the aim of the German poetic genre *Dinggedicht*, literally "thing poetry," practitioners of which include Rainer Maria Rilke[35]. The influence of these two different indirect modes of expression underscores Rifqa's avoidance of direct commentary in the post-nationalist period. His estrangement from the Romantic first-person perspective mirrors his estrangement from nationalist politics following the failed SSNP coup of the Lebanese government in late 1961. Examining Rifqa's ideological poetry from the 1950s and early 1960s lays bare his strategy of constant revision, a practice that would guide his poetic production for the remaining five decades of his career.

Following the 1961 SSNP coup, both Adūnīs and Rifqa leave Lebanon to study at European universities. Adūnīs studies in Paris on a scholarship from the French government

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[35] Discussion of Rilke and *Dinggedicht* will be delayed until the third chapter, "Orpheus in Arabic."

from 1960-61, during which he composes *Mihyar*. Rifqa undertakes post-graduate study in

Tübingen through a scholarship from the German DAAD[36] organization and earns a Ph.D. in

Philosophy in 1965 (Goethe Institut). In the early 1960s, each poet establishes the trajectory of

their contributions to poetic modernity. Though their paths are divergent, their productions

underscore the turn toward language.

"Writing the Nations" first briefly outlines the linguistic and cultural contexts of Lebanon

and the Greater Levant from the end of the Ottoman Empire through the end of World War II in

order to trace the historical trajectories of the relationship between language, poetry, and

nationalisms, particularly the cultural agenda of the SSNP. Focus then narrows to analysis of the

nature and function of SSNP-related symbols and metaphors in the nationalist period of the

1950s through 1961 in poetry from the Beiruti literary journal *Shiʿr*. This poetry bears markers of

participation in the construction and maintenance of a SSNP-affiliated irredentist Syrian identity

structure. The nationalist period should be viewed as a transitional period. This period coincides

with the end of the dominance of the spirit of Romanticism in avant-garde poetry in Beirut and

precedes the 1961 emergence of a robust Modernism that reflects the fragmentation and

alienation resulting from the problematics of nationalism, reassessment of predecessors, and the

individual's place in modernity.

Following the failed SSNP coup of the Lebanese government in 1961, the majority of

poets who had participated in this ideological project realigned their political sentiments. The

remainder of this chapter investigates the turns taken by two modern poets, Fuʾād Rifqa and

Adūnīs, toward divergent models of expression based on the exploration of language. Adūnīs

composes alternative histories of a secular strain, while Rifqa swerves toward a distanced,

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[36] The Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) is the German Academic Exchange Service, a scholarship
agency focused on supporting German students studying abroad and non-German students studying in Germany.

philosophical poetry that represents time through the evolution of the poet-philosopher in the wilderness. Under the banner of New Poetry, which engaged influence from both Arab predecessors and European literature, Adūnīs and Rifqa sought to create new approaches to historical consciousness as they also set the parameters for Modernism in Arabic poetry.

The Trajectory of the Arabic Language

The flagship language of the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman Turkish, served purposes of administration, governance, and elite literary production from the beginning of the empire in 1299 until its full dissolution in 1923. The status of all languages in areas of Ottoman control was secondary to Ottoman Turkish. In its more formal iteration, Ottoman Turkish was called *Fasiḥ Türkçe*. While the word *fasiḥ*, meaning "eloquent," is derived directly from Arabic—as was a large portion of the *Fasiḥ Türkçe* lexicon—many words and structures were also borrowed from Persian. The majority of the Turkish-speaking population spoke a less formal version of this language, *Kaba Türkçe* or "rough Turkish," and did not utilize high Ottoman Turkish on a daily basis. A third language variant, *Orta Türkçe,* occupies a middle position between formal and informal Ottoman Turkish and was spoken by upper classes and merchants.[37] The percentage of linguistic borrowings from Persian and Arabic correspond to the formality of each of these three varieties of Ottoman Turkish: the more formal *Fasiḥ Türkçe* borrowed heavily from Persian for literary purposes and from Arabic for religious and literary purposes; the less formal *Kaba Türkçe* reflected less input from non-Turkic languages.

In the nineteenth century, the question of how to modernize Turkish language(s) came to the forefront. Prior to 1928, Ottoman Turkish utilized Persian-Arabic script style and right-to-left

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[37] The Arabic language is often referred to as a diglossic language due to the contextual usages of *Fuṣḥa* and regional dialects. However, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) occupies a position between the two and reflects the pressures of modernization.

directionality. According to Yasir Suleiman, "Interest in the simplification of the language also covered what was perceived to be the chaotic orthography of Ottoman Turkish owing to the inadequacy of the Arabic script for rendering the phonemic, particularly vowel, distinctions peculiar to that language" (73). As an *abjad*[38] language, standard written Arabic represents consonants and a very limited number of vowels in texts that are unvocalized. Most vowels, which appear as diacritical markings, are not included in the majority of printed materials. Diacritical marks are added to represent vowels in texts that require extreme precision or will be read aloud. The text of the Qur'ān is represented as fully vocalized, whereas a newspaper article would not list any diacritical marks due to the expectation that readers can understand the implied vowels from a word's meaning and context within the sentence and paragraph. Suleiman identifies two major requirements of the push toward modernization of the Turkish language: the need for simplification and the need to equip Turkish "with the necessary lexical resources to enable it to cope with the demands of an age of fast-moving technological developments" (73). While the push to modernize the Arabic language was occurring simultaneously, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Ottoman turn to the West and to Turkic languages "began to marginalize Arabic and to cast it aside as an Other's language in the two areas that mattered: modernization and identity-formation" (73).

The turn to western and Turkic languages, and particularly away from Arabic and Persian, took its clearest form in one of Mustafa Kemal Attaturk's post-Ottoman "Turkification" policies. On November 1, 1928, Attaturk introduced policy that replaced the Persian-Arabic script with a modified version of the Latin alphabet as the official script of the Turkish language. This policy banned use of the Arabic script to represent written Turkish. Prior to this change, the

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[38] *Abjad* is the term used to describe scripts in which only consonants are represented. Arabic may be considered an impure *abjad* because a limited number of vowels have central graphemes (Daniels 415).

educational policies of the Young Turks enacted within Arabic-speaking regions sought to supplant Arabic through curricular changes and the replacement of native Arabic speakers with speakers of Turkish in language teaching positions in Turkey and other Ottoman regions. According to Suleiman, "The Arabic grammar curriculum was the same as that taught in the Turkish-speaking schools in the Turkish part of the Empire. This meant that Arabic was taught to Arab pupils not as a native language, but as a foreign one" (85). The de-emphasis of Arabic continued vis-à-vis colonial European languages.

Ottoman Turkish as well as the colonial languages of English and French occupied higher positions in different niches in the Levant prior to the fall of the Ottoman Empire: Ottoman Turkish served administrative and official purposes, and colonial languages appeared largely in economic and diplomatic spaces. Arabic languages, in the Modern Standard form as well as regional dialects, fell into the categories of religion and informal everyday usage, respectively, and became the building blocks around which nascent Arab nationalisms emerge.

Following Benedict Anderson's analysis of the importance of the particular language that serves as the medium of print capitalism in the development of European nationalisms, Yasir Suleiman extends this analysis into the Levantine context by suggesting that the privilege of Modern Standard Arabic over regional dialects in the development of Arab Nationalism is located in the "head start" Modern Standard Arabic had over colloquial Arabic in print (10). Modern Standard Arabic's wide usage in the elite spheres of religion and literature ensures mutual intelligibility by speakers across a broad geographic swath, whereas dialects, which can vary dramatically from region to region, do not offer mutual intelligibility over a large area. The privilege of Modern Standard Arabic over regional dialects also privileges those who maintain positions of cultural or political power because these elites are able to communicate to a broader

audience. The cultural work of re-asserting the dominance of the Arabic language in regions of Ottoman control and later European influence demanded the undergirding of a unifying national identity. This identity included the reassessment of tradition, the designation of "golden ages" within the tradition, and the activation of a shared mythology in the service of the nascent nation.

Suleiman cites the importance of Raymond Grew's 1985 claim that the creation of national identity is not "'simply a natural growth,'" and instead offers a nuanced explanation that focuses on the intentionally constructed nature of national identity. The strategic focusing of a particular view toward history facilitated by "the involvement of the elite in fashioning it" becomes "absolutely fundamental to formulating its intellectual foundations" as well as "popularizing it to the basis of mass political action" (7). Modern Standard Arabic's status as the elite lexicon in a community working toward wider representation and its growing role as a more standardized format for mass print culture both contributed to the later cultivation of changes in Arabic poetry.

While early efforts to form national identities often coalesced around specific faith communities, these configurations were not always oriented toward the promotion of religion. As Traboulsi notes, "Christian intellectuals did not turn to Christian Europe for inspiration but to the secular Europe of the Enlightenment, of English liberalism and the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789" however, "European concepts were not uncritically assimilated" (66). Three main secular forms of resistance to Ottoman Turkification in the first two decades of the twentieth century centered on establishing the Arabic language as a unifying factor of an Arab nation. Organizations were established to promote representation of the Arabic language within the Ottoman Empire. Arab culture and the Arabic language were further promoted through study societies and print publications in Arabic. The third resistance strategy was to activate poetry in

Arabic as an eloquent form of both rebuttal to Turkification and promotion of the Arabic

language (86-89). One instance of the latter form of resistance, cited by Saʿīd Al-Afghānī, is

Lebanese newspaper publisher Amin Nasir al-Din's attempt in 1901 to "cast all the news in his

newspaper in poetry" (Suleiman 89). While this particular instance did not gain much traction, it

illustrates the centrality of poetry to the appreciation and representation of the Arabic language

and poetry's utility in fomenting cultural change. Poetry functioned both to demonstrate unity

through the use of a common language, but it also occupied an important secular space as it

contrasted in both function and goal the privilege of Islam as *the* unifying factor of national

identity.

Adūnīs' literary criticism and histories from the 1980s onward all point to gaps in the

relationship between innovation in poetry and adherence to organized religion. In "Poetics and

Thought," Adūnīs locates the epistemological ruptures between literary criticism, Arab-Islamic

linguistic and religious sciences, and "the purely philosophical system" (*Arab Poetics* 55).

Criticism of Arabic poetry took pre-Islamic poetry as the true repository of cultural wisdom, and

in doing so, collapsed the polyphony of voices "into a single model, viewed by the critics simply

as 'song'", which rendered the criticism of all poetry, oral and written, through the lens of orality

(55). Later poets, who Adūnīs considers innovative or modern in their periods partially due to

their exploration of written language, were slighted due to the privilege of orality in criticism

(56). This slighting, paradoxically, branched also out of religious commitment to the divine

beauty of the language of the Qur'an, a written text, which had, according to Adūnīs, "all the

characteristics peculiar to writing" (57). The development of divergent written forms was thus an

affront to the standard of the Qur'an. Each system proclaimed their standards as absolute, owing

either to the genius of the pre-Islamic poets or to the hand of God. While a philosophical

approach to poetry seems appealing, Adūnīs warns that this approach is often simply "a continuation or completion of these two systems" with the addition of "its own particular arguments, drawn from Greek thought" (57). The drive toward a more encompassing understanding of poetry that privileges reason alongside emotion, sense alongside experience, and form alongside change, would not be realized until the 1960s. Countervailing influences on the status of the Arabic language, and of Arabic poetry, characterize the movement toward Modernism, and more immediately, nation formation.

Poetry's relationship to the Arabic language and its lack of mooring directly to religion allowed for a broader diversity of voices to emerge than if nascent nationalisms anchored the value of the Arabic language largely in religious terms. The Romantics, particularly the *Mahjar* poets, started the poetic language revolution in their unmooring of verse poetry from strict prosody. The relationship of poetry to nation moves from Romantic introspection prior to World War II into the field of direct activation by political parties for its utility in transmitting a unified sense of identity. The remainder of this chapter explores the nationalistic period that accompanied the rise of free verse and acted as a transitional period between Romantic introspection and Modernist exploration of language. The liberation of free verse from political and ideological utility and its redirection toward language by the New Poetry (*al-shiʿr al-jadīd*) ushers in the Modernist period.

Post-Ottoman Nationalisms

The early visions of nation forwarded by Arab and Lebanese nationalists, as well as proto-Syrian nationalists, were largely confined to securing civic representation of the Arabic language and cultural nation within the Ottoman Empire. Pressures to examine individual and social identity also came from the rapid acceleration of interactions between Europe and the

eastern Mediterranean. Yousseff M. Choueiri[39] describes the growth of national consciousness

during Muḥammad ʿAli's (1805-1848) reign in Egypt:

> The model of Muḥammad ʿAli's Egypt, coupled with efforts of modernization by various
> Ottoman sultans and governors in the nineteenth century, formed the background against
> which the first stage of this modern intellectual movement was born. Then the direct
> impact of western culture, commerce, and military power modified and shaped the
> national identities of a newly-constituted Arab intelligentsia. (5)

The waning of empire and World War I brought rapid change in the possibilities for

multiple configurations of representation. The period between World War I and World War II

was characterized by competition between major secular identity configurations. Götz

Nordbruch notes that this period was paradoxical in that "the rise of ideologies that popularized

notions of primordial authenticity and communal homogeneity was paralleled by an increasing

diversity of social and cultural milieus" ("Arab Students" 279). At the same time as a drive for

freedom and an anticolonial sentiment brought people together, identity groups splintered and

competed for dominance. Badawi notes the rise in nationalist sentiment after World War I in "a

series of major revolts first in Egypt (1919), then in Iraq (1920) and Syria (1925)" with the goal

of "progress and modernity (which meant westernization)" at the same time as "shak[ing] off

foreign domination and attain[ing] statehood" ("Background" 18). The constant presence of

shifting internal and external pressures within the Ottoman Empire, during the interwar years,

and following the post-WWII establishment of independent nations in the Levant all contribute

to the development of Middle Eastern nationalisms and the evolution of related terms over time.

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[39] Choueiri's 2003 book, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*, provides an
account of the co-development of histories produced by Arab writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries and the concept of nation across the Arab world. While I draw largely from Choueiri's discussion of
the development of nationalist thought in Syria and Lebanon, his book contains valuable discussion of nascent
nationalisms in Egypt, the Gulf, and North Africa.

Two general formations of nation are foundational to describing nationalist configurations in Europe and the United States: the civic nation, in which the formation of a national identity follows the formation of the state in a bordered geographic territory, and the cultural nation, in which in-group bonds such as language, ethnicity, and material culture shape the state as a unit bound by common culture and not necessarily by geography. When discussing the development of Levantine nationalisms, it is crucial to note the evolving definitions of two central concepts in the representation of nation: *Al-Ummah*, or nation, and *Al-Waṭan,* or fatherland. Changes in the usage of these terms over time also assist in differentiating periods of the development of nationalist thought, which will help to identify points of rupture between nationalist concepts of nation and poetry's representation of it in the modern period. All of these concepts change over time as the Ottoman context fades, European nations exert influence in the Levant, and independent nations are established and must mediate the both internal and external conflicts.

Al-Ummah is a supranational configuration of identity relations based originally in the brotherhood of Islam. *Al-Ummah* later came to signify "the Arab nation in general, and then just a part of it, Egypt or Syria for example" (Owen 14-5). Whether based in religious, ethnic, or racial affiliations, the concept of *ummah* centers on group affiliation rather than geographic location. The religious nature of the term *ummah* implies that Modern Standard Arabic would likely be the *lingua franca* used within the broader Islamic nation, however inclusion in the *ummah* is based on coreligionist ties rather than language ties. The concept of *ummah* evolves through the twentieth century into a more general term that can also include ethnicity-based identification, such as in Arab nationalism.

Al-Waṭan, according to Choueiri, gathers "the focus of national feelings and loyalty,

expressing itself in literature, poetry, [and] historical writings" and in the mid-nineteenth

century, particularly as advocated by Buṭrus al-Bustānī, included "the espousal of western

political notions" of representation within the larger body of the Ottoman Empire (40). Later

iterations of *al-waṭan* necessarily include self-determination of a bounded geographic nation vis-

à-vis colonial or imperial powers. Although *al-waṭan* is a political national unit bound to a

sometimes-shifting set of borders, an individual's inclusion in this identity structure persists even

if he or she no longer resides within the geographic or linguistic community. Ra'īf Khūrī

describes the related concept of *Al-Waṭaniyyah,* or *patriotism*, as "love of *al-waṭan* and

muwāṭinīn (compatriots), and the service and total sacrifice that such love calls for" (48). The

notion of political freedom as necessary to live in a functional *waṭan* is identified as stemming

from the French Revolution in passing by Said Bensaid (158) and in detail by Khūrī[40].

Suleiman notes that the strong linguistic identification of pan-Arab nationalism with

Modern Standard Arabic stands in contrast to Lebanese nationalism's use of Modern Standard

Arabic and the Lebanese dialect (205). Alongside the Lebanese dialect, the French language held

an elevated position for Lebanese nationalists due to long-standing economic, cultural, and

religious connections to France.[41] The eighth article of the Arab Nationalist Baʿth Party's

constitution states that "The official language of the state and the language of its people,

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[40] Marxist critic Ra'īf Khūrī's book, *Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab East*, written in 1943 in Arabic and published in English translation by Charles Issawi in 1983, investigates historical writings of nineteen Arab nationalists toward the development of political thought in the Middle East. In his introduction, Issawi notes that Khūrī's study "is the first systematic attempt to trace the impact of European ideas on 19th- and 20th-century political thought" and represents the close of what historian Albert Hourani calls "the Liberal Age" of "almost uncritical acceptance" of Western thought from the mid-19th century to the early 1940s (qtd. in Khūrī 5).

[41] Lebanese Nationalist voices in support of the use of Modern Standard Arabic include ʿAbdalla Laḥḥud, who argued against the exclusive connection between Arabism and Islam (Suleiman 207), and Kamal Yusuf al-Ḥajj, who argued that the Arabic language was one of four elements of Lebanese identity alongside "political geography, political economy and history" (210).

authorized for publication and instruction, is the Arabic language" (Binder 197). Syrian

Nationalism, on the other hand, views language as a necessary resource for group formation, and

in the interest of increasing support for their cause, the SSNP worked to activate the potential of

this resource. Suleiman writes that "rather than losing their identity to the Arabs and fusing it

into a prefabricated Arabic, the Syrians assimilated Arabic and its original speakers into their

national character," which leads to the conclusion that "if Arabic is the national language of the

Syrians, it is so only in its Syrianized form" (168). While for Arab nationalists, language

constitutes a central pillar of identity, and Lebanese nationalists espouse a multilingualism that

acknowledges dialect, Syrian Nationalism is predominately territorial in its orientation and views

language as a useful tool in nation building (167).

Lebanonism

Lebanonism[42] emerged largely from Maronite Christian communities in the period of

conflict in the *mutaṣarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon between 1840-1860 (Hakim 3). Following the

Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, which divided Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire into areas of

French and British control, as well as after the French Mandate of 1920, contemporary iterations

of Lebanonism focused on the political goal of establishing a Lebanese nation as a separate and

culturally distinct entity from Syria. Competing contemporary currents in the Greater Lebanon

debate included Arab federalists, who supported efforts toward a united Arab state based in

Damascus; Syrian federalists, who were committed to unifying 'natural Syria' and maintained

international offices in Paris, London, and Cairo, along with a support committee in New York[43];

and the protectionists, whose reactions ranged from "demand[ing] the annexation of Christian

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[42] Traboulsi prefers the term "Lebanonism," whereas Carol Hakim uses the term "Lebanism." Both terms refer to the same phenomenon.

[43] Traboulsi notes that Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān was among the members of a Syrian Federalist support committee in New York (82).

Lebanon by France" to supporting a dual position which viewed autonomy as "independence

from the rest of Syria" coupled with "attachment to France" (Traboulsi 82-3). Lebanese

Independentists in this period insisted on independence from both Syria and France while

maintaining a very close relationship with the French. Independentists "imagined Greater

Lebanon as an independent, democratic, and multi-sectarian republic" in which religions coexist

without conflict (83).

To varying degrees and ends, Lebanonists claim that the Lebanese descended from the

Phoenicians. Yūsuf Sawdā's 1919 text, *Fī Sabīl Lubnān*, which emphasizes Lebanon's

uniqueness and status as a separate nation, extends the claim of Phoenician lineage to

characterize modern Lebanese people as directly and uniquely descended from "the original

founders of civilization" (Hakim 221). Sawdā makes a plea for European intervention based on

this ancient connection: "If Europe had helped to liberate the modern Italians and Greeks, it did

so in recognition of the role of their forefathers in the founding of civilization" (qtd. in Hakim

221). As is characteristic of many nationalist projects, the vision of a glorious past is often

invoked toward current political economy. Casting Greater Lebanon as a consistently

multilingual, multicultural entity with a lineage dating to antiquity undergirds the argument that

an independent Lebanon would again act as an interlocutor between Europe and other Arabic

speaking countries in the Middle East. The identification between Lebanese nationalism and

French language and political relationships came from the idea that "by arming itself with

French, Lebanon can fulfil its civilizing mission in and to the East—read the Arab world—by

interpreting the West to the Arabs and by advocating Arab causes in the West on behalf of the

Arabs" (Suleiman 205). In this context, different languages filled multiple roles, and in doing so

emphasized the value of a multilingual environment.

Arab Nationalism

Arab Nationalism emerged in Egypt and the Mashriq[44] during the *Naḥḍa* period

alongside the modernization of the Ottoman *Tanzimāt* reforms. The call for cultural renewal

expressed by *Naḥḍa* philosophers addressed the need for modernization not only of culture but

also of the Arabic language. Traboulsi credits Ottoman Grand Vizir Midhat Pasha's 1876

deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, whom Pasha replaced with ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's brother, Sultan

ʿAbd al-Hamīd II. By 1877, Arab nationalist agitation had begun, and its goal was the

establishment of an Arab kingdom within the Ottoman Empire. Midhat Pasha was dismissed

from his role during the Russo-Ottoman War and later re-instated as the Wali of Syria. His new

position gave more license to calls for Arab independence, but these calls ended due to his

assassination in 1883 (Traboulsi 68-9).

Another wave of Arab nationalist organizing took place in the first decade of the

twentieth century in response to Sultan ʿAbd al-Hamīd II's strategy of promoting Islamic unity

between Muslims across the waning empire in order to bolster a sense of shared identity.

Traboulsi terms these organizers "multi-sectarian decentralists" whose political demands

included equal rights for Arabs within the Empire, inclusion of Arabic as an official language,

the recognition of the unity of Arab lands, and following the Young Turks' revolt in 1909,

greater representation in governance. Many of these demands were also voiced at the First Arab

Congress in Paris in June 1913 (Traboulsi 69-71). Before much progress could be made, World

War I began and Ottoman repression against nascent Arab nationalism increased. This targeted

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[44] The *Mashriq* is comprised of the Levant and Iraq. "Greater Syria" or "Natural Syria" are often referred to as *al-Sham* or *Bilad al-Sham,* meaning *north country*. Choueiri notes that after the Ottomans took control in the Levant in the early sixteenth century, "Ottoman authorities revived the old name of the Roman period, and started calling the country Sūriyya in their official decrees and proclamations" in spite of the region being referred to locally as *Bilad al-Sham* since the Muslim conquest of 634-638 CE (40).

repression, compounded by the famine in Lebanon that lasted the duration of the war[45], as well

as *Safar Barlik*, the period of mandatory military service and runaway usury[46] "that still today

haunts the popular imagination" (Traboulsi 72), ended the second wave of Arab nationalism.

Like developments in the arena of poetry, much Arab nationalist thought was written,

transmitted, and publicly discussed outside of Arab countries in diaspora communities rather

than within predominately Arabic speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire. According to

Traboulsi, the SSNP arose as a third option that changed the directionality of the discussion of

identity:

> Two versions of the identity of the country now clashed: Lebanonism versus Arabism.
> Between the two stood a third variant, the Syrian nationalism of Sa'adeh's SSNP,
> representing non-Maronite Christians and the Muslims on the peripheries. Most
> importantly, the stakes had changed: the identity debate was no longer defined in relation
> to the outside world (attachment/detachment) but articulated the relations of power within
> the country itself. (102)

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party

Al-Ḥizb Al-Sūrī Al-Qawmī Al-ʿIjtimāʿī, *Parti populaire syrien,* and the Syrian Social

Nationalist Party (SSNP) all refer to the party that was founded in Lebanon by Antūn Saʿādeh in

1932. All party doctrine centered around the charismatic leader Saʿādeh until his execution in

1949. The party has continued into the present in various iterations that have included support of

the Syrian government during the Lebanese Civil War, terrorist activities and suicide bombings,

and more recently, support of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria. Central to understanding

the cultural production of avant-garde poetry in Lebanon in the 1950s is an overview of the

SSNP's ideological positions, particularly vis-à-vis the relationship between poetry and

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[45] See note 19 in Chapter 1 for a brief overview of the World War I famine in Lebanon.

[46] Traboulsi notes that military service could be deferred through the payment of an exemption tax set at forty-four gold pounds per person (72), which was especially difficult for those remaining in areas from which large portions of the population had emigrated for economic reasons.

irredentism. Adūnīs and Rifqa's early poetry shows traces of the influence of Saʿādeh's central

principle of environmental determinism. The significant swerve each poet makes after breaking

with the party redefines their respective relationships to environmental determinism as they

move to worldviews structured by language rather than geography.

Controversy regarding the party, its early iterations, and the question of fascism are

consistent in critical and popular discourse. Critics like Yasir Suleiman and Fawwaz Traboulsi

maintain fairly neutral positions vis-à-vis the SSNP. Labib Zuwiyya Yamak's 1966 position

attempts to sidestep accusations of western machinations within the SSNP and instead

investigates the party's history and ideology as an example of the struggle between the

traditional and the modern (5). Perhaps the most defensive position is taken by historian Adel

Beshara, whose writings about Saʿādeh in general and his execution in particular provide

information that is largely unavailable in English. However, his critical orientation is one of

defense of Saʿādeh and his language is almost exclusively adulatory. For example, he describes

Saʿādeh's life as "a unique blend of dedicated, perpetual struggle, righteous idealism, and

theoretical pragmatism" (*Syrian Nationalism* 40). Beshara published a book review in December

2009 in the pro-SSNP publication *Al-Mashriq*[47], which he appears to manage, entitled "Go Forth

and Falsify" in response to German critic Götz Nordbruch's claim in his book *Arab Encounters

with Nazism* that Saʿādeh and the SSNP did not directly descend from nor were they beholden to

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[47] The mission statement of the Syria-wide Research Center (SRC), the organization that publishes *Al-Mashriq*, describes the SRC as "an invaluable source of accurate, objective and relevant information and analysis designed to enlighten public opinion about Natural Syria through innovative programs designed to advance progressive ideas in the interest of the country and its people. The center is guided by Antun Saadeh's world-view" (Syriawide.com). The SRC appears to be a personality project based in Australia and populated almost exclusively by Adel Beshara's publications. On October 23, 2010, the SSNP's website published an announcement encouraging members to read the September 2010 issue and all other issues of *Al-Mashriq* published by "Comrade Dr. Adel Beshara" because "the preparation of *Al-Mashriq* is always full of valuable studies in thought, politics, history, heritage and other topics of interest to the people of our nation and those of host nations" ("Issue 34", my translation).

National Socialism, rather their attitudes toward the Nazis were ambivalent. Beshara disagreed

and denied any connection or ambivalent attitudes from the SSNP, charging Nordbruch with

"trying to remould Saʿādeh as a Nazi" ("Go Forth"). This prompted Nordbruch's response,

which identified Beshara's ideological reading: "For Beshara, any attempt to place Sa'adeh in

the maelstrom of broader intellectual discourses risks blurring the 'authenticity of his national

ideology.'" This is an ahistorical move, however, because "insisting on its 'authenticity' would

place Sa'adeh and the related circles outside history" ("Response" 4). While the SSNP's

connections to European fascisms will be discussed in a later section of this chapter, the

continued presence of or interaction with the SSNP and its partisans appears throughout the

scholarship on this topic.[48] The field remains ideologically charged, and image management

remains a focus of party defenders.

Saʿādeh was born in the Lebanese village of Shuwayr in 1904 to Orthodox Christian

parents. His father, Khalīl Saʿādeh, was a physician, writer, and political activist who

participated in *Nahḍa* discourses (Zenzie 1949). Antūn Saʿādeh remained with his family in

Lebanon through the Great Famine of World War I and later, in 1920 or 1921, joined his father,

who had emigrated from Lebanon to Brazil. While in South America, Saʿādeh assisted his father

in editing *al-Majallah*, a periodical for the Syro-Lebanese émigré community in Brazil. Although

much of the SSNP's early ideological framework was developed while Saʿādeh was in exile in

South America, its doctrine focuses on the creation of what he envisioned as a Greater Syrian

homeland, which includes Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Cyprus.

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[48] To my knowledge, no comparative analysis of the varieties of rhetoric scholars use when referring to the SSNP
and Saʿādeh has been published.

Saʿādeh returned to Lebanon in 1929, and in 1932, secretly founded the SSNP at the American University of Beirut,[49] where he tutored German language and drew largely from the student population for his early supporters (Zenzie 1949; Betty Anderson 121). From 1938-1947, Saʿādeh lived in exile in Brazil and Argentina due to multiple instances of imprisonment between 1935-1938[50] and renewed arrest warrants issued against him by the French authorities after his 1938 imprisonment. He returned to Beirut in March 1947 following a recruiting period within Syrian and Lebanese diaspora communities abroad, recruiting for the party in Jordan, Syria, and Palestine. This international informational tour during World War II included engagements in Germany and Italy (Yamak 60). Saʿādeh gave a speech upon his return to Beirut that emphasized his belief that Lebanon should be part of a greater Syrian nation rather than an independent entity, which resulted in a summons from the Sûreté Générale, or General Security Directorate, which viewed the push toward "Natural Syria" as a threat to the Lebanese nation. In keeping with the recommendations of his advisors, Saʿādeh went into hiding for six months (62). He returned to Beirut after government raids against the party de-escalated. There he voiced his support for the legitimacy of the independent political entity of Lebanon, a significant divergence from his previous position (Yamak 63).

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[49] According to Yamak, "Sa'adih was not a member of the faculty not was he ever associated in any official capacity with the American University of Beirut. He was permitted, however, by the administration to use the classroom facilities of the university to teach German to some students who had expressed their desire to learn the language. The arrangement between Sa'adih and the students was strictly on a private basis. Furthermore, it is not known how well he knew German or where he had learned it. It is likely, however, that he studied it during his stay in Brazil" (Yamak 167). Betty Anderson notes the recruiting activities of the SSNP at AUB, as well as recruiting by other groups, such as the Baʿath Party and the Communist Party. These parties, according to Anderson, were less influential in shaping student discourse at AUB than *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*, the AUB Arab society and its journal of the same name (121).

[50] Saʿādeh's first arrest was in November 1935, when the French authorities discovered that he had founded the SSNP in secret three years prior and subsequently charged him with conspiring against the state of Lebanon, for which he was sentenced to six months in prison (Yamak 56-7). A second arrest occurred immediately after his release in May 1936 and was based on charges that the party had assaulted journalists (57). His final arrest before leaving for Argentina came in March 1937, after a clash between SSNP members and police at a late February 1937 political rally (Yamak 56-8; Zenzie 1949-50).

While in hiding, Saʿādeh conducted a massive purge of the party and set to reworking SSNP leadership by appointing younger members, many of whom were university students, to positions in the departments of culture and information. With their help, Saʿādeh set to criticizing Arab nationalism and preaching his re-organized doctrine of social nationalism, *al-qawmiyya al-ijtimāʿiyya,* in order to build the party and enact cultural-ideological goals in lieu of the immediate establishment of the geographic nation. Government raids against SSNP offices and presses increased in the period immediately following the Syrian coup d'état on March 31, 1949. In what would come to be known as the Jummayzah incident on June 9, 1949, members of the nationalist Katā'ib[51] party conducted raids on SSNP offices and presses, to which no police responded. In the days after the incident, over 2,500 SSNP members were arrested or detained. Saʿādeh fled to Syria and sought the protection of Husnī al-Zaʿīm, the leader of the March 31, 1949 coup in Syria that may have been carried out with the help of Saʿādeh and SSNP forces (Roberts 33). Saʿādeh declared war on the Lebanese government and party members raided government posts throughout Lebanon. However, on July 7, 1949, after only a few days of negotiation between Syria and Lebanon, Saʿādeh was delivered to Lebanese security forces by al-Zaʿīm's government, tried in secret by a Lebanese military tribunal, and executed at dawn the following day (Yamak 67).

The period following Saʿādeh's execution saw roundups and prison sentences for SSNP members, various re-organizations of its internal power structure, and SSNP-initiated clandestine political attacks. SSNP supporters, among others of high rank in the Syrian military, overthrew al-Zaʿīm and his regime in August 1949, which resulted in the summary execution of al-Zaʿīm and his prime minister, Muḥsin al-Barāzi (68). Party members also carried out the assassination

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[51] The Katā'ib Party is better known in English as the Phalangist Party.

of the Lebanese Prime Minister Riyāḍ al-Sulḥ in July 1951. Additionally, the SSNP participated

in the non-violent White Coup, *al-inqilāb al-abyad*, and a series of failed election bids by

members in Lebanon.

Following a failed attempt at filling many election positions in the 1958 Lebanese

election, leadership of the SSNP transferred from ʿAbdallah Muḥsin to Dr. ʿAbdallah Saʿādeh,

who sought to "liberalize" the SSNP platform to sympathize more with Arab Nationalism and

Nasserism. According to Yamak, "These liberal ideas were not translated into practice owing

among other things to the inertia of authoritarian tradition in the party" (74). After only two

planning meetings, the coup attempt took place in the pre-dawn hours of December 31, 1961.

Party and non-SSNP collaborators from the Lebanese military succeeded in kidnapping a small

number of government officials as hostages. However, the coup ended within hours, and by

January 2, 1962, over 1,195 people had been arrested (75). The party was dissolved by Executive

Order from the Council of Ministers on January 1, 1962, and all of their papers were seized. All

told, the June 1962 trials, 79 conspirators were sentenced to death, 35 received life sentences,

and 186 were sentenced to varying terms (75). While many of the poets under discussion in this

chapter broke ranks with the party prior to the failed 1961 coup and the resulting mass

imprisonment of many party members, this event marks a significant breaking point in any

remaining aesthetic support from *Shiʿr* poets.

The SSNP's Relationship to Fascism

Colonial control of the Levant had been split between the British and French after the fall

of the Ottoman Empire at the close of World War I. Not long after, the Soviet Union, as well as

Italian and German fascist governments, began to court students in the Middle East, particularly

in Egypt and the Levant, with study abroad scholarships (Nordbruch "Students" 278-9). The

early influence of twentieth century European fascisms is undeniable within the SSNP, yet the extent of that influence and the extent to which the party differed from them is subject to continued debate. The orientation of Lebanon and newly administrated post-Ottoman entities toward different strands of nationalism takes into account current and prior economic, diplomatic, military, and administrative relations with Europe. Nordbruch suggests that "in contrast to France and Britain, Germany's image was not tainted by overt colonial ambitions" ("Students" 277). Yamak suggests that "while the SSNP was decidedly a dictatorial organization with strong fascistic tendencies, there was apparently no tangible evidence to prove its subservience to German and Italy" (59). Partisan Adel Beshara dismisses similar accusations in 1938: "The evidence was clearly lacking but Sa'adeh's anti-liberal and anti-parliamentary tendencies, his focus on discipline, youth, and nationalism, the cult of leadership and the swastika-like emblem of his party provided enough material to condemn him as a Nazi agent" (*Outright* 19). Party members contest this characterization of their imagery. In her 2016 article on the SSNP in Syria, Nour Samaha writes, "Party members deny these accusations, explaining the group's logo is actually based on a combination of the Christian cross and Islamic crescent, as well as an ancient Syrian logo found in Samara dating back over 5,000 years." Other critics, including Ehud Ya'ari, note the resemblance between the symbol of the SSNP, *al-zawbaʿa*, meaning "the hurricane," and a swastika set into motion. Yamak describes the emblem of the party as "a red swastika-like symbol" that is supposed to symbolize "the rise of the party and its struggle against the evils of the old social order, namely, that state of nature in which society is subordinated to the individual" (Yamak 173 n6).

French authorities in Lebanon characterized the SSNP as extensions of the German government on multiple occasions. Saʿādeh's 1936 charges centered on allegations of SSNP

collusion with the Italian fascist government. Before Saʿādeh's return to Brazil in 1938, he toured party branches in Palestine and then visited Italy and Germany on a visit that was described by the party as "purely informational" (qtd. in Yamak 59). However, following months of investigation in 1939 by the French authorities in Lebanon, the SSNP was released from charges of conspiring with the Germans. In June 1941, Vichy government representatives in Lebanon released all SSNP members who had been imprisoned since the beginning of World War II. The leadership element of the prisoners who were released in June 1941 was comprised of religious leaders in Lebanon[52]. According to Yamak, "Because of the background and general character of the personalities who composed it [the group of freed prisoners], the delegation could hardly be accused of harboring any sympathetic sentiment toward the Axis powers" (60). In the 1949 trial, which resulted in Saʿādeh's execution, as well as a later series of SSNP trials in 1955, the party was accused of being a puppet organization for western—British, French, and American—governments, and by extension, agents of Israel against the independence of Lebanon (Yamak 3, 161). While the later scatter-shot accusations obscured some of the inspiration that the SSNP may have taken from German and Italian fascisms and paint it solely as opportunistic organization seeking the destruction of the Lebanese state, the synthesis and adaptation of fascist thought was clear. The young authoritarian organization participated in the kind of ideological searching promoted in the *Nahḍa*: consider foreign sources, adopt useful strategies, abandon less useful ones, and adjust what has been adopted into a form that would be politically viable within local and regional contexts. A balance of influence from European

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[52] Among the prisoners released in June 1941 were Bishop Karam, Maronite Bishop of Mount Lebanon, Amir Amin Arslan, Camille Chamoun, Hasan Buhsuli, Khalil Muʾtaq, Shafiq Nasif, and the General Mufti of Lebanon (Yamak 60).

fascisms, internal calls for cultural change, and a historically oppositional relationship with

France and England contributed to the development of SSNP doctrine.

Nationalist organizations in the Levant in the 1930s took some cues from European

nationalisms, including German National Socialism, but did not appear to privilege the racialized

narrative forwarded by European fascists. Instead, the SSNP's call for national inclusion of

different groups in Greater Syria is based on the idea of a communal shared history of

cohabitation in the same geographic region over time. According to Nordbruch, discourse on the

important differences between a civically-oriented nationalist ideology and a racially- or

ethnically-organized system largely did not arise:

> An ideal-typical antagonism between 'ethnos' and 'demos', which juxtaposed a French
> republican understanding of the nation as a community of choice with a German
> biologistic concept of a natural *Volk*, rarely echoed in Arab nationalist discourses. While
> biological concepts of a distinct and pure communal entity appeared scientifically
> questionable, definitions of community that were based on supra-historical traits
> nevertheless allowed for a quasi-natural determination of communal boundaries. (*Nazism*
> 74)

Although the SSNP were not Nazis proper, nor were they directly descended from Italian

fascism, they were authoritarian nationalists engaging a mythological identity-building strategy

through a well-organized propaganda wing in order to convince people to abandon their most

important prior allegiances, to religion and associated confessional groups, in order to overthrow

the Lebanese government and install their representatives in the new system's highest posts.

Although outside of the scope of this dissertation, it is also essential to note that the current wing

of the SSNP in Syria provides militia support to Bashar al-Assad's dictatorial Baʿathist regime.[53]

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[53] After being banned in the 1970s from political participation in Syria, the SSNP again became a legal participant in
Syrian politics in 2006. Seemingly overcoming prior conflicts with the Baʿath Party, the SSNP's military arm,
The Eagles of the Whirlwind, was reported in 2016 to have between 6,000-8,000 armed members fighting in
Syria (Samaha; Australian Government). SSNP officials interviewed in Samaha's article claim that their goal
remains the unification of Greater Syria and the cultivation of a national renaissance through cultural and
educational campaigns; however, they claim that overthrow of the government is not a goal at this time.

The drive to characterize the SSNP as Nazis is reductionist and neglects the unique conditions of development in relation to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the co-development of other Levantine parties, not the least of which is the Baʿath party. However, it is not unfair to highlight influence of European fascisms on the party, as the SSNP was and remains an actively fascist, irredentist organization that demands complete adherence from its members.

The Cultural Agenda of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party

Poetic production in support of the SSNP began during the 1947 reorganization of the party and took fuller form in the 1950s, between Saʿādeh's execution 1949 and the failed 1961 coup. Yamak describes the SSNP's cultural agenda as a modernizing, westernizing, and secularizing force, with the aim of "the generation of a national renaissance" (90). This renaissance shares with the broader *Nahḍa* elements of openness to the West, secularization, and modernization of culture, yet in contrast to the intellectual visions of the *Nahḍa*, the SSNP's goal was consolidation of the various governments in the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean into SSNP control. The party adopted the *Nahḍa*'s critical reframing of the past for its political economy. The "national renaissance" is based on the SSNP's reform principles, *al-mabādi' al-iṣlāḥiyya,* and includes the full divorce of church and state, the abolition of sectarianism and the confessional system, the abolition of feudalism, and the rise of militarism and corporatism. Religion is viewed as a social construct and a source of division, rather than as a revelation from God. The SSNP's goal was the construction of a national identity that would essentially replace religion as the most important element binding the individual to society (Yamak 104).

As charismatic sole authority figure, Saʿādeh held the final judgment on party ideology. The reasoning behind many of the SSNP's platforms are laid out in Saʿādeh's books. He wrote his first long text, *Kitāb al-Taʿlīm, The Book of Teachings*, while in Brazil prior to 1929. His

second book, *Nashāt al-Umam*, *The Genesis of Nations*, was written from prison following the 1936 trial by French authorities in Lebanon for activities against the state[54]. The SSNP's cultural goals would be achieved through identity politics that first recast Syrians as descendants of Mesopotamian and Western culture, rather than Arab culture, a characteristic it shared with Lebanonism. Naming Syria the fountainhead of Mediterranean culture located Syria as progenitor of all Western culture, and SSNP-supportive cultural producers activated a sense of pre-Islamic and pre-Christian mythology toward this goal.

Saʿādeh's conception of the aggregation of regions within the Levant into Greater Syria is based in environmental determinism, which interprets social group formation as stemming from human responses to geographic and climatic pressures. In *Nashāt al-Umam / The Genesis of Nations*, Saʿādeh describes "nation" as "the material basis upon which a cultural structure arises" (Beshara *Syrian Nationalism* 72). Environment shapes the character of a group, and disparate groups in shared landscapes are similarly molded by it. The nation stems primarily from physical environment and the interaction of geography and group (Suleiman 166).

The SSNP contended with the ideas of both the Islamic Nation, *Umma Islāmiyya*, and the more secular-leaning Arab Nation, *al-Qawmiyya al-ʿArabiyya*. The SSNP rejected Arab Nationalism "not only because it is considered 'unscientific' and visionary, but also because it is regarded as being too dependent of traditional beliefs that are not compatible with the spirit of modernity." To Saʿādeh, "being Syrian is being rational (i.e., modern) while being Arab is being traditional (i.e., reactionary)" (Yamak 16). Traboulsi describes the SSNP as "anti-communist,

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[54] Yamak notes that Saʿādeh did not outline the sources that provided inspiration for his concept of Syrian Nationalism or the geographical unit of Greater Syria. Yamak suggests that "these concepts were prevalent both in Syria itself and among the Syrian immigrants in North and South America" (53). Textual sources Saʿādeh may have encountered include Philip Hitti's *Suriyya wa al-Suriyyun min Nafidhat al-Tārīkh* (*Syria and the Syrians in History*) (1926) and Henri Lammens' *La Syrie* (1921).

anti-Jewish, corporatist, and secularist" (102). One of the SSNP's main strategies to reach their

goal of building a unified nationalist identity in Greater Syria was through the dissemination of

their ideology through poetry. After Saʿādeh's quick execution by the Lebanese state in 1949, his

death transformed him, at least to his followers, into a Tammūzian figure.

Poetry's Role in the SSNP's Cultural Agenda

In the case of 1950s Lebanese avant-garde poetry, the cultural wing of the SSNP is made

up of educated, secular elites. In part through the transformation of the uses of the Arabic

language in poetry and a broader move toward secularism achieved partially through the

activation of myth in poetry, the SSNP's cultural wing facilitates the construction of a nationalist

identity to bind together Greater Syria through the identification of "resonance," to borrow

Schöpflin's term, between images or narratives that already hold gravity within the population

and can be activated through standardization of a shared experience:

> Language in the broad sense, including both symbolic and grammatical codes,
> exposes a community to a particular experience, to particular ways of constructing the
> world. Those who control the standardization process derive power from doing so, so that
> the question of who is able to control the myths of the collectivity is an important one.
> Those who can invoke myth and establish resonance can mobilize people, exclude others,
> screen out certain memories, establish solidarity or, indeed, reinforce the hierarchy of
> status and values. (Schöpflin 22)

The SSNP's cultural wing emphasized an idea of shared Mesopotamian identity that

predated Christianity and Islam in order to de-emphasize elements of identity seen as divisive to

the construction of a nation, namely the privilege of religious, sectarian, or confessional

affiliation. Individual agency and identity come under this dominion as well. The SSNP's

strategy of deindividualization is contained in Saʿādeh's concept of "social potentiality," or

imkāniyya ijtimāʿiyya. Yamak describes this condition as one of "self-fulfillment through self-

abnegation" in "constant service to the nation" (81). The nation was considered the highest ideal;

the individual only mattered in his or her social role. The activation of this concept in the

nationalist poetry of the 1950s directly contradicts the search for individual expression

characteristic of the preceding Romantic period as well as the upcoming Modernist period. The

drive to be part of something larger than one's self came to the forefront in the decade following

the establishment of independent nations in the Levant and in the larger *Iltizām* poetry

movement. The drive toward individual expression, albeit it in a significantly different manner,

returned by the late 1950s and early 1960s to displace poetry's subordination to political

agendas.

The SSNP agenda merges politics, poetry, and representations of landscape to forward a

"blood and soil" identity related to specific place and lineage, as well as a model open to the

secularizing cultural influences that would ultimately supplant revealed religion. However, any

outside influences would be subordinated to the party's advantage or rejected. The SSNP's active

courtship of poets bolstered its cultural agenda of invoking a politically useful version of a pan-

Syrian national identity across the Levant. The SSNP forwarded this worldview through the

activation of Mesopotamian mythology to function within the party's secular framework in order

to make use of symbology that could cultivate mutual resonance through recognition across

confessional lines. This ideological strategy ultimately sought to supplant revealed religions as

the dominant organizational framework of social and political grouping in the Levant and replace

them with a call for cultural renewal issued through the activation of pre-Christian and pre-

Islamic mythology specific to Greater Syria.

The following sections first explore the early poetry of Adūnīs and Rifqa for signposts of

ideological support for the SSNP's cultural agenda. Adūnīs' political affiliation with the SSNP in

his youth as well as his use of the Tammuzi myth in his 1954 long poem *Qālat al-Arḍ* point to

his support for the SSNP's cultural agenda in his poetry. Rifqa's early poetry published in *Shiʿr*

largely issues support for the SSNP's cultural agenda, but it does introduce a few points of subtle

conflict. Each poet begins to create distance between himself and the party. Adūnīs' 1956-1957

play, *A Madman among the Dead*, problematizes prior political allegiances through the portrayal

of a soldier still suffering from the trauma of recent experiences in armed conflict. Rifqa begins

the unmooring process by publishing significantly altered versions of poems published in *Shiʿr*

in 1957 and in his 1961 collection *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj / An Anchor on the Gulf*.

The SSNP's cultural wing had a broad reach. While not exhaustive, George Zeidan's list

includes Syrian nationalist George Maṣruʿa, who dedicated his novel *Ibn Zīkār*, a reimagining of

Phoenician travails against Alexander of Macedonia, to Saʿādeh. *Mahjar* poet Amīn al-Rīhānī

expressed support for the "Nationalist Party" in Lebanon and Syria. Saʿādeh also claimed credit

for suggestions that led to Saʿīd ʿAql's poetic play, *Qadmūs,* "in which he made use of the myth

of Cadmus, the ancient Syrian who taught the alphabet to the Greeks" (Zeidan 73). Arabic

poetry, which traditionally resisted change more than any other Arabic literary art, became the

vanguard of this cultural agenda, however short the period of direct poetic support may have

been. The SSNP resisted the influence of other predominately secular movements, such as pan-

Arab nationalism and Communism, as well as the religiously oriented Islamic Nationalism,

which were all circulating widely at the time.

Shiʿr and Yūsuf al-Khāl

A Lebanese poet of Syrian descent, Yūsuf al-Khāl (1917-1987) was born in the same

rural Greek Orthodox village as Rifqa. Al-Khāl also studied at the American University of Beirut

(AUB) and worked for a time in the United States. He was conversant with English and

American literature; Salma Khadra Jayyusi describes him as "deeply attached to Western culture

as a whole" (*Trends* 601). Prior to founding *Shiʿr,* Al-Khāl had for a period been an editor of the

SSNP periodical, *Al-Naḥḍa*, named for the "renaissance" toward which the SSNP strove (Zeidan

74). The same term is used in *Al-Nahḍa Al-ʿArabiyya,* the larger intellectual and cultural

movement that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. Although he officially left the party in

1947[55], Zeidan claims that Al-Khāl's subtle aesthetic support continued in his poetry through

references to historical and mythological Syrian personages revered by the SSNP and his

metaphors of sand and sea (92). Al-Khāl's poetry after his break with the party is characterized

largely by consideration of metaphysics from a Christian point of view. In 1956, while Al-Khāl

was working for the United Nations in New York as part of a Lebanese delegation headed by his

teacher, Charles Malik, he contacted Adūnīs, who had just fled Syria for Beirut, about

establishing a specialized journal for avant-garde poetry. The two met in Beirut in October 1956,

and the first issue of Shiʿr was released in January 1957.[56]

   Shiʿr was founded to "liberate poetry" from both traditional constraints and political

commitment, or *iltizām*. Al-Khāl outlined the following requirements of modern poetry, *al-shiʿr

al-ḥadīth*, in a lecture that stressed the unity of the entire poem, rather than metrical attention to

the line. Poetry should be "the expression of lived experience in its full truth" through the use of

living imagery rather than tired metaphors and rhetorical devices. Phraseology focused on new

approaches to experience would replace expressions that had "lost their vitality" through

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[55] Al-Khāl's separation from the party was published in *Al-Nahār* on December 11, 1947, which means that he left
    the party while Saʿādeh was still living. Born in 1917, Al-Khāl's direct participation in the SSNP predated that of
    Adūnīs and Rifqa, who were both born in 1930.

[56] Although Adūnīs was involved in the planning, editing, translation, arrangement, and formatting for the first issue
of *Shiʿr* alongside Yūsuf al-Khāl, his name is not listed in the front matter or given credit for his role on the editorial
board. According to ʿAbduh Wāzin's 2010 interview with Adūnīs, this omission was by Adūnīs' request ("Arab
Nationalism" n.p.). Adūnīs' name appears as the *Sikritīr al-Taḥrīr*, or the Editorial Secretary, in the final 1957 issue
(*Shiʿr* 1.4 p. 2), although Adūnīs had been working with al-Khāl to launch *Shiʿr* for more than a year (Wāzin "Arab
Nationalism" n.p.).

continuous use. New contexts demanded new rhythms, and new expressions demanded new poetic structures that contribute to organic unity. The focus of poetry should be humanity and distinctly human experiences. One of the ways this can be achieved is through an informed critical relationship with the "Arab spiritual and intellectual heritage" and to be unafraid of sharing one's assessment. A similar approach should be taken, according to Al-Khāl, with European spiritual and intellectual heritage as well as with "the great achievements of poets elsewhere in the world." The final point suggests al-Khāl's vision of landscape representations as subordinated to expression of the human condition: "There should be a fusion with the spirit of the people and not with nature. The people are an inexhaustible source of life; nature is a temporary and changing state" (Jayyusi *Trends* 570-2). While all of these goals were not immediately achieved, the work done by members of the *Shiʿr* group, *Jamaʿāt Majallat Shiʿr*, brought about necessary changes in both the expression of individual experience and the subordination of landscape representations to language rather than political economy. The works under investigation in the remainder of this chapter make this transition in a step-wise manner.

The publication and popularity of *Shiʿr* encouraged direct participation and lively debate between poets both in print and in person; al-Khāl hosted a weekly Thursday night open house, *Khamīs Majallat Shiʿr,* at his home in Ras Beirut for poets, critics, and admirers of poetry. Jayyusi notes that politics, Lebanese and Syrian nationalisms, commonly arose as topics of conversation at the Thursday salons ("Modernist" 158-9). Publication of the journal continued until 1964 and resumed from 1967-1969, totaling forty-four volumes in eleven years. Politics and personalities clashed frequently, and Adūnīs left the journal to found his own poetry publication, *Mawāqif,* in 1964. Although the publication run for *Shiʿr* lasted for only a decade,

its contribution to the development of modernity in avant-garde Arabic poetry through

publication of original poetry, translations, and poetic theory is foundational.

What is Arab Modernism?

As in many other places, though on an accelerated timeline, the spirit of innovation

present in Romanticism became the standard in avant-garde Arabic poetry, and as the standard,

became a site of rejection in favor of a new poetic. Arab Romanticism peaked between World

War I and World War II, but the changing political, social, and economic realities of the post-

war period, including the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, created a reaction against

the perceived sentimentality of the Romantic forest visionaries. The Romantics were innovative

in their context as compared to those who maintained traditional practices, yet the Romantic

style fell short of reflecting the conflicts of the post-independence period. Romantic poets

dreamed of the nation to come; poets of the 1950s onward had to mediate life in the newly

established nations. Avant-garde modernist Arab poets were informed by changes of the

preceding period, "modern" classical poets, each other, and a new set of western poets and

philosophers, including T. S. Eliot and Jean Paul Sartre. Jayyusi notes that

> In a mechanistic, urban and middle-class order language has become cerebralized. The
> industrial order, mass democracy, the concept of efficiency, 'have destroyed the still
> point within the spirit', for technological society has demanded that people cultivate the
> conscious powers of their mind and will in order to deal with the linguistic anarchy
> created by the new age. Thus modern poetry is permeated by a sense of homelessness.
> The god, to use Pound's phrase, is locked inside the stone. ("Modernist" 135)

While the revolution of form occurred in the late 1940s, it was the early 1960s before

content reached a comparable level of change. The transition to modernism demanded appraisal

of the individual's role in a world vastly different from that of preceding poets. Re-assessment of

literary and cultural history plays a prominent role in the transition of the content of poetry from

Romantic to Modern. Writing from the mid-1980s, Adūnīs names the cyclical re-emergence of

"the ancient" a symptom of underlying conflicts in the internal and external relations of Arab

society:

> The problem of poetic modernity (*ḥadātha*) in Arab society goes beyond poetry in the narrow sense and is indicative of a general cultural crisis, which is in some sense a crisis of identity. This is linked to both an internal power struggle which has many different aspects and operates on various levels, and to an external conflict against foreign powers. It would appear that the return to the ancient has been more eagerly pursued whenever the internal conflict has intensified or the danger from outside has grown more acute. In Arab society today we find a powerful extension of this historical phenomenon which confirms our observation. (*An Introduction* 76-7)

The political economy of poetry in the Arab world, a rapidly transforming Arabic poetic, and the proliferation of translations of western literature create an environment that demands expressive forms. These forms must look inward to find a new sense of self, outward at European and American literary works, forward to a new future, and back at the development of Arabic poetic tradition, at the same time. Familiarity with European and American literature, whether read in translation or in the original language, is often credited with fomenting the revolution of content. However, Zeidan maintains that the influence of the SSNP, which he refers to as "The Syrian Party," outweighs the influence of western literature: "The Arab poets who initiated the artistic use of myth (particularly, myths of Canaanite and Babylonian origins) were inspired by the precepts of the Syrian Party. They did not acquire this technique from Western poetry as some critics enthusiastically contend" (74). While this chapter argues that poets' relationships to the SSNP and their break from it characterize the broadest level of influence that has also received the least attention, the contributions of western authors, particularly T. S. Eliot, to modern avant-garde poetry in Arabic are significant.

T. S. Eliot

Perhaps the most influential western writer to the development of poetic modernity in

Arabic is T. S. Eliot. The translations of Eliot's work, according to Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi,

"should be looked at with seriousness, as their timely appearance helped in directing attention towards a non-Romantic stance, an objectification of experience that suited the pose of the poet as a public intellectual" (177). The role of the poet was again in flux; public declamatory poetry had been all but dispensed with in the elite sphere, but there was still a need for engagement with and reflection on the realities of current lived experience.

Eliot's 1919 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" appeared in at least four different Arabic translations during the 1950s and 1960s[57] (Musawi 172). In this essay, Eliot explores the ways in which a modern poet acts both as an individual and as a part of his tradition. The "historical sense" of poetry he discusses is necessary to locate the poet in relation to his predecessors and also to locate the poet's pathway to future innovation; awareness of one's location in the continuum of artistic production in this way is well demonstrated by the historical and creative continuum conjured by Adūnīs in historical reimaginings like *Mihyār of Damascus*. According to Badawi, "Poets of the modernist temper followed Eliot in rethinking tradition, which was kept alive for Eliot, in Jabra's words, 'by the interaction between the new and the old through individual talent, which acted as catalyst'" (*Critical* 178). Another essay, "The Function of Criticism" (1923) became available to Arab thinkers at around the same time and appealed to many based on Eliot's exploration of "the role of literature in the formation of political and cultural consciousness" and served as a "poetics of challenge and innovation" (Musawi 173).

Yūsuf al-Khāl joined Adūnīs in translating *The Wasteland* in 1958. Other poets, most notably Iraqi pote Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, derived much influence from Eliot's poetry and critical writing. Al-Khāl was influenced both by Ezra Pound and Eliot while in the United States, and he published an anthology of translations in 1958 which included Emerson, Longfellow, Poe,

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[57] Translators include Rashād Rushdī (1951), Munaḥ Khūrī (January 1955), Muḥammad Musṭafā Badawī (May 1956 and June 1956), and Laṭifah al-Zayyāt (1964) (Musawi 172).

Thoreau, Whitman, Dickinson, Hilde Doolittle, Wallace Stevens, E. E. Cummings, William

Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, John Crow Ransom, Auden, and Robert Lowell, to name a

few. Additionally, al-Khāl translated Robert Frost in 1962 (Badawi *Critical* 242). The

Palestinian poet Tawfīq Sayigh's (1923-1971) translation of Eliot's *Four Quartets* was published

in 1970. Issa Boullata offers an Eliotian description of Sayigh's poetic contributions: "The poem

for him was a completely free verbalization of human experience communicated aesthetically to

the reader not only in order to induce a correlative experience if well received, but mainly in

order to relieve the poet himself of an inner power that rose painfully in him like an electric

charge" (74-75).

Like Wordsworth, Eliot was also well known for his discussion of a revolution of

common speech. This tendency was similarly reflected to some extent in modern Arabic poetry.

While one must acknowledge one's position in the continuum of literary tradition, one must also

look the kind of speech in use. Jayyusi reminds us that some characteristics of the New Poetry

that follow this line are the "loosening of metrical forms" as well as "the insistence on

conciseness and economy, on terseness of expression, on concreteness of imagery, on

contemporaneity of spirit, on the tendency towards a language and rhythm nearer to the language

and rhythms of common speech, and on a modern day poetic idiom" (*Trends* 749). However, it

would be decades before poetic voices would be heard widely in dialect.

Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's 1957 translation of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* inspired

many modern Arab poets and provided a virtual wellspring of research material. One significant

element at play in later iterations of avant-garde modern poetry in Arabic is the objective

correlative. In "Hamlet and His Problems", Eliot describes the objective correlative:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective
> correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be

the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (*The Sacred Wood* 92)

Rifqa's later poetry will utilize the objective correlative using landscape as an expressive device to investigate the individual's relation to time and language.

Tammūz and Images of Seasonal Cycles

The figure of Tammūz, representative of the vegetative myth revived from Mesopotamian mythology, is a widely utilized symbol of the life-death-resurrection cycle in modern Arabic poetry. Nahḍa discourse and SSNP doctrine both locate this figure firmly in the idea of cultural renaissance through metaphorical rebirth. A central question to the development of modern Arabic poetry in Lebanon in the 1950s is to what extent the Tammuzi myth intertwines with nationalist agendas and to what extent it derives from the influence of western literature versus the SSNP's cultural agenda. Images of other resonant regenerative mythologies—the Phoenix, Adonis, and Christ—merge with the Tammuzi myth to both reinforce and problematize concepts of nation and relationships to nationalist organizations.

As a seasonal vegetative myth, invocation of Tammūz provides a direct link between people and land, and in the SSNP's case, between the shared development of what the SSNP termed a historically continuous Syrian community and the land itself. Saʿādeh defined the nation "in terms of 'blood and soil,' of biology and geography" (Yamak 80). The implementation of the cyclical vegetative myth of Tammūz is merged in some poetry with images of the Phoenix, the Hellenic Adonis, and Jesus Christ. Allusions to the ancient gods, *al-āliha al-qadima*, rather than the monotheistic God of Islam and Christianity, *Allah*, constitute a second order of mythological hierarchy. These references were utilized in order to create a sharp differentiation between Syrian communities, which the SSNP viewed as descending directly

from Mesopotamian culture, and Arab communities, which the SSNP viewed as originating from the Arabian Gulf states and as unalterably tied to Islam.

Jabrā comments on parallels between the stories of Christ and Tammūz with the poet-as-individual: "'The return to God, or the imitation of Christ, or the apotheosis of man; these three elements are, in fact, one, if we remember the symbolic equation from which the poems [of the Diwan, *The Deserted Well*, by al-Khāl] derive their meaning and their beauty: land and water are Tammuz, Tammuz is Christ, and Christ is man in whom the overcoming of death is realized'" (qtd. in Zeidan 87). The call for cultural revival required exploration of the role of the poet as an individual. The first Tammuzic image under investigation belongs to Adūnīs.

Adūnīs's Ideological Poetry and Initial Ruptures

Multiple accounts exist of how ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd Isbar adopted the pen name Adūnīs. In a 2010 interview with Hanna Ziadeh for the Louisiana Channel, the poet attributed his name to the connection he made between the mythological Adonis's death by wild boar and his own difficulties publishing poetry at the age of fifteen. He began signing his poetry with the pen name Adūnīs, and the first poem submitted under his pseudonym was published enthusiastically by a journal that he does not identify in the interview ("Adonis Interview" 00:05:20-00:07:58). Zeidan argues, although somewhat vaguely, that "it is said that the pen name of the latter poet, 'Adūnīs,' was chosen by Saʿādah himself" which "indicated the importance that the leader attached to the myth of Adonis and to its implications" (Zeidan 74). Franck Salameh confirms Saʿādeh's selection of his pen name, citing Syrian philosopher Ṣadīq Jalal al-ʿAzm's detailed description of a young Isbar reading adulatory poetry to Saʿādeh during a 1947 "pastoral visit" to the Syrian coast and Adūnīs's village of Qaṣābīn[58]. Salameh notes that "Adonis, then still a

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[58] Saʿādeh was executed in the summer of 1949.

young Ali, alongside a group of local SSNP partisans, formed the welcoming company sent to acclaim the visiting Zaim" or leader ("Adonis" 44). Conflicting narratives surrounding the origin of the poet's pen name demonstrate that controversy consistently accompanies discussions of this poet, who is regarded widely as the leading living Arab avant-garde poet, and of prior political affiliations.

Adūnīs was born in 1930 in the agricultural village of Qaṣābīn in the Lādhiqīya (Latakia) region of French-mandated Syria. The region had been historically named Laodicea by the Seleucid-era Greeks and Laodicea ad Mare by the Romans. Although Adūnīs did not receive formal education outside of his village until 1943, his father encouraged deep engagement with classical and pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Adūnīs's entrance into formal education came in 1943 when the then thirteen-year old poet maneuvered his way into reading a poem for the newly installed president of the First Syrian Republic, Shukrī al-Quwatlī, who was touring the newly independent nation. In the same interview, Adūnīs reports that al-Quwatlī cited a line from his poem in a presidential speech—"For us you are the sword, / for you we are the sheath"—before organizing the young poet's education at the last remaining French lycée school remaining in Syria, located in Ṭarṭūs (00:01:25-00:05:20). Mirene Ghossein's introduction to Samuel Hazo's translation of Adūnīs's work, *The Blood of Adonis*, confirms this story in less detail (xiii). It is against the backdrop of his love of poetry and knowledge of its utility, a newly independent nation, and the strong regional presence of the SSNP that Adūnīs began his poetic career. This association would carry through Adūnīs's education in Syria, his official Syrian military service, and this eventual imprisonment alongside other SSNP members arrested in response to the assassination of Colonel ʿAdnān al-Mālikī[59] (Yamak 70; Zeidan 85).

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[59] Colonel ʿAdnān al-Mālikī was assassinated on April 22, 1954, by an officer in the Syrian national forces who was also a member of the SSNP.

As early as his 1954[60] poem "Qālat al-Arḍ" / "The Earth Said," Adūnīs invokes the life-death-rebirth cycle of Tammūz as a resonant symbol. Zeidan argues that this poem is a eulogy for Saʿādeh: the earth "is eternal while man is mortal. But the interaction between man and the earth, and vice versa, along successive periods of time constitutes one nation" (75). The young poet laments: "Why do I wake up to find that / neither my field is verdant nor my / hills are blossoming?" (75)[61]. The association of Tammūz is implied through the red anemone flower that is not blossoming in the field. The anemones are replaced by images of parched land: "Dryness blossoms, and death / lives in it, and abolished the / impossible" (Zeidan 76). In the third part of this four-part poem, Adūnīs emphasizes that "the wound of Tammūz" is a call for revolt, and in the fourth section, the poet feels the "nation" running through his veins: "All of it is in my blood and I am wholly in it" (77). This acts as a call to action: the nation that follows Saʿādeh will enact the rebirth of his goals: "The youths of my country are singing / their innocent songs / they say: there is revolution in / our land… / re-creating the life of the / coming morrow" (77). In this poem, resurrection occurs not with the eulogized, but with those who carry on his message.

Zeidan argues that SSNP doctrine shaped the early ideological orientations of both Adūnīs and Yūsuf al-Khāl (70). This influence, above and beyond exposure to western Modernist poetry, created the original impetus for affiliated poets to turn to the use of mythological themes. As opposed to his later poetry, the early phase of Adūnīs' poetry contained simpler diction, statements that approach completion, and a clear message. Zeidan contends that Adūnīs wanted to "appeal to the widest audience in an attempt to achieve the socio-political targets," thus rendering Adūnīs' use of resonant mythological structures "comprehensible for the

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[60] This poem was likely written during his period of study between 1950-1954 at the Syrian University in Damascus, now called Damascus University.
[61] Translated selections from "Qālat al-Arḍ" under consideration here belong to Joseph Zeidan.

average reader" (85). The singing youths of the as-of-yet unrealized nation represent Saʿādeh's

concept of social potentiality, *imkāniyya ijtimāʿiyya.* This concept resonates through Adūnīs's

transition from eulogy to call to action, from a feeling of loss to one of empowerment through

the realization of the nation.

If the tone and content of the eulogy "Qālat al-Arḍ" represent Adūnīs' work in the first

half of the 1950s, his 1955 play, *Majnūn bayna al-Mawtā / A Madman among the Dead,* points

to major ruptures with his previous tone, content, form, and expression of political commitment.

The difference between "The Earth Said" and *A Madman among the Dead* demonstrates the first

major reorganization of the logic of landscape in his work as well as a reassessment of the

individual. The "tragedy in four scenes," as it is subtitled, was the first work Adūnīs published in

Shiʿr with attribution. The play appeared in the journal's first issue in the winter of 1957. Adūnīs

wrote the play in 1955 while incarcerated in al-Qunaytrā prison, a military prison in Syria[62], on

political charges related to SSNP membership (Wāzin "Arab Nationalism"). He had been serving

in the Syrian military prior to his imprisonment. Following a year in prison, Adūnīs left Syria for

Lebanon in 1956 and quickly gained Lebanese citizenship. In Beirut, Adūnīs began working with

Yūsuf al-Khāl to publish the first issue of the foundational avant-garde poetry journal *Shiʿr* in

January 1957.

Zeidan argues that Adūnīs remained politically committed to the SSNP while in Lebanon

and this necessarily shaped his poetry (85). However, the following investigation of *A Madman*

among the Dead seeks to problematize Adūnīs's relationship to the doctrines of environmental

determinism and social potentiality central to SSNP ideology. While the poet may have

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[62] Al-Qunaytrā prison was a military prison in Syria, not to be confused with the infamous Moroccan prison of a similar name that is still in operation, which largely houses suspects of terrorism.

maintained sympathies with the party during the late 1950s, this previously untranslated[63] play

reveals deep anxieties toward both the ideological and geographical future of the party in

conjunction with the human toll of maintaining allegiances that lead to violent conflict.

In what appears to be in line with the Romantic tradition of dialectic in the forest, Adūnīs

places his focal character and the disembodied voices of the dead in an exchange that takes place

in a liminal natural space that serves mainly as setting for their dialogue. However, as the tragedy

progresses, the setting becomes increasingly central to both the plot of the play and to the

metaphorical relationships between geographic space, past and future anxieties, and poetry.

In this play, the protagonist is referred to as *al-Jundī*, or the Soldier. The Soldier

experiences visual and aural hallucinations of other disembodied entities, *Aṣwāt*, or voices, of

those who were killed around him in battle. A final entity, *al-Ṣada*, or the Echo, represents the

voice of poetry. Although the physical reality of the battlefield is behind him and the Soldier has

returned to his village, the Soldier remains vigilant against an unnamed threat. In the opening

scene, the Soldier keeps watch over his village by marching its perimeter alone at night. Stage

direction notes that "he sings and ties the laces of his military boots, which have stayed with him

for some reason" after his military service ended. In this play, the battlefield is represented as

distant from his peaceful, solitary surroundings. It is no longer of direct danger to the Soldier, but

it is very much present in his mind. Even after leaving the front, the front still negatively affects

the soldier.

A disembodied sound referred to as the Echo interrupts the Soldier, who is singing alone

on his self-imposed night watch, by occasionally repeating rhyming sounds from the Soldier's

disconnected songs. In the first scene, the Soldier attempts to ignore the Echo. However, his

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[63] My translation of this play is included in Appendix A.

attempts to ignore it result in increasing feelings of anxiety in his song: "The silence of echoes speaks in my ear / insisting that I have become disfigured / that I am, now, revolting / What was potential in my soul and my full form grows feeble / Everything I wished for was a mirage, everything I collected was mere wind" (28). The stage direction preceding the Echo's final repetition of rhyming sounds, "[the Echo] is heard long and sharp," closes the first scene with a sense of increasing interaction to come. A tone of doubt about ideological commitment and self dominates the Soldier's utterances early in the play.

In the second scene, the Soldier first listens to and then interacts with distinct disembodied voices who express regret and despair at their current states. One voice exhorts the Soldier to bring him the shroud that the speaker made before he died. Another asks what has been said about him since his death. A third considers a poem that his "veins and sinews" wrote before his death, and the final disembodied voice in this scene describes the "child frolicking within [his] ribs" who "cavorts in the hills, lost in the grassland." The Soldier, curious and frightened of what the voices want from him, responds with questions as his anxiety rises: "What is the difference, in my death, if the star were to engulf me or if tar were to suck me under?" The scene closes on the Soldier's further expression of futility: "Our existence is merely a haze / and we in the haze are destinies / Life has no secrets / and in death there is nothing new to see." References throughout the poem to "haze," *sadīm*, share morphological resonance with other derivations of the root letters *sa-da-ma* (س-د-م). Related meanings include references to "anxiety," often coupled with "repentance," "wrath," or "rage, together with grief" (Lane 1334), further emphasizing the Soldier's overwhelming sense of doubt and displacement, even on the perimenter of his natal village.

The third scene opens with stage direction that emphasizes the increased fervor of the Soldier after he is further disturbed by two simultaneous natural phenomena: "At this moment, a meteor falls from the sky, and the barking of a fox disturbs the encompassing quiet" which elicits in the Soldier "strange and ambiguous emotions mirrored in the furrows of his face." The voices' questions turn to demands—"Make my chest and the scraps of flesh on it and its crucifix / songs for the beloved"—demanding that the Soldier mold language to appeal to those who are moldering beneath the surface. This discursive space exists between his mind and the mountain slope upon which he is standing. The Soldier responds by rejecting the "haze." This haze, which he mentioned at the end of the second scene, represents the ideological impulse that sent his compatriots to their unmarked graves and that has transformed his mental environment: "The filth of the haze / and death and vainglory, useless / and impossible, / dust amassed of frozen destiny melts away in my veins." At this point, one of the voices begins to directly interact with the Soldier, responding to the prior line with "That, that filth / upon the brows of the people defiles every tomorrow." The relationship between "haze" and "anxiety" merges into what Adūnīs is presenting as false consciousness. At first, the soldier does not seem to hear the voice. When this voice responds again to the Soldier, it demands that the Soldier reject death: "Get up / flee from death—roll your sleeves up and run." The Soldier's response below indicates estrangement from the idea of time:

> The Soldier: How...how, how do I rise?
> While Death in my sinews
> inside me
> opening his eyes to see my disfigurement and then closing them
> (He stops for a moment, then says in continuation):
> In my body resides the weight of time
> the weight of destruction and the ruin
> in my body there is the hand of the shroud
> the hand of decay
> (After a brief moment and with a lack of care)

In the body there is pure Being and non-Being
like the waves in the struggle never resting
my life is bereft of yesterday and any present.

The Soldier describes feeling the "weight of time" in his body yet denies the experience

of or potential for time to be an organizing factor in his experience. In the fourth and final scene,

the Echo and the Voice respond together in one voice, which sonically demonstrates further

estrangement from time and a cohesive sense of self. Throughout the play, instances of the

Echo's vocalizations occur after the Soldier's utterances. Initially, the Echo as character returns

resonant sounds from other sources, as any echo would. In the final scene, the Echo gains agency

and the time lapse between utterance and return collapses. The Echo blends with a single

disembodied voice to provide answers to the Soldier's questions. These answers are directly

voiced yet ambiguous. The scene opens on the Soldier muttering "What is going to happen?", to

which the Voice responds, "Paralysis, miscarriage…it flies." In response to the Soldier's

question, "What is the beginning?", the Echo and Voice reply together, "All that became an

ending." This simultaneous response collapses the temporal concepts of beginning and ending as

the Soldier's voice merges with Voice and Echo.

Perhaps the most important plot detail in the final scene exists in its initial stage direction,

which notes that the Soldier's shoes remain untied as he paces along the edge of the slope. After

the initial conversation in which the Echo and Voice become univocal, the Soldier appears to trip

over his shoelaces and tumbles down the hill. While the stage direction does not directly state

that he tripped over his shoe laces, the Soldier's mental state causes him to be less spatially

aware of his surroundings and the dangers of the immediate physical environment. In the third

scene, the Soldier had described his mental state as "Like a stone / I do not feel / I cannot / My

existence is embodied in a tattered shoe." This comparison between his state of being and the

material evidence of his military service reinforces that remnants of the past remain to problematize visions of the future or render them impossible.

As the Soldier tumbles down the mountainside, vocalizations from the Soldier, the Echo, and the Voices merge simultaneously with the sound of his trundling fall. The structure of the play no longer differentiates between the speakers of different lines—the play ends with an extended moment of polyphony as the Soldier falls, possibly to his death. The final multivocal, unattributed section of the play resembles poetry more than drama in its presentation:

> Because we are potential
> and bubbles and mirage
> because we are youths
> the soil is enlivened by us
> And so are the worms and the ruin
> Because we are from nothingness   we keep running after nothingness
> a river of blood,
> live nothingness
> and from its very beginning, live nothingness
> And dismembered limbs and a bullet
> The wordiness and the summary
> And the strange absurdity
> And the fire and the flame
> Live death
> Live the emptiness and live the uselessness.
> Die, kill yourself
> or be victorious.

Conflicting methods of mediation of the Soldier's state come through in this polyphonic final section. The initial line of this section, "Because we are potential," is followed by a line, presumably from another voice, that counters the possibility of real change: "and bubbles and mirage." The next dialectic pairing of outcomes follows the statement, "because we are youths." The initial response is a Tammuzi reference, "the soil is enlivened by us," that is immediately countered by a gruesome and more realistic one, "and so are the worms and the ruin." The final sentence is made up of three imperative statements: "Die, kill yourself / be victorious." The

ambiguity of the source of these statements and their disagreements prevent the text's ideological closure.

The conclusion of this tragedy points to the deleterious mental effects of both participating in gruesome battle and having one's ideological system collapse. When the Echo and the voices blend, they answer the Soldier's existential questions in a single voice. In the final section, all voices blend and create a polyphonic yet de-individualized subjectivity that combines the Echo, the unified voices, and the Soldier without differentiation. The combination of the Soldier's post-traumatic auditory hallucinations provides a stage upon which an initial rupture within the individual's past allegiances occurs. The rupture expands to rend apart the Soldier's conception of time and eventually ruptures the form of the play itself by collapsing the voices of all entities in the play into a deindividualized polyphonic final section of chaotic poetry. One element of the original Arabic play that is not demonstrated in my translation is the level of poetic organization the final section achieves; the final seventeen lines are introduced with a rhymed couplet, a tercet, and then six successive independently rhymed couplets.[64] The final rupture presented in this play, the deindividualized polyphonic section itself being a poem, foregrounds the creative potential inherent in the genre of poetry. The final line, "Die, kill yourself / or be victorious," provides the only suggestion throughout the entire play that any way out of suffering could exist. It would be tempting to end discussion on this single note of potential for the Soldier, but this poetic experience is occurring as he is tumbling, perhaps toward his death, down the side of a mountain. The potential for experience to be structured by language is hindered by the peril of the landscape itself. This landscape, as a site of conflict and in its

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[64] The use of grammatical case endings in Arabic allows for considerably more malleability of rhyme than is possible in English. My further translation work on this play will work to approximate the rhyme structure of the original.

relationship to politically useful mythologies, destroys those within it. *A Madman among the Dead* highlights the dangers of the subordination of poetic landscape to nationalist ideologies and offers a glimmer of an alternative through the mediation of poetry.

A Madman among the Dead also marks the beginning stages of Adūnīs' critical consideration of his relationship to his poetic predecessors. While this initial iteration is incomplete and somewhat ambiguous, the play expresses the anxiety the individual feels when trying to compose something original in light of so much prior input. While the Voice and voices persist, they are without form or vision, *ruʿiyā*. All that remains of the Soldier's fallen compatriots are disembodied voices punctuated with a rhyming echo. The section of poetry that concludes the final scene is an aggregate created of new material and echoes of lines from other sources included throughout the play.

The most significant rupture would come in 1961 with Adūnīs' publication of *Aghānī Mihyār al-Dimashqī / Mihyar of Damascus: His Songs*, written while Adūnīs was studying in France for a year on scholarship. *Mihyar* is a reimagining of the eleventh-century Persian poet, Mihyār of Daylam, from the point of view of the modern poet. A convert from Zoroastrianism to Shiʿa Islam, the historical Mihyār "launched a rebellious voice within the political and religious culture" (Haydar and Beard 12). What appeals to Adūnīs in this figure is that he "stood far enough outside the tradition to ensure its dynamism" (12). Adūnīs adopts this persona as alter-ego, relocates him from Daylam to Damascus, and fully restructures landscape representation as a function of language. Further, Haydar and Beard argue that

> In Adonis's Mihyar poems the *expression* of the narrative is itself the narrative. We speak of sound and sense as separate entities; we speak of poetry as the place where they cooperate. This scenario, where a voice complains of its own death, to words, about Mihyar, seems a fundamental statement of the values and risks of writing lyric poetry. Mihyar is not so much a character whose actions are described via language as a

character located in the machinery of language. To talk about Mihyar is to discuss what poetry can do. (Introduction to *Mihyar* 14)

The publication of *Mihyar* signals the first major rupture with tradition in a career that would come to be characterized by series of ruptures (Haydar and Beard 11-12). In this 1961 text, Adūnīs fully redirects representations of landscape from functions of political utility into functions of the exploration of language and his relation as a poet to his predecessors. The latter sense relates directly to Harold Bloom's concept of misprision, or strong misreading: "In ways that need not be doctrinal, strong poems are always omens of resurrection. The dead may or may not return, but their voice comes alive, paradoxically never by mere imitation, but in the agonistic misprision performed upon powerful forerunners by only the most gifted of their successors" (xxiv). Adūnīs' adoption of the alter-ego of Mihyar is not based in imitation or mere reverence, but in a full reimagining and relocation of a historical figure that in turn expresses the modern poet's role vis-à-vis an innovator of a prior period.

This collection is comprised of seven sections of poetry. Save the final section of elegies, each section opens with a prose-poem, referred to as a psalm or *mazmūr,* that introduces each division's theme. In the first section, "The Knight of Strange Words," the introductory psalm describes Mihyar as the bearer of a dialectic inner nature through the use of landscape and atmospheric references:

> He arrives unarmed, a forest, a cloud not to be warded off. Yesterday he lifted up a continent and moved the sea from its place.
> He draws the back side of day. He fashions a day from his feet. He borrows night's shoes and waits for what will not come. He is the physics of things—he knows them and he calls them by names he will not disclose. He is reality and its contrary, life and its other. (*Mihyar* 23)

While in the introductory psalm to the first section, Mihyar exists in the third person, in the second section, "The Sorcerer of Dust," the speaker begins to assume the alter-ego of an

alternative Mihyar. Emphasis remains on the dialectic nature of the focal character: "I am both a prophet and a doubter. / I knead the rising dough of fallen time, then leave the past to its fallen self. I choose to be myself" (37). In the same paragraph, Adūnīs connects the speaker's assumption of this alter-ego to the dialectic interplay of language: "Flattening current time, I roll it into armor. I call out, 'Dwarf giant, giant dwarf'—I laugh, I cry" (37). Here, Adūnīs draws attention to the malleability of meaning via syntax. A simple reversal of order—in both Arabic and in English in this case—reverses the function of each word from noun to adjective. Upon a matrix of grammatical change, Adūnīs rewrites poetic history. This initial rupture is a portent of the depth of Adūnīs's historical reimaginings and reconsiderations of tradition vis-à-vis the individual, the poet, in modernity.

In this section, Adūnīs addresses the subordination of landscape representations in poetry to political economy through the poem, "King over the Winds":

My flag takes sides
with no fraternal pact.
It flutters alone,
my songs a faction in themselves.

Here I am mobilizing the flowers, enlisting the trees.
The sky I redesign in colonnades.
I experience love. I live. I'm born into words.

Here I am rounding up butterflies
under the auspices of morning.

I nurture the fruits.
We go home for the night, the rain and I,
home in the clouds with their bells, home in the sea.

Here I am launching the stars and fastening them down,
proclaiming myself king over the winds. (*Mihyar* 43-44)

The speaker of "King over the Winds" claims a fleeting ownership of geographic space through the composition of poetry rather than a nationalistic organization, as shown in the

speaker's rejection of his flag's alliance with a "fraternal pact" (43). The pairing of marital

images with elements of landscape and atmosphere, such as "enlisting the trees," underscores the

speaker's rejection of prior configurations. Haydar and Beard's rendering of the phrases

"mobilizing the flowers" and "enlisting the trees" reflects the distance between nature and

nationalism present in Adūnīs' original line, in which the term *aḥshud* reflects the gathering of

troops (Wehr 210) and *astanfir* reflects two meanings that stand in contradiction to each other:

"to be frightened away; to call upon […] to fight […], call out […] to go to war." Additionally,

the related term *nafar* and its plural *anfār* refer to soldier(s) generally or more specifically those

at the rank of private (Wehr 1154). The multiple possibilities of meaning inherent in Adūnīs'

etymological choices become clear when one considers another term related to *astanfir*, *nafra*,

which means "aversion, distaste, dislike, antipathy" (1154). The final four lines of this poem

point to the chasm of language Adūnīs seeks to conjure by splitting the concept of home equally

between sky and ocean: "home in the clouds with their bells, home in the sea." The final couplet

describes the simultaneous inward and outward motion of the speaker "launching the stars and

fastening them down" as he claims dominion over the invisible currents of movement of the

wind (44). In this simultaneous action of freeing and restricting, attention is drawn to the poet.

The unrestrained movement of wind that creates change through language symbolizes the poet's

work of generating meaning through the malleability of language.

Haydar and Beard note the lack of signification on the flag: "As king of the winds he

makes us notice not anything written on the flag but the forces of nature flowing over it" (*Mihyar*

18). In this move, Adūnīs has severed the link between banner and band, between flag and

organization or country, between the sign and signifier. It is in this space that language itself

becomes the structure upon which landscape elements are overlaid in order to emphasize their

subordination to language rather than party or nation. This is a double move: Adūnīs also reorganizes landscape through the logic of language by re-assessing his position in light of the iconoclastic historical Persian poet, Mihyar of Daylam.

Contemporary to Adūnīs's rupture with ideological poetry, Rifqa also reorganizes landscape representations toward a logic of language rather than a logic of conquest. However, their specific approaches—Adūnīs through historical reassessment and Rifqa through revision—differ greatly. In this difference, each poet defines himself up and against the history of poetry. In Adūnīs' case, this redefinition is within the Arabic poetic tradition; Rifqa, on the other hand, defines his unique contributions to modern Arabic poetry through commitment to philosophical and philological inquiry through engagement with German poetry.

Rifqa's Ideological Poetry and the Origins of Revision

Although specific information on Rifqa's early engagement with the SSNP is scarce, his active involvement with the party likely began in his early life and gained momentum during his study at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon. Rifqa's poetry under investigation in this section spans the years 1957-1961, from the initial winter 1957 publication in *Shiʿr* through the SSNP's failed coup of the Lebanese government on December 31, 1961. Rifqa's practice of constant revision of his poetry over time provides a window into his mediation process of a rapidly changing political and aesthetic environment. Between his first publications in *Shiʿr* in 1957 and the publication of his first book in 1961, *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj / An Anchor on the Gulf*, Rifqa engages an aesthetic of erasure of overt SSNP references through successive revisions. Rifqa's subordination of representations of landscape to the cultural agenda of the SSNP, his movement away from the party, and his adjusted use of mythological and land-based imagery in his poetry reflects the trajectory of many avant-garde Arab poets' relationships

with this political party. His initial commitment to party-sponsored imagery and metaphors is replaced with a devotion to a poetic in the image of German Romantics and post-Romantics, particularly Rainer Maria Rilke.

At a time when Arab Nationalism and Islamic Nationalism are vying for the top position of an emerging supra-national framework, Rifqa's work participates in the cultural project of Romantic Nationalism within the historical and geographic region of the Levant. This regionalism attempts to transcend post-WWI borders by emphasizing a historical continuity of different peoples persisting together through the ages in a specific region, rather than an ethnic group, as in Arab Nationalism, or a revealed religion, as in Islamic Nationalism. Rifqa's emphasis on pre-Islamic mythology through the depiction season cycles and resurrection reflects a larger trend of Phoenician revival that originates in part with the SSNP's cultural platform. He breaks this orbit by turning to German poetry for its resonant inquiry into the relationship between poetry and experience.

Rifqa's second poem published in *Shiʿr* in Spring 1957, "Risāla ila Ummī" / "A Letter to my Mother", provides an example of SSNP imagery in its portrayal of a direct relation between blood and soil. Rifqa presents the image of a historically continuous Syria as the mother receiving his letter:

A Letter to my Mother

In my blood, Mother, thousands of aeons
linger, in my hand a universe revolves
And aeons folded within aeons
And so I see what was before,
I see my Self in the deep reaches of the ages
washing History and that which is possible,
It tells of you, you the fertile expanse,
my Self tells of the heart which was not a heart,
It was a field and seeds,

رسالة الى أمي

في دمي يا أُمَّ آلاف العصور
تتلّهى، في يدي كون يدور
ودهور تنطوي خلف الدهور
فأرى ما كان من قبل،
ارى ذاتي باعماق الدهورْ
تغسل التاريخ والاماكنِ,
تروي عنكِ يا خصب المدى،
تروي عن القلب ما كان قلبا،
كان حقلا وبذور
وسماء حانيات النجم تستوحي الذي

And the skies' caring stars inspiring what was
    before
Pray like flower petals
When dew irrigates the petal before root
When the rocks walk,
The forest decked in greenery and the earth that
    was revolving toward a horizon
unfolding a new horizon
changed the meaning of lines,
the whole shape of Time
In my blood, Mother, are things that revolt
and thirsty visions revolving along with the past
and behold I am a child again
from my eyes flow wounded tears
with no path in sight.

قبل الدهور
وتصلي كوريقات الزهور
عندما يسقي الندى قبل الجذور
عندما تمشي الصخور،
واخضرار الغاب والارض التي كانت
تدور
صوب افق خلفه افق جديد وسطورٌ
غيرت معنى السطور،
غيرت شكل الدهور
في دمي، يا امّ، اشياء تثور
ورؤى عطشى مع الماضي تدور
فاذا بي عدت طفلاً،
في عيوني ادمع مجروحة المجرى
بلا دربٍ تسير.

(Shiʿr 1.2 39-40)

The first seventeen lines of the poem point to a triadic relationship between land, the partisan, and cultural renewal, which is achieved through individual and group commitment to the land itself. Rifqa emphasizes the familial connection between the speaker of the poem, a son, and the mother-entity of the poem, the land itself. The inclusion of the individual in the nation, according to the SSNP's concept of environmental determinism, has been shaped "aeon after aeon" through the production of a narrative of historical continuity of peoples who have undergone similar defining pressures from a shared landscape. The speaker's heart is likened to seeds, which in their suggestion of fertility, re-emphasize the connection between physical body and the future of the region. The use of a vegetative cycle in conjunction with a physical and social body invokes Tammūz and the imagined unity of a pre-sectarian Mesopotamian past. The appropriation of history by the party's agenda appears in the lines, "The forest decked in greenery and the earth that was revolving / unfolding a new horizon / changed the meaning of lines, / the whole shape of Time," in that the possibility of this specific path to renewal, to verdancy, changes both physical space, the perception of space, and time itself.

The use of the term "revolt" in the line "In my blood, Mother, are things that revolt" should be read as denoting the verb "rebel" rather than "disgust" due to the relationship of the original term, *tathūr*, to *thawra*, or "revolution." The final five lines of the poem emphasize the personal resonance between the speaker of the poem and the desire for a specific national configuration. This is shown through the poet's frustration that the stirrings he feels within his blood are difficult to realize. From his "eyes flow wounded tears" as he stands before his geographic mother as a child without a path toward reunification with her through cultural renewal.

When Rifqa revises this poem for inclusion in *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* (1961), the original twenty-two line single stanza is condensed into nine much more efficient lines:

In my blood, Mother, thousands of ages	في دمي يا امُّ آلاف العصور
linger	تتلهّى
and so I see what was before	فأرى ما كان قبلُ
and I see my Self as a cloud	وأرى ذاتي سحاباً
washing History, telling	يغسل التاريخ، يروي
the secret of the heart that was not a heart,	سيرةَ القلب الذي ما كان قلباً،
it was a field and seeds	كان حقلا وبذور
and sky	وسماء
in my blood, Mother, are things that revolt.	في دمي يا امُّ اشياءٌ تثورْ.

(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 14-5)

The 1961 version maintains elements of commitment to a geographic entity and demonstrates a revision-based approach toward poetry as well as history. References to natural elements, like stones, the forest, stars, flower petals, and the horizon, have been removed from the later version. However, these omissions only clarify the triad of land, partisan, and renewal. These revisions unmoor the poem from details not central to forwarding its core theme of

environmental determinism. Rifqa's poem recasts the speaker as a "cloud" that "wash[es] History," yet removes other references to water and the verdancy it produces. The addition of "and sky" to the line "telling / the secret of the heart that was not a heart, / it was a field and seeds / and sky" expands the scope of the speaker's effect to a broader area and acknowledges the speaker's new orientation as a cloud delivering much-needed moisture. This rain not only implicitly sustains life of the surface of the earth, it also cleanses the historical narrative through the transmission of a secret kind of knowledge. While the 1961 revision of "A Letter to my Mother" does not seem to demonstrate any ideological deviation from the prior version, it does introduce one of the concepts most central to all of Rifqa's later work: the exploration of the concept of time through the atmospheric presentation of landscape. In later works discussed in Chapter 3, Rifqa's focus on the connection between landscape representations and time will expand to encompass poetry to create a logic of landscape representation that privileges philosophy and language over political commitment.

Like Adūnīs' early poetry, Rifqa's poetry of the late 1950s also bears the markers of participation in military and/or paramilitary operations. The following poem, "Diary of a Fighter," which appears in *Shiʻr* 1.3 in Summer 1957, uses the first-person perspective to relate the crushing emptiness experienced by a soldier in the field. Rifqa served in the Syrian Army in 1956 in order to maintain his dual Syrian-Lebanese citizenship, which he had obtained after his family moved to Tripoli, Lebanon, from Kafrūn, Syria, in 1940 (Wāzin, "The Double Poetic").

Diary of a Fighter	يوميات مقاتل
I	I
From my trench	من خندقي
stretches into the unknowable essence	يمتد كنه المغلق
stretches me until it meets my Self	يمتد بي حتى بذاتي يلتقي
as if in the mind's eye I were not yet born	حتى كأني مضمر لم اخلق
remaining a horizon in the paths of the absolute	ما زلت أفقا في دروب المطلق

I live with potential–every universe rises toward me
for me the unknown lies within reach
and all beginnings are born here in my trench
Death and Man inhabit my intuition
and the closed history of time.

I am still alive right here in my trench
like a blind leech I don't walk, like a worrisome secret
I suck in my stomach—from the shade of the clouds my
stomach draws from every obscure root
my stomach waters a sun and orchard, a dark-skinned
slumber across the East: all beginnings reside here with
me—what should I be weary of?
Oh Lord, what should weary me
the universe is part of me: a pulse in my palm not yet
born

II

These skies are still outstretched and in me
distances. The crows keep on sucking in
the outside limits. The thirsty sun squeezes out
the lights from my eyes and casts
within my blood a desert of ashes, the stars
hazy like the idols in a universe without meaning.

III

How is my mother
after I left her on the road
a mere thing, something, after
I left her the tears, heavy and dead,
like the silence, dead, ah, how painful are
my tears! Those ghosts detained me
died in my veins. Where is my love! Where
oh, ye summits, are the remnants of my love!
There was a night in the monastery folded in a funeral
for memory and it has rotted in my blood.

IV

This is my hand, what is its shape! Only yesterday
it was a threshing floor tender like the eyes of my
beloved
it was many suns enfolding the horizons giving to them
an expanse beyond the universe and the love

احيا مع الامكان – صوبي كل كون يرتقي
فالغيب عندي، عند مرمى مرفقي
والبدء مخلوق هنا في خندقي
والموت والانسان في حدسي
وتاريخ الزمان المغلق.

ما زلت حياً ههنا في خندقي
كالعلقة العمياء لا امشي، كسرّ مقلق
امتص جوفي – من ظلال الغيم جوفي يستقي
من كل عرق مبهم التكوين جوفي يستقي
شمساً وحقلاً موسمياً، غفوة سمراء عبر
المشرق:
البدء عندي – اي شيء اتقي؟
يا رب ماذا اتقي
والكون بعضي: نبضة في قبضتي لم تخلق

II
ما زال هذا الجو ممدوداً وفي
ابعاد. ما زالت الغربان تمتص
المدى. الشمس عطشى تعصر
الاضواء من عيني وتلقي
في دمي صحرا رماداٍ، النجوم
الغبش كالاصنام في كون بلا معنى.

III
كيف امي
بعدما خلفتها في الدرب
شيئاً, بعض شيء، بعدما
خلفتها والدمع ميت مثقل
كالصمت ميت، آه، ما اقسى
دموعي! حجزتني هذه الاشباح
ماتت في عروقي. اين حبي! اين
يا هذي الذرى اشلاء حبي! ليلة
في الدير كانت وانطوت في مأتم
الذكرى وتخّت في دمي.

IV
هذي يدي ما شكلها! بالامس
كانت بيدراً رخصاً كعيني حلوتي
كانت شموساً تحضن الآفاق تعطيها
مدى خلف امتداد الكون والحب
الذي يبني فيمحو الليل عن
انساننا عند انحدار الليل من صبحٍ

that erupts to erase the night away from
our humanity at the time the night descends
doubt yawning in it.
Everything is obscure, even my hand, even
my shudders and my whole universe right here—even
me.

V
A disfigured skull I have here, right by
my head: the story of Man resides in it
a blind story reciting itself
aeon after aeon

VI
In the thronging things, my shadow stretches pale, like
doubt
my shadow is pale. The blind helmet is a belly
with pus swallowing dreams in the tedious silence
like a tunnel caving in. The mute soldiers
are idols without faces, as if the unknown cast
before them a dead wall and something horrible
the blocked trench and the past and my shadow, and the
expanding wasteland and the wind bereft of sound.

VII
The light is tired, the expanse collapses and the depths
of serenity and the earth remain without a goal, a horde
of bereaved ghosts.
In its horizon are murders of crows and strangling pains,
a silence issues from the valleys of buried unknowns
as though in my labyrinths an extent with blinded eyes
what is death: what is Man: what unknown
created the serenity?
Alone: I feel the gnawing in my chest like deep wells of
malevolence
I am here—nothing exists save doubt, save me, except
clay.

Damascus

تمطى الشك فيه.
كل شيء مبهم حتى يدي, حتى
اختلاجاتي وكوني ههنا – حتي انا.

V
جمجمة شوهاء عندي، عند
رأسي: قصة الانسان فيها
قصة عمياء تروي ذاتها
دهراً فدهرا

VI
في زحمة الاشياء ظلي باهت، كالشك
ظلي باهت. والخوذة العمياء جوف
من صديد يبلع الا حلام في صمت مملٍّ
مثل دهليز تداعى. والجنود الخُرس
اصنام بلا وجه، كأن الغيب القى
في مداهم حائطاً ميتاً وشيئاً مرعبا
الخندق المنسدّ والماضي وظلِّي، وامتداد
القفر والريح التي لا صوت فيها.

VII
الضوء واٍء، والذرى تهوي واعماق السكينه
والارض ما زالت بلا مرمى كأطياف حزينه.
في افقها اسراب غربان وآلام حقينه،
صمت من الاغوار، اغوار المجاهيل الدفينه
حتى كأني في متاهاتي مدى اعمى عيونه
ما الموت: ما الانسان: ما الغيب الذي خلق
السكينه؟
وحدي: احس الضيق في صدري كآبار
الضغينه
اني هنا – لا شيء غير الشك، غيري، غير
طينه.

دمشق
(*Shiʿr* 1.3 p 51-4)

With "Diary of a Fighter," Rifqa introduces the diary form, *yawmiyyāt*, that he will utilize

throughout his corpus of poetry. While rendered in verse, Rifqa's choice of the diary form

creates a tone of intimacy with the inner turmoil of the individual as well as marks the passage of time. The 1957 version of this poem appears in seven sections. Each section marks the mental state of the fighter in his trench as time passes, which moves from initial commitment to a state of doubt. The first section emphasizes how the physical trench changes the fighter: "it [the trench] stretches me until it meets my Self / as if in the mind's eye I were not yet born / remaining a horizon in the paths of the absolute." A significant duality emerges between the speaker's expression, his voice from the trench, and his conception of self, which is portrayed early in the poem as full of potential: "I live with potential–every universe rises toward me." The word "potential," translated from *al-imkān*, shares the root morpheme *ma-ka-na* with *imkāniyya*, a term included in the SSNP's deindividualizing concept of "social potentiality," *imkāniyya ijtimāʿiyya*. The fighter contemplates whether service to the nation, the social self, should supersede concern about the physical self. The tone of the first stanza situates the fighter in the trench physically and ideologically, while in the second stanza the fighter begins to express doubt. To this growing doubt, the speaker adds the salve of ideological commitment: "Oh Lord, what should weary me / The universe is part of me: a pulse in my palm not yet born." The fighter's call to God, *yā rab*, is a subtle turning point. A significant goal of the SSNP's was the replacement of established religions with zealous commitment to the party. The fighter's doubt begins to appear in the space between invoking God and considering his social potentiality.

The pairing of these two stanzas foregrounds the conflict experienced over time by the fighter in his trench as one of understanding the unified self. Section II introduces environmental challenges, such as the crows and the "thirsty sun," which cast in the fighter "a desert of ashes." As a result, the fighter describes the stars as "hazy like the idols in a universe without meaning." The subtle movement of religious references in this poem reinforces the fighter's transition from

privileging social self to privileging individual self. "The idols" is translated from *al-aṣnām,* a term that points to an object revered by polytheists; *al-aṣnām*, Lane notes, points to the physical object that is worshipped, which is separate from *wathan*, the incorporeal entity that is embodied in the physical idol (1735-6). The fighter's comparison of the stars to idols further emphasizes duality and doubt. The fighter had been thinking of himself as part of the universe, and now the stars he considered part of himself are interminably distant and void of spirit, much like the "universe without meaning." The juxtaposition of the expansive tone in the first section—"every universe rises toward me"—with the constriction of space in the second section—"The crows keep on sucking in / the outside limits. The thirsty sun squeezes out / the lights from my eyes"— emphasizes the fighter's increasing sense of doubt in his connection to the "universes" within him.

In the third section, the fighter laments the abandonment of his "mother" on the side of the road. Previous discussion of Rifqa's 1957 poem "A Letter to my Mother" points to the possibility of "mother" as the historical and geographic nation. In this case, the fighter's lamentations for his deceased mother are lamentations for the failure of a political ideal. A more literal interpretation of "mother" suggests the fighter's struggle with interpersonal feelings of regret due to separation from his kin. The third section creates a sense of movement inward. This section opens on the road, where the fighter left his mother, and progresses inward as the sediment of grief settles in the fighter's body, as evidenced by the line, "Those ghosts detained me / died in my veins." The fighter asks of the landscape, "Where / oh, ye summits, are the remnants of my love!" Without an answer from the peaks, the third section closes on an image of memory moldering within the fighter's body. This inner "rot" contributes to the fighter's sense of alienation toward his own body.

The fighter's estrangement from his physical form continues in sections IV and V. The fighter marvels at his hand as he considers its past versus its present. A pervasive sense of doubt clouds his perception of his physical form and its ability to process sensory input: "Everything is obscure, even my hand, even / my shudders and my whole universe right here—even me." In section V, the fighter considers a "disfigured skull" that is in close proximity to his head, upon which he projects a view of human history as "a blind story reciting itself / aeon after aeon."

Section VI connects the insularity of the "blind story" of Section V to the fighter's immediate situation through the image of the "blind helmet" as "a belly / with pus swallowing dreams in the tedious silence / like a tunnel caving in." Grotesque imagery of putrefaction not only consumes bodies, it consumes dreams. The terrifying image of "a tunnel caving in" spatially reinforces the severity of the collapse of a narrative of nation. This connection is further underpinned by Rifqa's reference to idols in the line that follows: "The mute soldiers / are idols without faces." In the fighter's state of ever-increasing doubt, this metaphor evokes a sense of futility and isolation. The soldiers, as hollow corporeal forms, have lost both their faces and voices. The use of *aṣnām* for *idols* emphasizes that the soldiers are vessels, or forms without the enlivening *wathan*, or spark of divinity and life.

Doubt becomes all-consuming in the final section of the poem and the fighter realizes the extent of his isolation from his fellow soldiers and the narrative for which they are fighting. All that remains after the "expanse collapses" is a "horde of bereaved ghosts," which further emphasizes internal conflict and a sense of emptiness. Parallels between this image and Adūnīs's play point to a growing sense of double among prior party supporters. The fighter levies a series of existential questions: "What is death: what is Man: what unknown / created the serenity?" The fighter finds himself completely isolated in the face of these questions. The final lines of the

poem—"Alone: I feel the gnawing in my chest like deep wells of malevolence / I am here—nothing exists save doubt, save me, except clay"—reinforce the fighter's isolation from prior narratives. The fighter no longer attempts to console himself with thoughts of his connection to the universe through his social self. The rest of the world has been erased and nothing remains except the fighter, his doubt, and the clay walls of his trench. The reduction of "the expanse" of Greater Syria into the claustrophobic clay walls of the trench completes a turn in landscape representations and function away from direct party support. "Diary of a Fighter" employs landscape representations as a spatial technique to problematize environmental determinism and social potentiality. The poet considers his connection to the universe and time and finds only clay. Ever-narrowing spatial arrangements within the poem create a sense of movement inward that reveals the fighter's increasing doubt toward the "blind story" that brought him to the trench.

Material from "Diary of a Fighter" appears in a more condensed form in *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* under the title "Waraqa min Jundī" / "Note from a Soldier." Rifqa's selection of the word *jundī*, meaning *soldier*, rather than *muqātil*, meaning *fighter*, points to a recharacterization of the focal figure. The term *muqātil* derives from the triliteral root *qa-ta-la*, which relates to killing, and definitions of *muqātil* range from *fighter* to *militant* and *raider*. *Jundī*, on the other hand, points to the act of assemblage of a military force. Lane also notes an additional relationship the root *ja-na-da* bears to a particular archaic Syrian usage that refers generally to Syrian cities and their associated lands as *junūd*. These administrative units were the places from which military forces were collected, and the term refers specifically to their ability to assemble and deliver soldiers for larger Syrian campaigns (I.470).

Note from a Soldier	ورقة من جندي
I	I
From my trench	من خندقي

the shadow of the unknowable stretches
for me the unknown
lies within my arm's reach
as do Death and Man in my intuition
and the closed history of time.

يمتد ظلُّ المغلق
فالغيب عندي
عند مرمى مرفقي
والموت والانسان في حدسي
وتاريخ الزمان المغلقِ.

II

A disfigured skull
settles in my eye
the whole story of Man in it
a blind story telling itself aeon upon aeon.

II

جمجمةٌ شوهاءُ
في عبني ترسو
قصـة الانسان فيها
قصةٌ عمياء تروي ذاتها دهراً فدهرا.

III

The winter passes by my heart and freezes
and so I remember my love
and recall that I am a god turned to ashes.

III

يمرّ الشتاء بقلبي ويجمدْ
فاذكر حبي
واذكر أني إله ترمّدْ.

IV

Here in the plains of sand
I have sown a small question
and after a short sojourn I returned
and found only my hand and the impossible

IV

هنا في سهول الرمالْ
زرعت سؤالاً صغيراً
وبعد اغترابٍ رجعتُ
فلم القّ إلا يدي والمحال.

V

The wind freezes in the atmosphere
and my blood is mere frozen beasts.
Spiteful clouds pelt the unknown.

V

الريح تجمد في الفضا
ودمي وحوش جامده.
ألغيب ترجمه غيومٌ حاقده.

(*Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* 16-8)

The evolution of "Note from a Soldier" from "Diary of a Fighter" functions in much the same way as changes from the 1957 to the 1961 version of "A Letter to my Mother." The movement toward expressive economy in both poems demonstrates Rifqa's strategy of constant revision. Much of the grotesque imagery has been redacted, save the disfigured skull, which is drawn closer to the speaker of the poem. In "Diary of a Fighter," the disfigured skull was close at hand; in "Note from a Soldier," the disfigured skull "settles" in the speaker's eye. This

movement inward from the first poem to the second poem intensifies the speaker's alienation; the "blind story" that resided within the skull has now settled within the speaker himself.

Prior references to a mother figure are omitted in the 1961 revision and instead replaced with "my love." This significant omission dissolves the prior connection between "mother," geographic space, and the irredentist goals of the party. Winter in this stanza provokes reflection. Rifqa's use of the term *ilh,* which points to a single god among a pantheon, in the line "I am a god turned to ashes" retains the sense of alienation present in the previous poem in a considerably more economical form. Further revision renders the vision of the first version in a single stanza: "Here in the plains of sand / I have sown a small question / And after a short sojourn I returned / And found only my hand and the impossible." By likening his question to a seed unable to grow in sand, the soldier returns to find only his hand, the hand that planted the seed, and an overwhelming sense of impossibility.

The final stanza's return to images of winter stills movement and provokes introspection. After the "wind freezes in the atmosphere," the soldier finds that his blood is "mere frozen beasts." The final stanza merges conditions in the external environment with the speaker's internal conditions. The final line turns the relationship between the soldier and his doubt into a metaphorical atmospheric event when "spiteful clouds pelt the unknown." This image externalizes the soldier's doubt, which is reinforced by the landscape. The final line creates motion again after the wind and his blood had been frozen, after the introspection of winter, yet the outcome remains problematic.

Anxieties of Influence

In this chapter, two varieties of influence come to the forefront: ideological influence based in the activation of poetry's political economy, and as the nationalist period ends and

modernism becomes the tone of avant-garde Arabic poetry in the 1960s, the individual poet's

relationship to predecessors. Harold Bloom cites the expression of poetic influence through

misprision as a necessary characteristic of poetic modernity:

> *Poetic Influence—when it involves two strong, authentic poets,—always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist.* (Bloom 30, original emphasis)

The sense of anxiety expressed in Adūnīs's play, which is given full form in *Mihyar of

Damascus*, speaks to the impetus for reconsideration of the modern poet's relationship to

predecessors. Adūnīs's use of the dramatic form in *A Madman among the Dead* directly stages

the conflict between originality and imitation, and the final poetic production at the end of the

play enacts an assimilation of poet and predecessor. This instance, particularly through the

dramatization of mental illness, expresses a loss of self in the process of filtering influence from

the past, as represented by the voices of the dead and the uncritical echo of poetry. In *Mihyar*,

Adūnīs reverses the relation of self to predecessor through the modern poet's adoption of his

vision of the historical poet, Mihyar of Daylam, as an alter-ego. By enacting the alter-ego of

Mihyar of Damascus, Adūnīs reassesses, reimagines, and reasserts the poetic persona.

Underlying this reassertion is the liberation of landscape representations from political utility.

Rifqa's early poetry demonstrates support for the SSNP's cultural agenda, yet his

exploration of the individual in relation to landscape carries doubt. Through a strategy of

revision of his own poetry, Rifqa begins to privilege doubt over the SSNP's doctrines of

environmental determinism and social potentiality. Instead of delving into his relationship with

the Arabic poetic tradition like Adūnīs, Rifqa engages the German poetic in order to deepen his

investigation of the individual in relation to poetry and philosophy in the modern period, a period

in which travel, study abroad, translation, and intercultural engagement become accessible to an emerging middle class through technology and travel. Rifqa's intentional engagement with the German poetic rests on the privilege of poetry in relation to philosophy in this tradition, which will be explored in depth in the third chapter, "Orpheus in Arabic."

In *Formations of the Secular¸* Talal Asad interrogates "the question of how secularism as a political doctrine is related to the secular as an ontology and an epistemology" (21). He notes Adūnīs's use of myth in particular as an intentional framework for problematizing concepts in poetry, yet attributes this strategy largely if not completely to western influence: "Using devices familiar to Western symbolist and surrealist poetry, Adonis alludes to mythic figures in a self-conscious effort to disrupt Islamic aesthetic and moral sensibilities, to attack what is taken to be sacred tradition in favor of the new—that is, of the Western" in a way that seeks to "dislocate settled feelings, not to impose a sense of order and form where they are lacking" (54). Myth, for Adūnīs is "plural, even anarchic, while the religious law is monotheistic and totalitarian" (56). The creation of instability within these images facilitates an environment in which rupture becomes productive.

Consideration of the modern poet's relationship to tradition is an essential characteristic of Modernism in Arabic poetry, as is the re-appropriation of landscape representations from political utility into the service of language. Critical analysis of the nexus of influence on Rifqa, Adūnīs, and other *Shiʿr* poets demonstrates an entirely different variety of anxiety in relation to influence. Although Romanticism and Modernism in Arabic poetry show major ruptures with the majority of poetry that preceded it, they did not exist in a vacuum. The long history of strict prosody and its eventual descent into artifice, alongside insufficient exploration of individual experience, provide a framework against which Romantic poets created a new poetic. Western

literature opened new pathways of thought and introduced alternative poetic structures that supported emerging avant-garde Arabic poets, but innovation would not occur without critical adaptation and synthesis on the part of the poet. Up and against the perceived sentimentalism of later Romanticism and a changing world stage, the nationalist period sought to politically activate the potential of poetry to construct national identities. To credit SSNP doctrine exclusively as the inspiration for poetry in this period would be inaccurate, as would exclusively crediting western literature. An excess of privilege placed on any single source of influence necessarily distorts the larger interconnected nexus of pressures, questions, and experiences that contribute to the development of a Modernist aesthetic in Arabic poetry. This arc of direct and indirect relationships to different political groups and to the idea of art's role in politics characterizes Arabic poetry in the mid-twentieth century, as does the arc of mythological and historical references and the level of Arab poets' engagement with western poetry. The turn to language after 1961 resulted in the freeing of landscape representations from political economy.

Chapter 3

Orpheus in Arabic: Rifqa's Translation and Synthesis of German Romanticism

As a undergraduate in philosophy at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Fu'ād

Rifqa happened upon an English translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies* at the Goethe

Institut in Beirut. Fascinated, he pocketed the book and left. A week later, he returned and

apologized to the director for stealing the book, who laughed and let Rifqa keep the book (Wālī).

This chance encounter led to Rifqa's life work of building syntheses between his original poetry

in Arabic and his translations of German Romantics and post-Romantics. Rifqa's early

interaction with the Goethe Institut in Beirut led to a poetic career that would later, in 2010, be

recognized with a Goethe Institut Medal presented to him in Berlin for his contributions to

increasing the Arabic reading public's access to German poetry. Stefan Weidner, editor of the

Goethe Institut publication, *Fikrun wa Fann* (*Art and Thought*), underscores this point in a 2010

article about Rifqa's Goethe Medal award: "With Fuad Rifka, Arabic and German poetry are no

longer two separate elements that must be mediated. They are one, as if out of two languages and

cultures a new, third language and culture had suddenly emerged" (79).[65] Weidner highlights

Rifqa's creation of a third position, an interstitial space based on contact between languages, that

occurs in relation to both Rifqa's translations and the role of strong readings of German

Romantics and post-Romantics in Rifqa's composition of original poetry in Arabic. This

betweenness characterizes much of Rifqa's large catalogue of original poetic publications.

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[65] Transliteration of Fu'ād Rifqa's name from Arabic to German often lends the "k" rather than the "q" usage. However, in direct transliteration, "q" represents the Arabic letter "ق". In this proposal and dissertation, "Rifqa" will be the preferred transliteration.

Rifqa's translation strategy was selective; rather than translating complete poems, Rifqa often gathered a small number of stanzas from a much longer work into a translation that is more representative or interpretive than literal. The two factors that bind Rifqa's selections of German poetry for translation are the creation of *stimmung* in the original works and resonance with Rifqa's ontological and phenomenological exploration. *Stimmung* is a difficult term to translate, due not in small part to its extended history in German aesthetic discourse—Kant coined the term in *Critique of Judgment*. Many of the authors Rifqa translated invoke *stimmung* by creating internal and external experiences that, in their resonance, create a "third position" of representation to "give objective form […] to the intangible things they encounter" in the case of Goethe, or "nam[e] memories and intuitions from the early stages of humanity's existence" in Hölderlin's case (Gumbrecht 8).

While common translations into English include "mood," "climate," and "atmosphere," Gumbrecht rejects these terms as oversimplifications that are respectively too interior or too exterior to capture the range of *stimmung* (5). *Stimmung* is instead an effect of the meaning generated from the interaction of emotional mood and elements in the surrounding environment, often weather and evocations of sensory input like sound or color. This interaction occurs simultaneously both within and outside of the subject and may reflect a more complete yet difficult to describe approximation of the feeling of a particular historical moment. For clarity, the remainder of this study will use the term *stimmung,* rather than an English translation, to emphasize the necessity of a state of betweenness in the German original.

Rifqa examined the development of this concept in German literature through his translation of authors from Goethe to Rilke. Because of Rifqa's late historical placement in relation to German Romanticism, post-Romanticism, and Modernism, he was able to review

development through periods and selectively participate in recreations of *stimmung* from different periods through translation. Additionally, all of the authors Rifqa translated were, at some point or another, the foci of works by Heidegger and other major philosophers in the German tradition.

Speaking to the revival of critical studies of *stimmung* in German literary circles in the early twenty-first century, Gumbrecht describes a condition of reflection following accelerated development that mirrors Rifqa's approach, albeit in critical studies rather than production of poetry itself (1-3). Attention to *stimmung*, he suggests, can effectively create a "third position" for criticism that exists between the linguistic turn of Deconstruction and the ideological turn of Cultural Studies (3). Rifqa's approach is innovative in that he pairs the ontological inquiry of German poetry with the morphological resonance of the Arabic language to create a "third space" between representations of wilderness and the distanced focal subject of the poem.

Rifqa's poetic persona utilizes a distanced, third-person limited perspective, one of a spectator far removed from the inner workings of his focal character. Largely silent and almost always alone, the focal subject of the poem represents the individual divorced from as many pressures of technology and social interaction as is possible in modernity, freed from human change and distraction. This distance is necessary in an ontological sense as well: the focal subject's isolation reflects Heidegger's concept of Being-toward-death. The narrator and reader's alienation from the focal character's perspective is countered by landscape settings that surround and eventually envelop the focal character. The Woodcutter, the Sufi, and the Fisherman do not fear death—their deaths do not simply end but rather complete their lives and define their essence. Rifqa reinforces this union through the invocation of *stimmung*, especially imagery of ambient sounds, smoke or fog, light, and echoes: the Woodcutter lives on in the form of echoes

heard by shepherds and in their stories (*Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb* 127); as the Sufi closes his eyes

"behind the fog of time / on the Mount of Olives / a peal wraps the laurel" (*Khirbat Al-Ṣūfī* 124);

and upon the death of the Fisherman, "a bird / hovering, draws the face of God / forms rings in

the atmosphere" (*Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr* 124). The narrator and reader cannot share an interior

experience with the focal character—Rifqa does not grant either this leve of access—but the

experience of *stimmung* can be shared.

In the 1902 essay "Concerning Landscape," Rilke speaks to the necessary condition of

distance to understanding the relationship between humans and "Nature" in the modern period:

> To see landscape thus, as something distant and foreign, something remote and unloving, something entirely self-contained, was necessary, if it was ever to be a medium and an occasion for an autonomous art; for it had to be distant and very different from us, if it was to be capable of becoming a redemptive symbol for our fate. It had to be almost hostile in its sublime indifference, if it was to give a new meaning to our existence…For we began to understand Nature only when we no longer understood it; when we felt that it was the Other, indifferent toward men, which has no wish to let us enter, then for the first time we stepped outside of Nature, alone out of the lonely world. (Rilke, *Selected Poetry* xxv)

The approach that Rifqa develops throughout his career centers around creating distances

between subjects and objects, between focal character, landscape, and poetic persona.

Ultimately, Rifqa's invocation of *stimmung* in his original work attempts to occupy the space

between essence, the sum-total of our lives that is complete only at death, and existence, the

aggregation of choices on a daily basis that comprise essence. He does so through the creation of

a poetic environment linguistically resonant of both stillness and movement, of change and

stasis. Rifqa's inquiry is temporal in that he focuses on cyclical changes in landscape rather than

the creation of a forward-moving continuum of time. Through his strategy of constant revision,

Rifqa's distanced focal characters live their isolated existences aligned with "natural" or

"seasonal" time—a time construction revealed through changes in trees, air quality, and light—

rather than "secular" or "modern" time, a system that aligns with human activity, industrialization, and technology.

The distance Rifqa creates differentiates his poetry from prior iterations of the forest-philosopher in Arabic poetry. The Romantic focal characters of Jubrān and Al-Shābbī also wander alone in forests or on mountainsides as they consider death and isolation. However, they are able to posit their musings directly through poetic monologue or dialectic debate. Wilderness settings are largely a stage upon which characters play out the drama of change free from the societal pressures of poetic, social, or religious tradition. Rifqa's wildernesses, on the other hand, are central in the process of illumination. Consider the death scenes of the Woodcutter, the Sufi, and the Fisherman: invocations of *stimmung* demonstrate that the distanced subjectivity of the poem is absorbed by the landscape itself—sound dissipates, fog clears, and birds change their course. Landscape and the subjectivity of the poem are set apart as "Other," which doubly emphasizes the non-relational aspect of Being identified by Heidegger—death is an individual process and is always viewed from a distance unless it is one's own death.

Formally, this shift is significant in that it almost completely dispenses with the oratorical mode that has characterized much of Arabic poetry since the pre-Islamic era. Vestiges of oratory are present only in the distanced, depersonalized elegies delivered by the third-person narrator upon the death of each focal character. This ritual of language points to another critical aspect of Rifqa's ontological inquiry through poetry. Rifqa's rustic subjects reflect an experience of secular modernity precisely because they are placed outside of it.

After being central to the ideological project of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), the use of mythology in poetry demanded reassessment. The party's emphasis on the commitment to the party above and beyond previous allegiances to religion, sect, or other

identity configurations came to complicate the expression of landscape in the post-SSNP period. Rifqa's relocation of the poetic narrator as a distant figure in relation to the subjectivity of the poem reflects the poet's status as secondary observer. From this position, the poetic narrator observes the focal character's near-silent life and death as well as his resurrection. From his distanced vantage point, the narrator locates the result of the sacred process of resurrection in dispersal of the re-enlivened subjectivity through poetry rather than divinity or apotheosis.

Rifqa's turn to German Romantic and post-Romantic poetry to explore subjectivity and time in modernity reflects his study of German philosophy and results in the generation of a philosophical poetic in modern avant-garde Arabic poetry. This chapter explores Rifqa's translations of German Romantic poets and the concepts cultivated through synthesis of these translations in Rifqa's original poetry. Rifqa's original poetry considers the processes of other poets, Arabic and German, as they mediate Being-in-modernity, as well as the process of poetic inspiration in a climate of accelerated change.

Context of Study: Why Germany?

The first wave of Arab students to study in German universities in the twentieth century came from Egypt after World War I, and Levantine students followed in greater numbers after World War II. According to Götz Nordbruch,

> While Syrian and Lebanese students were often attracted to French universities, German universities gradually gained prominence among students from Egypt. Although France retained its appeal in parts of the Egyptian *effendiyya* [middle class], the strong presence of Egyptian nationalist circles in Germany contributed to the popularity of German campuses. During and after the war, leading members of the Egyptian National Party *(al-hizb al-watani al-misri)* and of other nationalist factions had found refuge in German exile, thus fueling the attention given to Germany in nationalist discourses. In addition, these circles were engaged in considerable efforts to draw students to German universities. This attraction was noted with concern by the British authorities in Cairo, who in March 1920 observed an 'exodus' of youngsters to Germany and an increasing number of Egyptian students relocating from Britain, France and Switzerland to German cities. ("Students" 283)

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Germany had not been associated with "overt colonial ambitions" in Arab regions in the ways that France and Britain had due to the more direct involvement of these countries in positions of economic and administrative authority ("Students" 277). Arab students in European universities "demonstrate a growing fragmentation and diversification of Arab intellectual discourses on the one hand, and their interconnectedness across national borders on the other" (278). The development of modern avant-garde Arabic poetry is tied both to European and Arab educational institutions and the exchanges between them, particularly in Lebanon. Points of connection with the German language and cultural institutions in Beirut include Antūn Saʿādeh's role as informal tutor of German at AUB prior to his exile in Brazil in 1938. Little information exists about where specifically he learned German and his level of facility with the language (Yamak 167), however it is clear that his promotion of the German language occurred contemporaneous to his SSNP organizing activities in Beirut. Nordbruch identifies ambivalence, rather than direct support, between the Nazi party and the SSNP, although he maintains that the SSNP participated in fascist ideology and political strategy ("Arab Encounters"). Later iterations pertinent to this study include the founding of the Goethe Institut[66] in Beirut in 1955, where Rifqa first encountered Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. Betty Anderson's 2011 book, *American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education,* provides an excellent overview of student political activities at AUB, particularly the diversity of student groups voicing their opinions as the institution changed over time from a Protestant missionary college into a politically active, secular, and global institution. The enmeshed layers

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[66] The Goethe Institut replaced the German Academy (Deutsche Akademie/DA), which had been founded in 1925, with the goal of providing training to foreign teachers of German. Following World War II, the DA was closed and replaced by the Goethe Institut in 1951, which intentionally focused on rehabilitating the international status of German culture without political content through its language education program. The Goethe Institut's mission became more political as the 1960s progressed and facilitated restorative projects, both in Germany and in their rapidly increasing number of locations abroad. Currently, the Goethe Institut has over 150 offices worldwide.

of political, educational, and cultural influence of Germany in Lebanon, in its different forms

that evolved over time, is evident in Rifqa's choice of this focus in language study and

translation as well as its effects on his original poetry composed in Arabic.

Rifqa's Engagement with German Literature

Alongside nineteen original books of poetry and a poetic novel, Rifqa published twelve

book-length Arabic translations of German poetry and a translation of Heidegger's philosophy,

likely descended from his 1965 dissertation on Heidegger's aesthetics written in Tübingen,

Germany. He pursued the project of translation throughout his life, essentially introducing the

long arc of German literature from the 17th century to the 20th century to an Arabic readership.

Translations of Rilke bookend Rifqa's adult life: he published a collection of Rilke's poetry in

1969, and *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus* in separate volumes in 1999. In 2009, Rifqa

published a book of original poetry, *Shāʿir fī Rārūn / Poète À Rarogne / Dichter in Raron,* that

was inspired by visits to landscapes Rilke had inhabited, and each original poem was them

translated into both German and French. Rifqa's translations and transitions emphasize the value

of poetry and philosophy as fields of inquiry mutually beneficial in interpreting each other. Many

of the poets Rifqa translates are cited heavily by twentieth century philosophers, from Heidegger

to Walter Benjamin, for their creation of *stimmung* as well as innovations in the field of

translation. The dearth of direct mooring of Arabic poetry to philosophies emerging from the

Arab world has been noted by many scholars; Salma Khadra Jayyusi opens the second volume of

Trends and Movements in Arabic Poetry on the following note:

> The Romantic movement in Arabic literature came about without the backing of a
> philosophy (except in the case on Gibrān who developed his own ideas based in part of
> Western concepts), and certainly without anything similar to the French Revolution. It
> lacked an indigenous basis similar to the thought and ideas that underlay the European
> Romantic movement, and it did not formulate its own principles after its development. It
> never acquired a poetic creed with defined principles which it was felt that the poets

should follow. It simply happened. In fact, it is perhaps one of the simplest Romantic
movements in the history of any poetry. (361)

Rifqa's focus on merging poetry and philosophy through the adaptation of German poetic styles
partially reinforces Jayyusi's assessment of the lack of a local philosophical background for
Romantic poetry, especially in conjunction with the tendency of both Romantics and Modernists
to announce their divorce from prior dominant poetic schools and practices. However, Rifqa's
particular acuity in adapting the morphological possibilities of the Arabic language to
experimentation within an imported poetic points to Rifqa's development of a new space, a third
space, between languages and traditions, rather than direct imitation and reproduction. Of equal
significance is Rifqa's creation of a modern avant-garde poetic in Arabic that is thoroughly
grounded in philosophy and moves forward by looking back at developments in the German
tradition. The remainder of this chapter explore Rifqa's introductions to and translations of
German poets as well as his application of Heidegger in the development of a hybrid poetic in
his original poetry in Arabic. In closing, this chapter will posit reasoning for the resonance
between themes and structures in German and Arabic poetry in linguistic, cultural, and
ideological terms. Although he is not the first German poet Rifqa translated, Hölderlin's early
chronological position and foundational status in the history of German Romanticism as well as
Rifqa's adaptation of his themes render Hölderlin an excellent starting point in the discussion of
Rifqa's long engagement with the German tradition.

Hölderlin

Rifqa published one translation of Hölderlin's selected poetry, *Hildārlin: Mukhtārāt min
Shiʿrīh,* in 1974. Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), a native of the contested
southwestern German region of Swabia, has long been recognized as a leading lyric poet whose

reflective compositions undergird much of German Romantic poetry, especially the later compositions of Rilke. After waning for a period following his death, critical attention returned to Hölderlin in the twentieth century in part through Heidegger's Hölderlin lectures, which were delivered between 1934-1942 and continued in his work through the 1960s. Heidegger foregrounds Hölderlin's "Bread and Wine" in his essay, "What Are Poets For?", and "In Lovely Blueness" in ""…Poetically Man Dwells…." The contents of these essays were gathered from lectures in the early 1950s. These writings and lectures returned Hölderlin's philosophical contributions alongside his poetry to discussion in the same period that Rifqa was working toward a doctoral degree in philosophy in Tübingen.

The question of unity between subject and object as well as a lively synthesis of Christian and Hellenic themes at the core of Hölderlin's hymnic poetry likely appealed to Rifqa's existential questions about the possibility of an ancient unified identity, now corrupted, that may be accessible through poetry. A sense of cultural rebirth through mythological imagery was already thoroughly embedded and moving toward its end in modern avant-garde Arabic poetry by the early 1960s. Through translation of Hölderlin's poetry and study of Heidegger's commentaries, Rifqa had an opportunity to reassess recent developments in Arabic poetry through the lens of the early development of German Romanticism. Arabic poetry stood at a point of transition between its own experience of Romanticism and looked ahead in order to structure a Modernist poetic.

Although Rifqa began studying Hölderlin more than a century after Hölderlin's death, questions of the individual's role in modernity and establishing what a modern homeland means are extremely relevant in each poet's context. In his introduction to his translations of

Hölderlin's *Hyperion* and selected poems, Eric L. Santner describes *Hyperion* as an early

mediation of the changes to human life and processes accompanying the shift to modernity:

> Hölderlin's oeuvre represents in its fragmented totality a sustained, if highly ambivalent,
> effort to master a series of personal, political, and, as it were, philosophico-theological
> traumas, the sum of which may be seen to lay down the terms of a social space that
> would indeed require a new, precisely modern, mode of heroism. (xxiv)

Rifqa's introduction to *Hildārlin: Mukhtārāt min Shiʿrīh* addresses Hölderlin's creation of a

sense of home and homeland as concepts constructed by poetic language. Rifqa's introduction to

Hölderlin centers around a quoted line from the sixth stanza of Hölderlin's poem "Mein

Eigentum" / "My Possessions," through which Rifqa highlights the development of the terms

home / *al-bayt¸ homeland* / *al-waṭan*, and *maʿrūf*, the meaning of which includes *well-known* and

universally accepted (Wehr 710). It through the Hölderlin lectures that Heidegger began to

develop a "new language" which he utilized in his later writing on poetry. Michael Hamburger's

translation of two stanzas from "My Possesions" illustrate the positive experience of rootedness

in a "worthy homeland" and the negative experience of displacement:

> Blessed he who calmly loving a gentle wife
> Can call a worthy homeland and hearth his own;
> Above firm ground more brightly to the
> Settled, secure man his heaven glitters.
>
> For like the plant that fails to take root within
> Its native ground, the soul of that mortal wilts
> Who with the daylight only roams, a
> Pauper astray on our Earth, the hallowed.
> (*Hyperion* 141)

Rifqa selects *maʿrūf* as the Arabic translation of the German term *rühmlicher*, meaning

praiseworthy, worthy, or *known*. At the heart of the introduction, Rifqa asks, "When does poetry

become the savior of the nation?"[67] (*Hildārlin* 11). A nation becomes worthy when its poets fully

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[67] "متى الشعر يصير منقذاً للوطن؟"(*Hildārlin* 11).

inhabit and sing the nation into existence. The nation is created through song. Who are the poets

who sing the nation into existence? Rifqa privileges the poet's experience of alienation due to

both anxiety and vision as twin results of receptivity to the "language of the gods" (11).

According to Rifqa, the poet is alienated from his contemporaries because "the word remains

incomprehensible, because these prophetic words transcend his time" (11). Rifqa's identification

with the poet-as-madman trope results from both Hölderlin's influence and the forest-

philosopher of Arab Romanticism. Rifqa, in the introduction to *Hildārlin: Mukhtārāt min

Shiʿrīh*, finds resonance with a model of poetic inspiration in which the poet is viewed as prophet

and outcast, one who must stand apart from others and sing the nation into existence.

Rifqa throws his hat into the long historical discussion of subject and object through

intertextual references to German poetry. In his poem "The Tomb of the Poet" from *Hut of the

Sufi* (1998), Rifqa invokes Hölderlin's "Bread and Wine," an elegy to Hölderlin's contemporary,

Wilhelm Heinse, as the inscription on the book's focal character's tombstone:

Its length is nearly two meters,	طولُه قرابةَ مترين،
Its width, a meter, maybe more.	عَرضه متر، ربّما أكثر.
A small tomb,	قَبْرٌ صغير،
Its sky, the stars of the world,	سماؤه نجومُ العالم،
Its stones: "The Bread and the Wine."	حجارته "الخبز والنّبيذ".
Naked	عارياً
and "bare headed"	،ومكشوفَ الرّأس"
under the winds of the gods,	تحت رياحِ الآلهة
he had observed the chasms,	كان يَرصد الفَجَوات،
the courses of the lightning.	مساربَ البروق.
	(*Hut of the Sufi* 38)

In "What Are Poets For?", Heidegger describes the era invoked in Hölderlin's poem,

"Bread and Wine," an era than continues and deepens to this day, as the "darkness of the world,"

which is characterized by "God's failure to arrive" (91). Significantly, in Hölderlin's poem, Christ

follows in the procession of Greek gods. Rifqa, in a clear response to Hölderlin's poem, waits

carefully, having borne witness to both the depth of the abyss and the wide reach of the lightning across the sky. Moving through the scene and making direct contact with the focal character's naked skin is the "winds of the gods." The term Rifqa uses in Arabic is *riyāh*, translated here as "winds", but the term contains deeper resonance through its root letters *ra-wa-ḥa*. This root, through the many forms that can be derived from it, invokes not only the wind and the movement of air, but also "breath" and "soul" (Lane 1177-8). This subtly calls into presence the living or enlivening nature of this breath from the gods, but the poet's role is rendered in the past tense. In a sense, by alluding to "The Bread and the Wine" as an epitaph, Rifqa casts the poem and poetry itself as a memorial form. The continuous darkening of the world, per Heidegger, increases the severity of this situation over time until it reaches a point at which the world in Heidegger's period "has already grown so destitute, it can no longer discern the default of God as a default" (91). The poet is entombed in stone.

This condensed elegy to Hölderlin appears in Rifqa's 1998 poetry cycle *Hut of the Sufi*, published eight years after the end of the fifteen year-long Lebanese Civil War. The destitute condition of sociopolitical relations and the tenor of poetry itself during the 1980s and 1990s may shed light on reasons why the focal character can only observe and respond to Hölderlin's invitation to the gods from within his own tomb. If the poet is the one who should sing the homeland into existence, what is the role of the poet following a civil war? Hölderlin asks, "Where, to delight the gods, brim-full with nectar, are the songs?" (*Hyperion* 183). In the seventh stanza of "Bread and Wine," which opens on the impossibility of communing with the gods in the modern period, Hölderlin writes, "Who wants poets at all in lean years? / But they are, you say, like those holy ones, priests of the wine-god / Who in holy Night roamed from one place to the next" (185). Rifqa's allusion to "Bread and Wine" points to a feeling of alienation

and distance transmitted through Hölderlin's later stanzas on the impossibility of a divine

experience in the modern period. His next allusion, however, both refutes this feeling and

confirms it.

Rifqa's next quoted reference in "The Tomb of the Poet" seems to provide an answer to

the questions brought up by the allusion to "Bread and Wine" preceding it. In a direct reference

to Hölderlin's poem "As on a Holiday," Rifqa's silent focal character awaits the enlivening

breath of the gods "'*makshūf al-ra's*,'" or "'bare headed'" to view the "courses of the lightning."

This line comes from the following stanza in the original:

> And hence it is that without danger now
> The sons of Earth drink heavenly fire.
> Yet, fellow poets, us it behooves to stand
> Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,
> To grasp the Father's ray no less with our own two hands
> And, wrapping in song the heavenly gift,
> To offer it to the people.
> For if only we are pure in heart,
> Like children, and our hands are guiltless,
>
> The Father's ray, the pure, will not sear our hearts
> And, deeply convulsed, and sharing his sufferings
> Who is stronger than we are, yet in the far-flung down-rushing storms of
> The God, when he draws near, will the heart stand fast.
> <div align="right">(Hyperion, trans. Hamburger 195)</div>

Rifqa's pair of allusions to Hölderlin creates an intertextual density that outstrips the

length of his efficient single stanza poem. However, if one reads the final two stanzas of "As if

on a Holiday," the move back toward a productive poetic utterance connected to divinity is again

problematized in the last line of the above-quoted stanza and the two stanzas that follow it to

complete the poem:

But, oh, my shame! When of

My shame!

> That I approached to see the Heavenly,
> And they themselves cast me down, deep down
> Below the living, into the dark cast down
> The false priest that I am, to sing,
> For those who have ears to hear, the warning song.
> There
>
> (*Hyperion*, trans. Hamburger 195, 197)

Rifqa creates and problematizes a dialectic of possibility for the poet's effective utterance through two very brief references. The density of meaning surrounding Rifqa's allusions to Hölderlin demonstrate Rifqa's compositional strategy of intensification in his own poetry. Instead of eschewing participation in a Romantic tradition, as were many of his contemporaries in modern avant-garde Arabic poetry, Rifqa places himself directly in conversation with German poets through allusion. He offers responses to previous works and adds another move, as if a player in a very long chess game.

Novalis

Rifqa published two translations of Novalis' work, *Auswahl* in 1982, and selections of his poetry, *Mukhtārat*, in 1992. Novalis, or Georg Phillip Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772-1801) was known for his early Romantic poetry and essays as well as ideas that bridged literature and philosophy, such as *Liebesreligion,* or "love religion." He is associated with one of the first German Romantic groups, the Jena Romantics, named for their location in the German university town of Jena. Novalis, in association with Friedrich Schlegel, is well known for his contribution toward a "progressive, universal poetry" that, among other ethereal goals, can "hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors" (Schlegel, *Athenaeum* Fragment 116, qtd. in Bernstein 249). Hardenberg's pen name points to both past and future; Novalis comes from *de*

Novali, a Latinized version of *roden*, or "one who clears new ground for cultivation," which points to the Hardenbergs' acquisition of their estate, *Grossenrode*. Bruce Donehower notes the "connotations of groundbreaking independence as well as overtones of trespass" present in Novalis' pen name and calls those with these qualities "heralds of a new age or order" (*Birth of Novalis* 7). Rifqa's introduction to *Nōvalis Mukhtārāt* opens with a defining moment in Novalis' short poetic career, the death of his fiancé, Sophie von Kühn. Novalis' particular encounter with Sophie's death, Rifqa suggests, is less important than the larger vision he put forth as a result of it: "What is important is that this poet surpassed this death, and through it reached a comprehensive philosophical vision about man, history and the universe"[68] (5).

Rifqa highlights the symbol of night in Novalis' work as a creative space while daytime represents a modern, more regimented experience: "Here, day represents the age of Enlightenment: rationality, scientific truth, and abstract divinity, that is, the outside world, while the night represents here the romantic climate: spiritual intuition, pantheism, Christianity, and the meaning of the inner world"[69] (5). In his own poetry, Rifqa emphasizes diurnal rhythms alongside seasonal rhythms. In an untitled poem from *Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr / Lanterns in the Sea* (2005), Rifqa's narrator likens the mood of the hunt to the experience of the poet as he glimpses inspiration in the form of lightning within the creative space of night:

He melds into the grasses and into the soil	بالعشبِ يلتحم وبالتراب
watching his prey	راصداً فريستَه
a shark:	سَمَكُ القرش:
like a poet	كشاعرٍ
in darkness	في ظلمةٍ
observing the twilight bolt of lightning	يرصد بَرْقَ الشَّفَقِ
	(*Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr* 52)

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[68] " المهمّ هو أنّ هذا الشاعر تخطى حادثة الموت هذه، ومن خلالها توصل إلى رؤيا فلسفية شاملة حول الإنسان والتاريخ والكون" (5).

[69] "النهار هنا يمثّل عصر التنوير: العقلانيّة، الحقيقة العلميّة والألوهية المجرَّدة، أي العالم الخارجي، بينما الليل يمثّل هنا المناخ الرومانسي: الحدسيّة الروحانيّة، الحلوليّة، المسيحيّة، وبمعنى آخر العالم الداخلي" (5).

Another untitled example from the same collection demonstrates a similar assignment of creative

potential to night scenes combined with Rifqa's characteristic distance:

In the night	في الليل
under an ambiguous sky	تحت سماء مبهمة
on the pages of the sea	على صفحات البحر
stars scrawl	تُخَرِبِش النجوم
maps of destiny	خرائط القمر
	(*Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr* 59)

Novalis' poetry, philosophy, and fragments demonstrate a search for an organic unity

through a constant process of becoming, and this search is related to Novalis' broad training in

the sciences as well as the arts. In the introduction to *Novalis: Notes for a Romantic*

Encyclopedia, David W. Wood describes Novalis' goal for *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*: to "map a

new scientific continent" that is far-reaching and "breathtakingly universal and ambitiously

idealistic: to discover the common principles underlying all the different arts and sciences" (xii).

Perhaps one of the elements of Novalis' work that most appealed to Rifqa was the range of

Novalis' goal, which he described in a letter to Schlegel as "generating truth and ideas writ

large—of generating inspired thoughts—of producing a living *scientific organon*" (xiii). In

fragment 243, Novalis locates his theory of mathematical relations in poetry in "analogical

mathematics" and describes its spirit as "the principle that raises it [expression] to a higher

power—thus the *world of writing* is Nature that has been raised to a higher power, or the

technical world" (36). The "higher power" he refers to in this proto-encyclopedia entry is a result

of the "easily appropriated mathematical process of potentization" as applied to poetry, which

results in a system by which poets can "romanticize" a text through a qualitative rather than

quantitative application of potentization in order to discover and emphasize its underlying unity

(xv-xvi).

Novalis' collection of notes toward his Romantic encyclopedia, Wood suggests, is not simply a collection of fragments; rather, it should be viewed as the early stages of what Novalis intended to be a full vision of the theoretical undergirding of creativity through the lens of scientific inquiry (xvii). In the same vein, the poet's appropriation of methods from fields considered separate from art, as with the example of potentization above and its inverse function of de-emphasis, logarimization, demonstrates the poet's tendency toward the creation of a more interconnected vision of academic study and scholarship. Rifqa's 1965 dissertation completed at Tübingen under Professor Otto Bollnow explores the relationship between Heidegger's aesthetic theory and Oskar Becker's merging of aesthetics and mathematics.[70] While a full English translation and investigation of Rifqa's dissertation in German is not available, Rifqa's consideration of existentialism and mathematical approaches to philosophy may reflect the kind of interdisciplinarity prized by Novalis as he was working toward his Romantic encyclopedia.

Underlying Novalis' vision for interdisciplinarity is the centrality of love, which he describes as "the final goal of *world history*—the One of the universe" (8). Rifqa closes the introduction to *Nōvalis Mukhtārat* on the topic of Novalis' union of human love, embodied in his lost Sophie, with themes of Christian love: "We know in death we will find ourselves in the arms of the bride, the arms of God: the arms of love"[71] (8). The theme of interconnectivity extends to Novalis' conception of *stimmung* glanced in fragment 1122: "The word 'mood' [*Stimmung*] pertains to the musical relations of the soul—The acoustics of the soul is still an obscure, yet perhaps vitally important domain. Harmonious—and disharmonious vibrations" (186). Although

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[70] Beckers' work has fallen out of favor in mathematics and aesthetics due in no small part to his Nazi allegiance. It should also be noted that Martin Heidegger and Otto Bollnow both signed the 1933 document, "The Loyalty Oath of German Professors to Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist State," which included approximately nine hundred signatories.

[71] ‏"في النشيد السّابع يمجّد الشاعر الحبّ الذي يجعلنا نُحسُّ بالحالة التي تنتظرنا بعد الموت، فننشتهي العبور إلى هذه الحالة. جميع البشر يشتهون هذا العبور، نماماً كما فعل الشّهداء القدامى.‏
‏نحن نعرف في الموت حتى نجد أنفسنا في سواعد العروس، سواعد الله: سواعد الحبّ" (7).‏

the scope and scale are quite different, Rifqa's vision of a greater unification of poetry and philosophy in the Arabic language context reflects elements of Novalis' vision of a unified theory of creativity, both of which aim to promote human flourishing in scientific, artistic, and spiritual fields through inspired combinatory analysis.

Trakl

In 1987, Rifqa published a selected collection of Georg Trakl's poetry, *Georg Trakl: Qaṣā'id Mukhtāra*. This was the only translation he published on the poet, possibly due to the poet's short life. Georg Trakl, born in Salzburg in 1887, contributed to Austrian expressionism through his philosophical poems. At the age of thirteen, he began composing poetry, and published only one complete volume, *Gedichte*, in 1913 before his war-related death by cocaine overdose in 1914. Trakl's early poetry was published in the periodical *Der Brenner*. *Sebastian im Traum / Sebastian in a Dream* was published posthumously in 1915, and a collection of poems selected from Trakl's papers, *Auf goldenem Kelch / The Golden Chalice*, was published in 1939. Trakl's poetry and Rifqa's original poetry long after Trakl emphasize seasonal cycles, particularly winter and autumn scenes, as well as invoke stone in relation to the transmission of poetry after the death of the poet. Rifqa's quiet poetry reflects Trakl's stilling of movement and representations of silence, or a "paradigm of muteness" (Pierre 42).

Robert Bly's introduction to a collection of Trakl poems he and James Wright translated into English notes the "magnificent silence" in Trakl's poetry, "the silence of things that could speak, but choose not to" (*Twenty Poems* 5). In the same volume, Wright describes the experience of reading Trakl's poetry as meditative: "They are not objects which he constructed, but quiet places at the edge of a dark forest where one has to sit still for a long time and listen very carefully" (9). Trakl's poem "Summer" demonstrates the centrality of silence in his work:

At evening the complaint of the cuckoo
Grows still in the wood.
The grain bends its head deeper,
The red poppy.

Darkening thunder drives
Over the hill.
The old song of the cricket
Dies in the field.

The leaves of the chestnut tree
Stir no more.
Your clothes rustle
On the winding stair.

The candle gleams silently
In the dark room;
A silver hand
Puts the light out;

Windless, starless night.

<div align="right">(Twenty Poems, trans. James Wright and Robert Bly, 13)</div>

One of many examples of this tendency in Rifqa's poetry appears in the following poem, titled

with the date "15 November 1984," in *Diary of a Woodcutter*. While at this point in the poetic

narrative, the focal character, the Woodcutter, is still alive, Rifqa draws attention to both stilled

motion through unmoving starlings and death through the image of "the soot of the Woodcutter":

15 November 1984 ١٥ تشرين الثاني ١٩٨٤

Under a grey sky تحتَ سماءٍ رماديّةٍ
Barren plains, سهولٌ جرْداء،
Abandoned ponds, أحواضٌ مهجورةٌ،
Starlings. زرازير.

In the Woodcutter's soot kilns في مشاحر الحطاب
frost accumulates soon, قريباً يتكدّس الصقيع،
and on the rivers. وعلى الأنهار.

<div align="right">(Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb 109)</div>

The winter theme in this and many other Rifqa poems echoes Trakl's winter scenes. Frost

accumulates on the Woodcutter's unmoving body, portrayed here as soot, to suggest both a lack

of movement and vitality through his lack of bodily warmth and the image of ash, the result of a fire that is no longer present. Another method which Trakl uses, remarked upon by both Heidegger and Rifqa after him, is a sense of constant revision toward a single poem. In his introduction to his Arabic translations of Trakl, Rifqa writes,

> His poetic world is like a dense forest, closed from view, in cipher. The adventure to it is descent into the abyss until one chokes. Despite this, it can be said that his poetic world is based on the foundation of his experience of grief to the bone. This is why he compared himself to the martyrs of Christianity, whose bodies were pierced by arrows. Remarking on this state, he said: "I have no right to avoid hell" and "it is an indescribable misery for the human world to become schizophrenic."

> His expression of this experience is embodied in the living image that constantly strikes the reader and estranges him from a sense of permanence. However, the images that embody this experience are limited, as is the vocabulary, which gives the reader the impression that his poems are one poem. This is true, meaning that he tries to say the same thing every time, each time more accurately, but always and forever remains what is not said. (*Qaṣāʾid Mukhtāra Trakl* 9)[72]

The pursuit of a single piece of pure expression is perhaps the most important element of Trakl's poetic that Rifqa adapted into his original poetry in Arabic. In Rifqa's introduction, he next cites Heidegger's comment on Trakl from the essay "Language in the Poem" that reads, "Every great poet creates his poetry out of one single poetic statement only. The measure of his greatness is the extent to which he becomes so committed to that singleness that he is able to keep his poetic Saying wholly within it" (*On the Way to Language* 159). In his original work, Rifqa took this comment to heart. Consistent revision throughout Rifqa's poetic corpus tends toward ever increasing density of meaning through an ever winnowing vocabulary. Early iterations of this tendency were explored in the first chapter of this dissertation, focusing on Rifqa's revisions

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[72] عالمه الشعريُ أشبه بالأدغال، بالرؤيا المغلقة، بالشيفرة. فالمغامرة إليه سقوطٌ في هاويةٍ حتى الاختناق. ورَغْمَ هذا، يمكن القول إنّ عالمه الشعريَّ قائمٌ في أساسه على تجربة الألم حتى العظم. من هنا كان يقارن نفسه بشهداء المسيحيّة الذين كانت السهامُ تخترق أجسادهم، وتعبيراً عن هذه الحالة كان يقول: "لا حقّ لديّ أن اجتنب الجحيم"، أو "أنها لتعاسةٌ لا توصف أن يصير العالم للإنسان مُنْفَصِماً.
تعبيرُه عن هذه التجربة يتجسّد بالصورة الحيّة التي تَلْطُم القارئ وتَستنفره باستمرار، غير أن الصوَرَ التي تجسّد هذه التجربة محدودة، وكذلك المفردات، ممّا يولّد الانطباع عند القارئ أنَّ قصائدَه قصيدةٌ واحدةٌ، وهذا صحيح، بمعنى أنّه يحاول أن يقول الشيء ذاته في كلّ مرةٍ، وفي كلّ مرةٍ بصورةٍ أدقّ، لكن دائماً وأبداً يبقى ما لا يُقال (*Qaṣāʾid Mukhtāra Trakl* 9).

between work published in the 1957 issues of *Shiʿr* and his 1961 collection *Mirsāt ʿala al Khalīj*, which coincide with the period when Rifqa broke with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Two examples from considerably later in his career, "Hut of the Sufi" from his 1993 collection, *Qaṣāʾid Hindī Aḥmar / Red Indian Poems,* and the 1998 version of the same name from the collection named for it, *Khirbat al-Ṣūfī / Hut of the Sufi*, demonstrate Rifqa's tendency toward revision in a less immediately politically charged context and emphasize his synthesis of Trakl's influence. Each poem emphasizes a meditative process that allows the focal character to receive inspiration inside a ruined hut in the wilderness. First, the 1993 version:

In these mountains	في هذه الجبال
For thirty autumns	من ثلاثين خريفاً
With the hawks and eagles.	مع البواشق والنّسور.
His hat is the sun and the wind,	قُبَّعَتُه الشّمس والرّيح،
His hair the clouds,	شَعرُه السُّحُب،
His bosom a gathering place for birds of prey.	حضْنُه مُلتقى الكواسر.
On a seat of tangled moss	على مقعدٍ طُحلبيّ
He does not move,	لا يتحرّك،
He does not tire from sitting,	لا يتعب من الجلوس،
He is silent.	يصمت.
Two stones: he and the stone.	حَجَران: هو والحجر.

(*Qaṣāʾid Hindī Aḥmar* 36)

The 1993 version of "Hut of the Sufi" offers a vision of transformation achieved through the stillness of the poet and his central position as a gathering place for birds of prey. Movement is further stilled by the attention drawn to the focal character's quiet meditation in the second stanza. In the single closing line, the focal character achieves a change of state; he becomes like and is identified with a stone in a line bereft of a verb.

The 1998 version approaches the transformation of poetic inspiration through a completely different metaphor—the subtle yet wholly transformative process of fermentation:

In the beginning of days	في بداية الأيام
he loved poetry, so he retired,	أحبَّ الشّعرَ, فاعتزل،
forty years in "The Hut of the Sufi"	أربعينَ عاماً في "خربة الصّوفيّ"
he prayed and fasted,	صلّى وصام،
and chanted the songs.	ورتَّل الأناشيد.
He fermented,	تَخمَّر،
his eyes blazed,	توهّجت عّيناه،
he became a poet:	صار شاعراً:
he forgot poetry.	نَسيَ الشّعر.

<p style="text-align:right;">(Hut of the Sufi 46)</p>

The meditative element remains between both poems: sitting in silence provides the appropriate conditions for the arrival and absorption of inspiration. When that inspiration arrives, Rifqa invokes the image of fermentation, particularly when collapsing time scales between points in a series or process, such as invoking the vineyard and the wine in the same breath. The image of fermentation suggests a transformative process, rather than a more permanent state, as with the stone in the previous revision of this poem.

While Trakl provided much of the undergirding for Rifqa's style—intentionally resonant minimal vocabulary, stone imagery, and winter settings, to name a few—the next poet under consideration acts as a cornerstone for the transformation of Rifqa's aesthetic throughout his life.

Rilke

Rifqa's long career of translation is bookended by translations of Rilke. In 1969, Rifqa published an Arabic translation of *Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke / Qaṣā'id Mukhtāra Rilke*, and in 1999, Rifqa published two volumes of Rilke's poetry in dual German-Arabic editions: *Duino Elegies* and *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Rifqa worked alongside translators Antoine Boulad and Daher Srour and visual artist Katrin Ullman to produce a tri-lingual volume of poetry in Arabic, German, and French, titled *Dichter in Raron / Sha'ir fi Raron / Poete a Rarogne* in 1999. This volume of Rifqa's original poetry celebrates and recreates Rilke's merging of artistic

and environmental aesthetics by presenting the same poem in three languages in tandem with impressionistic landscape paintings of the same scene.

Another important parallel that exists between Rifqa and Rilke is that of transitions. Rilke negotiates the transition to poetic modernity and into the modern secular age in the Central European context at the beginning of the twentieth century. His poetic of transition appealed to Rifqa at the beginning of his career in Beirut in the mid-twentieth century, as the cultural scene was also rapidly adjusting to the rejection of Romanticism in favor of the adoption and subsequent abandonment of a more politically-oriented form of Modernism.

The epigram to Rifqa's first book of poetry, *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj / An Anchor on the Gulf* (1961), is comprised of the final lines of Rilke's eighth poem in *Duino Elegies*. Robert Hass, in his introduction to Stephen Mitchell's translations, describes Rilke's text as an "argument […] against ordinary life. Nor does it admit, as comfort, any easy idea of transcendence" (xv). The initial lines below fill out the beginning of the full stanza prior to the epigram, which begins at "Just as, upon":

> And we: spectators, always, everywhere,
> turned toward the world of objects, never outward.
> It fills us. We arrange it. It breaks down.
> We rearrange it, then break down ourselves.
> Who has twisted us around like this, so that
> no matter what we do, we are in the posture
> of someone going away? Just as, upon
> The farthest hill, which shows him his whole valley
> One last time, he turns, stops, lingers--,
> So we live here, forever taking leave.
> (Rilke, *Selected Poetry* 197)

<div dir="rtl">

كما هو،
على التلة الاخيرة التي تريه
ثانيةً كلَّ واديه
يلتفت، يتوقّف، يتردد
هكذا نعيش، وأبداً نأخذ إجازة
</div>

(Epigram, *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj*)

The beginning of the stanza of the Eighth *Duino Elegy* preceding its brief invocation by Rifqa in the epigram to *Mirsāt ʿala al-Khalīj* emphasizes the distance between the individual and Rilke's concept of "the Open," which was later taken up by Heidegger. In Rilke's 1926 response to a reader's question about "the Open," he wrote, "'The animal is *in* the world; we stand *before it* by virtue of what peculiar turn and intensification which our consciousness has taken'" (qtd. in Heidegger *Poetry* 105). A human experience of "the Open" is necessarily ephemeral: "'The animal, the flower […] has before itself and above itself that indescribably open freedom which perhaps has its (extremely fleeting) equivalents among us only in those first moments of love when one human being sees his own vastness in another, his beloved, and in man's elevation toward God'" (105-6).

Heidegger's concept of "the Open" rests on the concept of concealedness-unconcealedness of Being, or *alētheia*. Poetry is, for Heidegger, "the saying of the unconcealedness of what is" (71). In further detail,

> Poetry, however, is not an aimless imagining of whimsicalities and not a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal. What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out. If we fix our vision on the nature of the work and its connection with the happening of the truth of what is, it becomes questionable whether the nature of poetry, and this means at the same time the nature of projection, can be adequately thought of in terms of the power of imagination. (70)

Rilke's term "the Open" refers to "something that does not block off," "does not set bounds," or is "without bounds." In "What Are Poets For?", Heidegger describes "the Open":

> The Open is the great whole of all that is unbounded. It lets the beings ventured into the pure draft draw as they are drawn, so that they variously draw on one another and draw together without encountering any bounds. Drawing as so drawn, they fuse with the boundless, the infinite. They do not dissolve into void nothingness, but they redeem themselves in the whole of the Open. (106)

"The Open" is not a condition accessible to humans; animals, in their unboundedness, have access to "the Open," to the infinite, yet do not have a concept of it. Rilke's well-known poem, "The Panther," from *The Book of Pictures* (1902, 1906) demonstrates a kind of trauma shock in relation to an experience of "the Open" that Rifqa, in the poem "Bāshiq" / "Hawk" from one of his final collections, *'Awdat al-Marākib / Return of the Ships*, responds to and further complicates. First, Rilke's poem:

> His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
> has grown so weary that it cannot hold
> anything else. It seems to him there are
> a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.
>
> As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,
> The movement of his powerful soft strides
> Is like a ritual dance around a center
> In which a mighty will stands paralyzed.
>
> Only at times, the curtain of the pupils
> Lifts, quietly--. An image enters in,
> Rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
> Plunges into the heart and is gone.
>
> (*Selected Poetry*, trans. Stephen Mitchell 25)

In "Bāshiq," Rifqa recreates the caged predator of "The Panther" in a bird of prey and adds the further complicating technological factor of photography. The final stanza connects the plight of the caged hawk to that of the poet.

Hawk	باشق
A cage of steel	قفصٌ معدني
From its holes	من ثقوبه
A hawk casts a glance at the forests	باشقٌ يلمح الأحراج
The scent of wasted lands:	رائحة الوعر:
He turns	يدور
Around himself he turns	حول نفسه يدور
He stumbles	يتعثّر
Falls	يسقط
Disappears in his feathers	في ريشه يغيب
Under the rubble of photographs	تحت أشلاء الصّور

Two friends: صديقان:
He and the woodcutter of poetry   هو وحطّاب الشّعر
                                                                                         (ʿAwdat al-Marākib 62)

Like Rilke's panther, the hawk does not return a gaze of recognition to human onlookers. Unlike the panther, the hawk does seem to maintain the ability to perceive the world outside of his cage. However, the hawk's glance outward is returned not with sight but with another form of sensory input: "the scent of wasted lands." This sensory input causes the hawk to lose his sense of space, even within the cage. The final line of the first stanza introduces the weight of the photographic gaze as the "rubble" under which the hawk collapses and "disappears."

In 1902, Rilke arrived in Paris and began the phase of his life that would produce *The Book of Pictures* and *New Poems*. In large part due to the artistic influence of the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), for whom Rilke worked as a secretary, Rilke developed the approach to writing poetry that he called *Ding-Gedichte*. Hass describes *Ding-Gedichte*, or "thing poems," as "poems about looking at animals, people, sculptures, paintings, in which the focus was thrown off the lyrical speaker of the poem and onto the thing seen" (xxi). "The Panther," from *The Book of Pictures*, is a prime example of this style. From Rilke's focus on a distinct otherness, the caged animal, he identifies an inward otherness. The end of "The Panther" is an intense absence, evidence of the void into which the image taken into the panther's eyes "plunges into the heart and is gone." Hass describes this as "a poem about the exhaustion of seeing" that "stripped away the lyrical ego of his early poems" (xxiii).

With a population of over three million, Paris in the first decade of the twentieth century was the largest city in continental Europe[73]. Rilke had relocated to Paris from Prague by way of a

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[73] While London's population of approximately 6.4 million was near double Paris' 3.3 million in 1900, Paris was the largest continental European city.

number of extended trips to rural regions in Russia and a residency at Bremen. The crowded

streets of Paris were unappealing to the poet, who "didn't altogether like the city, either its

poverty or its glamour, both of which shocked hit at first and saddened him later" (xiv). The

shock of urbanity communicated by Rilke resembles Walter Benjamin's concept of trauma

shock, a condition that results from the anonymity of urban life, from the gaze of the subject not

being returned. In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin discusses the shock of modernity

Baudelaire expresses through his representations of the anonymous, amorphous crowd.

On the technology of photography, an image of which Rifqa has added to the end of

"Hawk," Benjamin writes, "Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and

the like, the 'snapping' of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the

finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time" (175). The intersubjective

condition of a shared gaze confirms one's presence as a subject; the failure of reciprocity in a

gaze, whether with a lens, the photograph produced, or anonymous strangers avoiding eye

contact in an urban crowd, creates a sense of intersubjective instability. This dislocation must be

guarded against to avoid the shock of the unreturned gaze. Rifqa's addition of a destructive

avalanche of photographs points to a doubly unreturned gaze. The couplet that closes the poem,

"Two friends: / He and the woodcutter of poetry," both responds to Rilke and problematizes the

possibility of the reception of lyric poetry in general. By likening the poet, and by extension

poetry, to the distant object, here the hawk, rather than the implied crowd snapping photographs

of it, Rifqa removes poetry from the unrequited gaze of mechanical reproduction. Instead, like

the caged hawk, it has the possibility of glancing the Open through all of the barriers of

perception. By pairing the "Woodcutter of poetry" with the hawk, Rifqa separates the poet's

ability to recognize these fleeting moments of "Openness" from the aesthetic experiences of

those gathered in the crowd. For Rifqa, poetry's potential to glimpse the Open, however

ephemeral, inheres in its creation of an experience, its phenomenological potential, which he

communicates through the relationship of poetry to music and song.

In the first of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Rilke relates the song of the mythological figure of

Orpheus to objects in the natural world. He concludes the first sonnet on an image of poetry's

transformative abilities: Orpheus' song, and the gathered crowd of rapt woodland animals,

transforms the "makeshift hut" into "a temple deep inside their hearing":

> A tree ascended there. Oh pure transcendence!
> Oh Orpheus sings! Oh tall tree in the ear!
> And all the things hushed. Yet even in that silence
> a new beginning, beckoning, change appeared.
>
> Creatures of stillness crowded from the bright
> unbound forest, out of their lairs and nests;
> and it was not from any dullness, not
> from fear, that they were so quiet in themselves,
>
> but from simply listening. Bellow, roar, shriek
> seemed small inside their hearts. And where there had been
> just a makeshift hut to receive the music,
>
> a shelter nailed up out of their darkest longing,
> with an entryway that shuddered in the wind—
> you built a temple deep inside their hearing.
> (*Selected Poetry* 227)

In this poem, transformation occurs in the removal of the barrier between human language and

animals, in the nature of the built structure of the hut, in the structure's transition into a temple,

and in the location of that temple in the sensory experience of the human and animal listeners.

Hass identifies in *Sonnets to Orpheus* a major theme of Rilke's later poetry, *Gesang ist Dasein*,

or "singing is being," as "the moment when the pure activity of being consciously alive is

sufficient to itself" (*Selected* xl). As Rilke puts it in the closing two lines of the third *Sonnet to*

Orpheus, "True singing is a different breath, about / nothing. A gust inside the god. A wind" (231).

The volume of original poetry that Rifqa published after his translations of *Sonnets to Orpheus* and *Duino Elegies* in 1999 was *Wādī al-Tuqūs / The Valley of Ritual* in 2002. Rifqa describes the poems in this volume as *anāshīd shiʿriyya*, or poetic songs. The term *nashīd / anāshīd* generally refers to *song / songs*, but more specifically connotes a hymn, recitation or psalm, such as in the Song of Solomon or Song of Songs, which is translated as *Nashīd Al-Anāshīd* (Wehr 1132). Rifqa's introduction to this volume emphasizes the poet-singer's distance from "'modern' readers" and establishes the atmosphere of funerary ritual through parenthetical statement akin to stage direction, emphasizing the performative aspect of poetry-in-song:

> *The Valley of Ritual* are songs in one song of dense strains.
>
> The strains of this song are "ancient," strange to "modern" readers, to "modernity" and what comes after it, so they will remain a star behind the cloud.
>
> Shepherds of words and sentinels of the sunset glimpse them; they are companions on the path to the edge of poetry.
>
> (An ancient temple, priests, funerary rituals, behind the smoke of the offering are voices, echoes of which cross the night up to the borders of the Departed.)[74] (*Wādī al-Tuqūs* 5-6)

The poem that accompanies this introduction gathers together other "companions" who may be able to "glimpse" the larger song that contains all of the seemingly separate songs in the collection.

With the bow and arrow	بالقَوسٍ والنشاب
To the hunt in the wasteland	إلى الصّيد في القفار
And they did not return.	ولم يعودوا.
By the paddles and mast	بالمجاذيف والأشرعة

---

[74] "وادي الطقوس" أناشيد في نشيد واحد كثيف الأوتار.

أوتار هذا النشيد "قديمة"، غريبة عن القارئ "الحديث"، عن "الحداثة" وما بعدها, لذا ستبقى نجمة خلف السّحب.

رعاة الكلمة وحرّاس الأفق يلمحونها، إنهم رفاق الدّرب إلى حافّة الشّعر.

(معبد قديم، كاهنات، طقوس جنائزية، خلف دخان المحرقات أصواب، صداها يعبر الليل حتى تخوم الرّاحلين) (*Wādī al-Tuqūs* 5-6).

To the hunt in the tempests	إلى الصّيد في الأنواء
And they did not return.	ولم يعودوا.
By the scythes and pikes	بالمناجل والحراب
To the hunt in the caverns	إلى الصّيد في الكهوف
And they did not return.	ولم يعودوا.
By the lanterns and candles	بالقناديل والشموع
To the hunt in the hollows	إلى الصّيد في الأغوار
And they did not return.	ولم يعودوا.
By songs and strings	بالأناشيد والأوتار
To the hunt travel the companions	إلى الصّيد سافر الرّفاق،
To the crossings of the rivers.	إلى معابر الأنهار.

(*Wādī al-Tuqūs* 6-7)

Rifqa simultaneously represents the intersections of contemporary poetic innovation within Arabic poetry and the significant influence of German poetry and philosophy gathered through his study of Hölderlin, Rilke, and most emphatically, around the philosophy of Heidegger. Poiesis occurs against the backdrop of realistic actual and imaginary landscapes, yet these representations are subordinated to Rifqa's philosophical intention, just as each poem in each collection is subtly instrumental to the organic unity of the whole. Each collection fits into the larger framework of reflection and revision, and when viewed as a whole, his entire body of work appears an ontological draft of an individual's life in different contexts. Each level of relation reflects other levels of relation in Rifqa's work, creating structures that gather meaning at the interstices of points where two lines of thought or image meet.

Heidegger

Rifqa organized much of his corpus of original poetry around Heidegger's exploration of Being. In addition to his original poetry, Rifqa may have used Heidegger's commentary on aesthetics as a guide to German poetry in that all of the poets he translated are within the orbit of Heidegger's explorations of lyric poetry. The earliest available information on Rifqa's initial

engagement with German poetry came through Rilke, as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. However, it is unknown at present when he came into contact with Heidegger's writing.

When Rifqa began his course in continental philosophy at AUB in 1949, the stage for exposure to Heidegger had already been set, due in no small part to Charles Malik (1906-1987), a Lebanese diplomat, who as president of the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights drafted and supported the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to its adoption in 1948. Malik was also a philosopher who earned his Ph.D. under the advisement of Alfred North Whitehead at Harvard. Whitehead had attempted to study under Heidegger in 1932 but left Germany in 1933 due to the ascent of the Nazis to power. After earning multiple degrees and teaching at various universities in the United States, Malik returned to Lebanon to found the Department of Philosophy at AUB, where his teaching focused heavily on Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, and Heidegger (Malik 43). In this role, Malik "held a series of simultaneous informal circles of reading and discussion in which many of Lebanon's, and some of the Arab world's, leading intellectual figures took part" (43). As a figure in both academia and international diplomacy, Malik became recognized as a Christian Existentialist who reached across confessional lines in Lebanon. Further research into Malik and the nature of Christian Existentialist discourse will be included in the next evolution of this project. While it seems Rifqa attended AUB in the period between Malik's first tenure at AUB in the 1940s and his return in the 1960s, Malik's influence likely reached him through Malik's institutional legacy.

Rifqa's dissertation, published at the University of Tübingen in West Germany in 1965, reveals his interpretations of Heidegger's aesthetics and will provide grounding in the poet's application of Heidegger's vision of poetry as method of expression uniquely connected to the etymological roots of thoughtfully chosen language. Rifqa's particular attention in many of his

works, original or translated, is to the etymological relationships of word roots in Arabic, which underlines Heidegger's discussion in his 1926 lecture "What Are Poets For?", given on the twentieth anniversary of Rilke's death. In this lecture, Heidegger emphasizes the corruption of words through their transmission and translation from Greek to Latin and eventually to German, and how these corruptions prevent our understanding of the earlier epochs' basic ontological concepts (*Poetry* 23-4). In a dual strand, the technological development of the modern age complicates humans' understanding of our relations to the mystical, the divine, and ourselves through language. One of the poet's roles, according to Heidegger, is to search for a purity of language (216-7); Rifqa's original poetry and translations aim at this goal, and through seasonal revision, pursue it again and again for the span of his entire career.

In two poems from *Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr / Lanterns in the Sea* (2005), Rifqa emphasizes a lost, unified point of origin by contrasting the loss of this memory against the eternity contained in the bones of a long-dead fish. Remembering an early, ancestral point of origin requires acknowledgment of one's place in relation to environment and objects, but Rifqa suggests that this has been lost.

Perhaps in the sea we were	ربّما في البحر كنّا
for millions of years	من ملايين السّنين
kelp or whelk	عشبةً أو صَدَفةْ
then came the tide and the flood	ثمّ جاء المدُّ والطوفان
For the wilds we left	للبرّ خرجنا
and forgot	ونَسينا
Our house abandoned on the seafloor	بيتنا المهجور في القاع
We forgot	نَسينا
that in the sea we were	أنّنا في البحر كنّا
kelp or whelk	عشبةً أو صَدَفةْ
for a million years	من ملايين السّنين
	(Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr 98)

And by contrast, fishbones:

His fishbones	حَسَكَهْ
in the seaweed	في حشيش البحرِ
were his fish	كانت سَمَكَهْ
no limit concerns it	لا مدئَ يُقلقها
distracted	لاهية
by threads of the shimmering net	عن خيوطٍ في الشَّبَكَهْ
Behind its eyes echo a wave	خَلْفَ عينيها صدى موجٍ
and the memory of a fish	وذكرى سَمَكَهْ
	(*Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr* 99)

The contrast between these two poems emphasizes in concrete terms the point Rifqa makes over and over again in his work: we are language, which echoes Heidegger's dictum that "Language is the house of Being." Language, particularly artistic utterances like poetry, grounds us in History: "The origin of the work of art--that is, the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people's historical existence, is art. This is so because art is by nature an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical" (Heidegger 78). These two poems finish a longer section relating the sea to History, the sea which also throughout acts as non-reciprocating recipient of poetry and language, as a source of origin and unity, but also as a location for dangerous conditions that work against humanity, such as storms, sharks, and whales, as mentioned in the prose introduction to *Lanterns in the Sea*.

Another shared element with Heidegger is Rifqa's general suspicion toward technology, which Rifqa often represents through paired landscapes set in opposition to each other: Rifqa regularly relates the poetic experience and references to composition with elements of landscape and seasonal cycles. In the following example, the first stanza causes a welling up of anxieties related to a built landscape, and in the second stanza, the forest emerges as a kind of coping mechanism for the Woodcutter in an urban environment. In a poem dated March 3, 1983, from

the collection *Diary of a Woodcutter,* Rifqa engages the city physically and a rural setting

emotionally:

The woodcutter emerges from his hovel,	مِن وكْرِهِ يَخرجُ الحطّاب،
his feet are two chimneys,	قَدَماهُ مِدْخنتان،
his head a whirlpool,	رَأْسهُ دَوّامةٌ،
his body a dusty stone.	جَسَدُهُ حَجَرٌ أَغْبر.
He closes his eyes:	يُغْمض عينيه:
a forest wakes up,	غابٌ يستفيق،
it glows in the heart	يَتَوهّجُ في القلبِ
across the swaying boats.	عَبْر المراكب المتأرجحة.

<div align="right">(Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb 25)</div>

This poem is included in a section of *Diary of a Woodcutter* in which the focal character travels

to Washington, D.C. Rifqa's Woodcutter, who appears throughout the text as a character living

outside of an identifiable time period, is abruptly cast *out of* the wilderness and finds himself

struggling to cope in the modern urban setting of Washington, D. C. The inversion the character

feels in the second line, "His feet are two chimneys," and the chaos suggested by the third line,

"His head a whirlpool," is righted when the Woodcutter closes his eyes and considers the forest.

The landscape of the heart-space is reminiscent of the Woodcutter's forested home environment,

not the one in which he finds himself physically. Rather than actual landscapes, the majority of

poems in this section deal with imagined landscapes that when conjured are presented as more

real to the focal character than his present physical surroundings. When the timeless character

enters a thoroughly modern setting, he evokes the forest. The division of this poem into two

stanzas emphasizes Rifqa's crafting of language that relates the oppositional nature of the two

landscapes the narrator finds within the woodcutter: the "whirlpool", "chimneys", and "dusty

stone" of the first stanza constitute the world that relates the negative identifications he finds

between his body and his current urban environment. These metaphors suggest chaos and an

inability to interact. Unlike in the forest, he cannot interact with his surroundings. He is closed

off to them. Each line in the first stanza relates his body and its parts to the built environment, the products of technology. In the second stanza, the physical present of Washington is shut out by closing his eyes. When this occurs, personal pronouns begin to disappear and the woodcutter is absorbed in the landscape that "glows in the heart" (25). The woodcutter's experience of subjectivity is represented as buffered in an urban environment and so porous when he considers the forest that pronouns are unnecessary.

In another poem, "F-16" from *ʿAwdat al-Marākib,* he provides a startlingly direct reference to a specific example of modern warfare technology. In the first four lines, Rifqa maintains his characteristic imagery—autumn, evening, a liminal space between sleeping and waking—and so creates the expectation that this poem will continue as such. Then "suddenly" his tone changes, turning on this single-word line, and the war plane tears through the rest of the stanza, redrawing maps throughout its flight.

F-16	إف 16
Under an autumn pomegranate	تحت رمّانةٍ خريفيّة
The end of the day,	آخر النّهار،
Drowsiness,	نعاسٌ،
No memory and no dreams	لا ذاكرةٌ ولا أحلام،
Suddenly	فجأةً
Over the Atlantic	عِبْرَ الأطلسي
An F-16 rips through the ocean	إف 16 تشق المحيط
In the sky of stars and moons	في سماء النجوم والأقمار
It draws maps of blood	ترسم خرائط الدّماء
On head injuries	على إصابة الرأس
The pilot is training	يتدرّب الطيّار

(*ʿAwdat al-Marākib* 69)

This amount of active movement is not characteristic of Rifqa's body of work. *ʿAwdat al-Marākib / Return of the Ships* (2009) is one of Rifqa's last publications, followed only by

Tamārīn ʿala al-Haykū / Exercises in Haiku (2010) and *Miḥdalat al-Mawt wa-Humūm lā Tantahī / The Grindstone of Death and Ceaseless Worries*, published in the year of his death, 2011. The difference of tone between the initial imagistic scene and the arrival of the active bringer-of-death in the form of a warplane points to an anxiety directed more toward technology, with all of its reorganizations of time and existence, than to the specter of death itself.

The Journal, the Elegy and Being-toward-Death

Rifqa created a synthesis of poetry and philosophy within his poems and within his larger body of work as a whole. Through the use of the diary form, Rifqa attaches contemporary dates to poems that at the same time seek to establish a sense of timelessness. The distant focal characters, whether Sufi, Sailor, or Woodcutter, are portrayed as experiencing time through diurnal and seasonal cycles rather than participating in a more regimented, modern industrial order of time. *Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb / Diary of a Woodcutter*, published in 1988 and dedicated to poet and *Shiʿr* founder Yūsuf al-Khāl following his death in 1987, achieves the pinnacle of Rifqa's synthesis of form and content from both Arabic poetry and German poetry and philosophy in its portrayal of the role of the poet. Through the journal form, Rifqa inhabits the life and death of the solitary Woodcutter while also maintaining the distance of a detached observer. His exploration of the Woodcutter's life is a combination of German poetic style with content that Rifqa connects to his contemporaries in modern avant-garde Arabic literature. In the elegy that concludes *Diary of a Woodcutter*, Rifqa alternates between poetry and prose as the Woodcutter makes the passage from life to death.

5 July 1986   ٥ تمَّوز ١٩٨٦

(The End)   (النهاية)

In front of his hut   أَمامَ كوخِهِ
Under a blue star   تحت نجمةٍ زرقاء
The Woodcutter dreams.   يحلمُ الحطّابِ.

He is helpless now   عاجزٌ هو الآن
and there is no one,   وما مِنْ أحد،
all friends scattered away,   فالرِّفاقُ تبعثروا،
scattered in the midday heat   في الهجير تبعثروا
and without a trace.   وما مِنْ أثر.

Ah, the time of woodkilns and shared nights,   آه، يا زمنَ المشاجر والسَّهر،
and you woodcutters,   أيِّها الحطّابون،
you eagles of rising suns and silence   يا نسورَ الإشراقاتِ والصمت،
behold the last of you   هوَذا آخرُكمْ
his ash in the breeze   في الهواءِ رمادُهُ
and in the rivers,   وفي الأنهار،
and until another epiphany   وحتى ظُهورٍ آخر
and then a vast darkness engulfs the forest.   على الأدغالِ يسقط ظلامٌ كبير.

In the plains of eternity   في سهولٍ الأبَدِ
the Woodcutter burned his eyes and became   أحْرقَ الحطّابُ عينيهِ وصارْ
in lanterns of tomorrow,   في قناديلِ الغدِ،
a body within a body.   جَسَداً في جَسَدِ.

Smoke masks the sun   دخانٌ يَحجب الشمس
Ashes are spread about   رمادٌ يتناثر
A funeral dirge rises: صَلاةٌ جنائزيّة ترتفع:

Pure, he rose from the soil   نَقيّاً طَلَعَ مِنَ التراب
And pure he returns to it,   وإليه نَقيّاً يعود،
Pure, he rose from the water   نَقيّاً طَلَعَ مِنَ المياه
And pure he returns to it,   وإليها نَقيّاً يعود،
Pure, he rose from the fire   نَقيّاً طَلَعَ مِنَ النّار
And pure he returns to it,   وإليها نَقيّاً يعود،
Pure he rose into the air,   نَقيّاً طَلَعَ مِنَ الهواء
And pure he returns to it.   وإليه نَقيّاً يعود.
Blessed are you, oh elements,   مُبارَكَةٌ أنتِ, أيّتها العناصر،
Oh holy springs,   أيّتها الينابيعُ المقدّسة،
Oh unending times.   أيّتها الأزْمنة.

And on the third day his old friends joined him in his hut: his old owl, his starving hyena, and his limping eagle. And when they did not find him, they knew everything. Long they cried, and deeply. In the morning they went away, each one in a different direction.

وفي اليوم الثالث تلاقى في كوخه رفاقُه القُدامى: بومته العجوز، ضَبْعُهُ الجائع، ونسْرُةُ الأعرج، وحين لم يجدوه عرفوا كل شيء، طويلاً بكوا وعميقاً، وعند الصبح تفرقوا، كلُّ واحدٍ في جهة.

And as they are moving away, one from the other, fog hemmed the forest in. There were echoes in it, as if from another world.

وفيما هُمْ يبتعدون، الواحدُ عن الآخر، كان الضّباب يلفّ الأدغال، وفيه أصداء كما لو مِنْ عالمٍ آخر.

He was a woodcutter
He moved toward the pathways
And faded into lakes of fog,
He became the wind's depth
From forest to forest.

كان حطّاباً
مضى صَوْبَ المجاري
وتلاشى في بحيرات الضّبابْ،
صارَ عُمْقَ الرّيح
مِنْ غابٍ لغابْ.

They say, after he burned out, he remained in the caves and for many years appeared to the shepherds. Even now, there are those who say in the night's breeze there is a shudder from him, and in the rocks, radiance and light.

ويُحكي عن الحطّاب أنّه، بَعْدَ احتراقِه، ظلَّ في المغاور يظهر للرُّعاة سنينَ عديدة، وحتى يومِنا هذا، هناك مَنْ يقول، في هواء الليل رَغْشَةٌ منه، وفي الصّخور بريقٌ وإضاءة.

(*Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb* 124-7)

Rifqa's elegy for Yusūf al-Khāl creates a spatial logic that observes, from a distanced third-person narrative point of view, the figure of the poet life's on the horizon between life and death to try to bring into focus the vanishing point of the parallel lines of existence and essence. The resulting dissolution of life is represented as poetry: disembodied echoes move ever outward from a central point that no longer exists. Although the poet, the Woodcutter of poetry, has "faded into lakes of fog," his influence is still felt by the shepherds, by those who remain in the philosophical forest and are able to recognize him "in the rocks" as "radiance and light." His essence moves through ambient sound and is retained in objects. For those who are able to hear it, the poet enlivens the stone even after his death. Rifqa's elegy bears marks of Heidegger's

analysis of the evolution of Rilke's representations of "the destitution of time" shown in *Sonnets to Orpheus*:

> Along the way Rilke comes to realize the destitution of the time more clearly. The time remains destitute not only because God is dead, but because mortals are hardly aware and capable even of their own mortality. Mortals have not yet come into ownership of their own nature. Death withdraws into the enigmatic. The mystery of pain remains veiled. Love has not been learned. But the mortals *are*. They are, in that there is language. Song still lingers over their destitute land. The singer's word still keeps to the trace of the holy. (*Poetry* 94)

Rifqa's alternation between poetry and prose in the elegy for the Woodcutter emphasizes his invocation of song in a time of destitution. The evidence that the song remains and can be heard by others, thus creating an experience, points to the role of the poet in destitute times: "The mark of these poets is that to them the nature of poetry becomes worthy of questioning, because they are poetically on the track of that which, for them, is what must be said" (*Poetry* 139). The poet "answers to the coming era" in part by engaging his precursors. Like Heidegger in "What Are Poets For?", Rifqa acknowledges Hölderlin as a precursor, as a forerunner of poetry "in a destitute time." Rifqa multiplies this identification by dedicating this work to Yusūf al-Khāl, the co-founder of *Shiʿr* and the poet Adūnīs described as the first Arab Christian metaphysical poet (Badawī 242). Badawī elaborates further that Al-Khāl's "vision of the world is a hopeful Christian vision, for despite the many images of suffering in his poetry there is the promise that there is that which transcends death" (244). In Rifqa's elegy to al-Khāl, "that which transcends death" is poetry.

Without the restrictions of traditional meters and rhyme or the subordination of poetry to specific ideological agendas, Rifqa's poetry now reflects the spirit of the Modernist period in Lebanon: representation of identity, Levantine and Arabic, through the lenses of Arabic, Mediterranean, and European traditions at different points of development during different time

periods. Rifqa chose to participate in the German philosophical approach of Heidegger and in German poetic tradition through Rilke and Hölderlin because these influences allowed him to generate a poetic in the Arabic avant-garde that was necessarily tied to philosophy. While the time image Rifqa creates through observation of silent forest-philosophers tends toward the eternal, his choice of the German philosophical and poetic tradition is representative of modernity and the technologies of travel and communication in a number of ways: it represents the interconnectivity of universities, cultural institutions, and political turns, as well as the option that poets in a world connected by communication have to selectively merge traditions through structure, content, and style.

It would be difficult to overstate the depth of Rifqa's engagement with the German poets he translated and with Heidegger's conception of the work of art and the role of the poet. So immersive was his engagement with the German tradition after his break with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party that his original poetry reflected themes and methods of inquiry particular to an essentializing subset of discourse in German Existentialism that Adorno named "the jargon of authenticity." The conclusion of this dissertation will consider questions prompted by Rifqa's meticulous synthesis of German Romantic poetry and existentialist thought into modern Arabic avant-garde poetry alongside questions of the role of the poet and translator in communicating across boundaries of language and culture in a climate of accelerated cultural, political, and technological change.

Conclusion

"He Returned as a Woodcutter": Poetry, Translation, and a Third Space

While the vast majority of Rifqa's efforts in translation focused on German Romanticism, he published a single volume of translations of poetry from English into Arabic. This volume was a result of a 1983 Fulbright Fellowship. The project was completed at the Rockefeller Foundation's cultural center in Bellagio, Italy, in 1984, and published in Beirut in 1985 (*Shiʿr Amīrkī* 13). Among the fifty-five poets Rifqa translated for this collection are Robert Bly, W. S. Merwin, Denise Levertov, Amiri Baraka, and Anne Sexton, as well as Arab-American poets George Kheirallah, Naomi Shihab, and Samuel Hazo. Rifqa's introduction to this volume, *Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir / Contemporary American Poetry*, emphasizes both the creation of a dialogue between the Arab readership and American poetry and the transmission of an indirect poetic experience through translation. Rifqa's translations range from direct, literal representations to more interpretive translations that sometimes tend toward erasure.

Consideration of erasure is particularly pertinent in relation to Rifqa's deep engagement with German Romantic poetry and existential philosophy. This dissertation has argued that Rifqa's goal through translation and original poetry was to directly enact a philosophical poetic within modern avant-garde Arabic poetry, as evidenced by his extensive contributions in each of these spheres. Rifqa's poetic corpus cultivates a poetic experience reflective of the individual's experience of time and subjectivity in a modern context by emphasizing distance, isolation, and the passage of time through diurnal and seasonal cycles that contrasted by intrusions of a more modern, urban concept of time. Rifqa's focal characters have been removed from an experience of time structured by industrial rhythms and relocated into a landscape of the mind in order to meditate on an essential core of subjectivity.

While the search for something eternal and enduring has had many forms in poetry and philosophy, Rifqa's attentive translation and integration of modes of inquiry adapted from German poetry into his original work prompts questions of the mobility of discourse communities that exist within the literary and philosophical tradition under translation. Is it possible for an ideological formation—a formation tied specifically to the way language is used in poetry and philosophy, a formation that is submerged and masks itself—to be transmitted through translation, particularly when translated into a language that has a vastly different logic and structure than the original?

Theodor Adorno's criticism of "the jargon of authenticity" lays bare the ideological system of the specific discourse community of German intellectuals, particularly Heidegger, to which Rifqa is responding. To illustrate this point, in the introduction to Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will's translation of *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Trent Schroyer writes, "For Adorno, Heidegger's existentialism is a new Platonism which implies that authenticity comes in the complete disposal of the person over himself--as if there were no determination emerging from the objectivity of history" (*Jargon* xvii). At the core of Adorno's criticism is the rejection of an ahistorical philosophical position that denies the production of different subjectivities in different conditions. Rifqa's poetry engaged "the jargon," but as the remained of this conclusion will explore, this engagement was a result of a desire to expand the definition of poetry within modern avant-garde Arabic poetry and enliven it through infusion of new ideas rather than enact a specifically post-fascist obfuscation of difference. Rifqa's adaptation of "the jargon" reflects the successful expansion of bourgeois subjectivity into modern Arabic poetry. This expansion comes as a result of the nexus of technological interconnections and mediations of an increasingly global world characterized by accelerated change and development.

Translating Contemporary Poetic Experience from American Poetry into Arabic

To illustrate the coexistence of literal and interpretive translations within this volume,
Rifqa's translations of two poems by Robert Bly are illuminating. In Rifqa's translation of
"Reading in Fall Rain," he follows the poem quite literally, opting to reverse the order of a line
or two without significantly altering flow or meaning. The original 1975 poem illustrates the
dual presence of physical and imaginative space experienced by a reader kept indoors by an
autumn downpour:

<table>
<tr><td>Reading in Fall Rain</td><td>قراءة في مطر الخريف</td></tr>
<tr><td>
The fields are black once more.
The old restlessness is going.
I reach out with open arms
to pull in the black fields.
</td><td>
سوداء هي الحقول ثانيةً،
والقلقُ القديم يروح.
بأذرعٍ مفتوحةٍ
أتجهُ إلى الحقولِ.
</td></tr>
<tr><td>
All morning rain has fallen
steadily on the roof.
I feel like a butterfly
joyful in its powerful cocoon.
</td><td>
دونَ توقفٍ على السطح
تمطر كلَّ الصباح.
كأني فراشة فرحةٌ
في شرنقتها القوية.
</td></tr>
<tr><td>
I break off reading:
one of my bodies is gone!
It is outdoors, walking
swiftly away in the rain!
</td><td>
أتوقف عن القراءة:
أحدُ أجسادي راح!
إنّه في الخارج، بسرعةٍ
يمشي تحت المطر.
</td></tr>
<tr><td>
I get up and look out.
Sure enough, I see
the rooster lifting his legs
high in the wet grass.
(Bly, *An Old Man* 25)
</td><td>
أنهضُ، وخارجاً أتطلع،
دون شَكَ، أرى الديك
عالياً في الحشيش الرطب
يرفع رجْليه.
(*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 50-51)
</td></tr>
</table>

Rifqa's translation of "Reading in Fall Rain" differs greatly from his treatment of Bly's poem,
"A Hollow Tree," a poem of which multiple iterations exist. In its longer form, Bly's poem is
presented in two sections, the second section being a revision of the first. Rifqa's translation
merges elements of the original first and second sections into a prose poem that consists of two

poetic paragraphs, resembling Bly's later version. Whether due to expediency, rejection of Bly's approach to revision, or acceptance of the product over the path to it, Rifqa obfuscates the process inherent in the original poem. Rifqa's tendency toward a more polished version seems to run counter to his own poetic strategy of revision, yet Rifqa's goal of distilling elements of American poetry for Arab readers may explain his choice of the condensed, more polished version. A comparison follows below:

A Hollow Tree

شجرة جوفاء

I bend over an old hollow cottonwood stump, still standing, waist high, and look inside. Early spring. Its Siamese temple walls are all brown and ancient. The halls have been worked on by the intricate ones. Inside the hollow walls there is privacy and secrecy, dim light. And yet some creature has died there.

فوق شجرةٍ مقطوعةٍ أنحني، لم تزلْ واقفةً حتى الخصر، وداخلَها أتطلع. أوّل الربيع. جدران معبدِها السياحي سمراء وقديمة، مصنوعة بدقّة. داخلَ الجدران المجوَّفة سرّية، ضوءٌ خفيف ، ومع هذا مخلوقٌ مات هنا.

On the temple floor feather, gray feathers, many of them with a fluted white tip. Many feathers. In the silence many feathers. (Bly, *Stealing Sugar* 70)

على أرض المعبد ريشٌ رمادي، كثيرٌ منه برأسٍ أبيض مزماري. ريشٌ كثيرٌ. في الصمت ريشٌ كثيرٌ. (*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 51)

Rifqa's translations of Robert Bly demonstrate elements of his broader selection process of poetry to include in this volume: ephemerality set in a "natural" or wilderness scene, experimentation in stanzaic free verse or in prose poetry, treatment of death, the strong yet distanced perspective of a reflective narrator, strong imagery, and underlying philosophical concerns. In the introduction to this volume, Rifqa describes the thread that connects each selection as one of realism or naturalism, from the term *al-wāqiʿiyya*, which denotes a world based in rational explanation and fact:

Despite these varied experiences, there is a thread that draws them together. It is the thread of realism.

رغْم هذه التجارب المتنوّعة هناك خيط يشدّها، بعضها إلى بعض. إنّه خيط الواقعية. وأحياناً تتخذ

Sometimes this realism takes a descriptive approach as if the poem were a newspaper report.	هذه الواقعية منحى وصفيّاً كما لو كانت القصيدة تقريراً صحفيّاً.
In total, there is no need for too much talk. When the output is poetic, the reader alone remains to undertake the discovery and the venture.	على كلٍّ، لا حاجة إلى كثرة الكلام. عندما يكون النتاج شعرياً، وحده القارئ متروك لفعل الكشف والمغامرة. (*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 12)

While the essential kernel of discussion is maintained in Rifqa's selection of Bly's later version rather than his earlier version of "A Hollow Tree," Rifqa's introduction to the volume demonstrates his goal of providing a core group of contemporary American poetry for Arab readers without unnecessary distractions. Like Rifqa's original work, many of his selections for this volume center on nature, death, and the meditative image. While some of Rifqa's predecessors like Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān took inspiration from American litterateurs like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the American literary traditions had not experienced the volume of intimate readings in the Arab world that English and French poetry had received throughout the Romantic and early Modernist period. Rifqa's goal was one of opening an Arab readership to American poetry, but to do so he made some significant editorial choices, some more problematic than others.

Some of the erasures Rifqa enacts render poems with contemporary or popular references ahistorical. A significant example of erasure at the line level that serves to dehistoricize the translation occurs in the first line of the first poem of the collection, "An Old Cracked Tune" by Stanley Kunitz. The absence of the first line of Kunitz's original is marked in Rifqa's translation below.

My name is Solomon Levi,	[…]
the desert is my home,	الصحراءُ بيتي،
my mother's breast was thorny,	صدرُ أمّي كان مليئاً بالشوك
and father I had none.	ولم يكنْ لي والد.

The sands whispered, Be separate,	ألرمالُ همستْ، كنْ وحْدَك
the stones taught me, Be hard.	ألحجارُ عَلَّمتني، كنْ قاسياً.
I dance, for the joy of surviving,	أرقصُ فَرحاً لبقاءٍ
on the edge of the road.	على طَرَفِ الطريق.
(*Collected Poems* 141)	(*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 10)

The removal of Kunitz's reference to "Solomon Levi" is problematic in a number of ways. First, the song "Solomon Levi" referenced in the line, "My name is Solomon Levi," is the first line of a popular late nineteenth and early twentieth century anti-Semitic American song. Multiple iterations of it exist in folk traditions, minstrel shows, and college songs ("My Name is Solomon Levi"; "Solomon Levi"; Seavers). The song portrays a Jewish tailor whose store is on Salem Street. All iterations ridicule the title character; for example, the chorus of Seavers' 1885 version includes the line, "O Solomon Levi, tra la la la la / Poor sheeny Levi, tra la la la la," which describes the title character using the nineteenth century derogatory term for Jewish people, "sheeny." In a 1992 interview with Christopher Busa, Stanley Kunitz describes "An Old Cracked Tune" as a poem that took a long time to become important in his repertoire:

> It's an extraordinary coincidence. My father's name was Solomon, and he was a Levite, a member of the long line of the priestly house of Levi. In Jewish tradition, the given name and lineage are passed on from father to son. Why I should have remembered the name of Solomon Levi and virtually nothing else from the song, except its tone, its nasty tone, is of some significance. It's taken me years to understand why I had to write that poem.
> […] Sometimes you don't know at the time of writing how central a poem is. The effort, above all, is to discover, step by step, the spirit that answers to your name, to discover it and reveal it. (*Conversations with Stanley Kunitz* 155)[75]

In large part, the significance Kunitz refers to is tied to his father's suicide in the months before Kunitz's birth in 1905. The juxtaposition of the name of Kunitz's deceased father, who he was

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[75] While matrilineal descent has long been the standard in Judaism, the early 1980s saw the acceptance of patrilineal descent by the Reform movement, following the Reconstructionists' adoption of patrilineal descent in 1968. For more information on this debate, see "Patrilineal Descent Revisited" in Steven Bayme's *Jewish Arguments and Counterarguments: Essays and Addresses*. The cited interview with Kunitz took place in 1992, well after the Reform movement accepted patrilineal descent.

never able to meet, with the caricature of a Jewish merchant of similar name points to a
multifaceted sense of loss to which the erasure in translation does not do justice. The enduring
sense of estrangement in Kunitz's poem is located both historically, in his reference to this song,
and in the eternal, shown in Kunitz's references to survival in harsh landscapes.

In the same interview mentioned above, Busa describes Kunitz' identification with the
title character: "In 'An Old Cracked Tune' you align yourself very clearly with the marginal
figure, the outcast, yet define some enduring value which transcends marginality. The poem is as
condensed as a stone" (155). Rifqa's translation of this poem, when viewed in light of his own
corpus of original poetry and the approaches he has taken toward the translation of German
poetry, reveals his attempt to capture or relate a poetic experience. The particular nature of that
experience in this instance, however, has been altered to skew toward one that obfuscates
historical placement, and in doing so, conceals the particular experience of an American Jewish
poet in the process.

In presenting Kunitz's poem to an Arab readership, Rifqa has removed a potentially
problematic reference. However, his reasons for excluding this line and the range of reasons the
line is problematic are not clear. While Rifqa may have wanted to remove a line from a
decidedly racist song from a translation intended for a readership that finds itself in conflict with
the state of Israel, the outcome is a larger erasure of geohistorical positioning and the
ethnoreligious experience of alienation. Perhaps this is what Rifqa was referring to when he
wrote the following lines illustrating the second goal of this volume of translations: "Focus on
the principle of inclusiveness, taking into account the ability of the chosen poem to speak to the
Arab reader in one form or another, leading to narrowness within the framework of this

universality"[76] (*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 11). The second goal listed in the introduction provides a

connection to what Rifqa assumes will appeal to "the Arab reader," and in the case of this poem,

it is a general ontological experience rather than a historically located one, particularly when that

experience is historically located within a community, the American Jewish community, that

Rifqa expects his readership to associate with Israel. This translation collection, which began in

1983 and was published in 1985, was concurrent with the Israeli occupation of Lebanon during

the Lebanese Civil War. This occupation lasted from June 1982 to June 1985. The heaviest

fighting, including the Sabra-Shatila Massacre of Palestinian refugees in Beirut by the Lebanese

Phalange (Katāʾib) party in conjunction with the Israeli Defense Forces[77], occurred in the

summer of 1982. At present, there is no conclusive evidence of Rifqa's reason for excluding

Kunitz's important first line.

 Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir is somewhat of an anomaly in Rifqa's translation career because it

is a translation into Arabic from English rather than German and it includes a great diversity of

contemporary poets rather than focusing on a single, chronologically-distant author for an entire

volume. This translation points most clearly, however, to the decision-making process associated

with translation. Rifqa's selection of the single-stanza prose version of Robert Bly's "A Hollow

Tree" rather than the two-stanza revision-based version, alongside his erasure of Stanley

Kunitz's historical and social placement, suggests that Rifqa has a specific kind of "poetic

experience" (*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 11) in mind to transmit to an Arab readership. This poetic

experience is based in the finished product rather than the revision process, as shown through his

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[76] "التركيز على مبدأ الشمولية، مع الأخذ في عين الإعتبار قدرة القصيدة المختارة على التحدث إلى القارئ العربي بشكلٍ أو بآخر، مما يؤدّي إلى ضيقٍ
في إطار هذه الشمولية" (*Shiʿr Amīrkī Muʿāṣir* 11).

[77] Between 750 and 3,500 Palestinian refugees who lived in the Shatila refugee camp, next to the Sabra
neighborhood in Beirut, were murdered by Phalange and IDF forces between September 16-18, 1982, in what
was described as an effort to remove the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Lebanon. For more
information on this massacre that the United Nations described as a genocide, see Bayan Nuwayhed al-Hout's
authoritative volume, *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982.*

rendering of the Bly poem, and seeks to highlight something eternal—Kunitz's desert, stone, and disembodied voice (of God?)—rather than something based in a specific time, place, and experience. In short, details about sociopolitical positioning obscure the universal presentation of Being that Rifqa is attempting to cultivate an experience every time a reader encounters the poem.

Rifqa's editorial strategies show his valuation of a unified representation of Being in the poetry he translates. This tendency reflects the value that Heidegger placed on the poet's role of uncovering or "unconcealing" a unified sense of Being that had been lost through the corruption of time and translation. He highlights the Greek term *alētheia*, often translated as "truth" but more specifically meaning "unconcealedness" (*Poetry Language Thought* 35). "Unconcealing" the Being, nature, or essence of something in a work of art does not necessitate a realistic representation of what is being "unconcealed." Rather, in "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger writes,

> The work, therefore, is not the reproduction of some particular entity that happens to be present at any given time; it is, on the contrary, the reproduction of the thing's general essence. But then where and how is this general essence, so that art works are able to agree with it? With what nature of what thing should a Greek temple agree? Who could maintain the impossible view that the Idea of Temple is represented in the building? And yet, truth is set to work in such a work, if it is a work. (*Poetry* 36)

The drive toward a more universalized truth in Rifqa's poetry is explored in Chapter 3 of this dissertation at length, but at present, suffice it to say that underlying every poem Rifqa wrote in his extended career, there are threads of a universalized yet inaccessible subjectivity in his distant focal characters, in his seasonal revision, in his constant comparison of ephemerality and eternity, and his representation of death as a dissipation of sound and/or poetry.

This drive toward a unified representation of truth presents itself in Rifqa's original work particularly through his practice of consistent revision. In an interview following Rifqa's death

on May 13, 2011, the Syrian poet Ḥussayn bin Ḥamza described Rifqa as one who composed "a thousand funerals for himself"[78] (Ghanem). When asked by Samīr Jaris if he knew that forever writing one poem "is a death sentence for the poet," [79] bin Ḥamza responded that "Rifqa was one of the poets who was devoted to the poetic experience rather than to the critics, the press or the poetic market"[80] (Ghanem). In another instance, Stefan Weidner, editor of the Goethe Institut publication, *Fikrun wa Fann / Art and Thought*, describes Rifqa's work in relation to the Goethe Medal thus: "With Fuad Rifka, Arabic and German poetry are no longer two separate elements that must be mediated. They are one, as if out of two languages and cultures a new, third language and culture had suddenly emerged" (79). Weidner highlights Rifqa's creation of a third position, an interstitial space based on contact between languages, that occurs in relation to both Rifqa's translations and the role of strong readings of German Romantics and post-Romantics in Rifqa's composition of original poetry in Arabic.

In doing so, Rifqa also adopted a more specific pattern of language, imagery, and inquiry characteristic of German Romanticism and Existentialism; this pattern is characterized by the search for a sense of primal unity between subject and object, which often uses nature as a backdrop for philosophical inquiry. In part because of this association, Rifqa turns his attention to etymological roots and contrasts between ephemerality and eternity in a largely depersonalized sense. These turns are characteristic also of the tradition of German Existentialism from which Rifqa drew much influence. At this point, a major criticism of postwar German Existentialism that took aim at "positivism" can be illustrative of underlying discourse elements in that tradition. That Rifqa has adopted and adapted this discourse through

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[78] ‏"رفقة 'كمن يؤلف جنازاً لنفسه'" (Ghanem).
[79] ‏"ألا ترى أن هذا حكم بالإعدام على شاعر؟" (Ghanem).
[80] ‏"رفقة كان أحد الشعراء الذين أخلصوا للتجربة الشعرية أكثر من إخلاصهم للنقاد أو الصحافة أو ما تريده السوق الشعرية" (Ghanem).

translation and in his original poetry prompts questions as well about the mobility of discourses at the level of genre or school of thought rather than the broader language itself.

Adorno and *The Jargon of Authenticity*

As Rifqa navigates German Romanticism as a translator and reader of philosophy, he integrates language associated with Heidegger and the idea of authenticity into his original poetry as well. Adorno refers to this particular configuration of language in German Existentialism as "the jargon of authenticity" due to the portrayal of subjectivity as something eternal, undifferentiated, and thus ahistorical. Adorno seeks to recast existentialism, via Sartre, as "a moment of the dialectical, or critical, reason" and not a historically unmoored flotilla of pure subjectivity. Adorno takes this step further by entering an ideological critique of the entire German approach to existentialism because it participates in the "mystification of the processes of domination" (viii) rather than casting light upon these processes.

Critique of the relationship between language and ideology has roots in the general project of the Frankfurt School. The lineage of Adorno's conception of "the jargon" emerged from his 1939 essay, "On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love," in which he portrayed Kierkegaard's privilege of *agape* over *eros* as a "reification that could not be actualized" because of its "radical inwardness," which caused it to lose its ability to engage in dialectical mediation. This fall into the "fallacy of 'objectivism'" causes the loss of critical reason (Schroyer *Jargon* xi-xii).

The debates that further inspired Adorno's sharp admonishment of "the jargon" occur at points of rupture throughout the 1960s between critical rationalists and the Frankfurt School. Much of the material from *The Jargon of Authenticity* was intended for inclusion in Adorno's 1966 *Negative Dialectics* but was removed and published separately in 1973. Although there is not specific evidence available that Rifqa attended any of these debates, many occurred in

Tübingen at the same time as Rifqa was a doctoral student there under the advisement of Otto

Friedrich Bollnow. Critical rationalists such as Hans Albert and Karl Popper—later and

especially Heidegger—were dubbed "the Authentic Ones" (*Jargon* 48) by members of the Leftist

Frankfurt School. Alongside Adorno, Jürgen Habermas figured prominently in this debate as

well. On Heidegger's presentation of "authenticity," Adorno writes,

> It is true he does use the word "authenticity" centrally in *Sein und Zeit*, and most of the
> familiar shorthand is spread around over his best-known text—spread with gestures, of
> incontestable authority, which the mass of the authentics then mechanically imitate; there
> is unquestioned agreement about the undiscussed core of all of this. In the same way
> Heidegger struggles to show reserve toward all the current phrases which he, with ease,
> can put aside as vulgar misunderstanding. Nevertheless, as soon as he loosens his
> voluntary self-censorship, *he falls into the jargon, with a provinciality which cannot be
> excused on the grounds that it becomes thematic of the theme itself.* […] Heidegger has
> praise for the "splendor of the simple." He brings back the threadbare ideology of pure
> materials, from the realm of handicrafts to that of the mind—as if words were pure, and,
> as it were, roughened material. But textiles of that sort are mediated, today, through their
> calculated opposition to mass production; and in just that way Heidegger wants,
> synthetically, to create a primal sense for pure words. (*Jargon* 50, emphasis added)

Rifqa's participation in the "jargon of authenticity" points to the post-fascist context in which he

composes poetry and his attempts to locate in the German tradition some salve for the intense

feelings of alienation resulting from the shock of modernity.

A later revision of Adorno's invective against the uncritical composition of poetry—

whether he means at all or in any previous configuration remains a debate—following the

atrocities at Auschwitz and other Nazi death camps can be illustrative here. The first version of

this idea emerged from Adorno's 1949 essay, "Cultural Criticism and Society":

> The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more
> paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme
> consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds
> itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry
> after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become
> impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual
> progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical

intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation. (*Prisms* 34)

Adorno later revised the final paragraph of the essay and included it in his 1966 book *Negative Dialectics*, in the following form, which provides a clearer explanation of the effects of reification of ideological language.

> Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living--especially whether one who escaped by accident, one who by rights should have been killed, may go on living. *His mere survival calls for the coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz; this is the drastic guilt of him who was spared.* By way of atonement he will be plagued by dreams such as that he is no longer living at all, that he was sent to the ovens in 1944 and his whole existence since has been imaginary, an emanation of the insane wish of a man killed twenty years earlier. (*Negative Dialectics* 362-363, emphasis added)

The question Adorno's 1966 revision replaces "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" with "whether after Auschwitz you can go on living." Adorno's emphasis on the adoption and enactment of a bourgeois subjectivity, an adoption he lists as a necessary step for many who survived the Holocaust, reveals the problematic of survivors having to adopt a subjectivity that is still undergirded by some of the same philosophical problems under which Nazi ideologies were created and disseminated. The 1966 revision more strongly emphasizes the totalization of postwar life—not poetry alone—by a configuration more totalizing than National Socialism. The crushingly broad penetration and interpenetration of the bourgeois subjectivity that gave rise to National Socialism remains after the war to erode and replace any alternative subjectivities that survived the war. Following the trauma of the war, survivors stepped back into the larger system of bourgeois subjectivity that birthed this particular iteration of fascism. At its core, this

discussion responds to the dangers of ahistoricism, or more specifically the concealment of

ahistoricism, as do criticisms of the jargon.[81]

A Third Language

It is illustrative of Adorno's thinking on the jargon that he describes Heidegger as one

who "falls into the jargon, with a provinciality that cannot be excused" (50). To describe

Heidegger's delivery as one that is provincial likens the jargon, this particular discourse

community, to a dialect of a language that is not central to urban—read, developed or

industrialized—spaces. In this section, Benjamin's statement that translation "ultimately serves

the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages" (72) illustrates

Rifqa's engagement with translation and synthesis of elements of German Romantic poetry and

philosophy into his original poetry in Arabic.

Walter Benjamin's exploration of translation in "The Task of the Translator" is a useful

lens through which to view certain elements of Rifqa's translation strategies. Benjamin firmly

privileges direct literal translations—syntax included—over the reproduction of meaning through

an interpretive reorganization. To this point, he cites Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles: "A

literal rendering of the syntax completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and

is a direct threat to comprehensibility. The nineteenth century considered Hölderlin's translation

of Sophocles as monstrous examples of such literalness" (78). Meaning, on the other hand, is

"served far better—and literature and language far worse—by the unrestrained license of bad

translators" (78). What, then, does a rendering that bears direct literal fidelity to the syntax of the

original mean when translated into a new language with prevailing structures? Benjamin

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[81] Robert Savage's 2008 book *Hölderlin after the Catastrophe: Heidegger—Adorno—Brecht* examines the discourses of three major German thinkers regarding the reassessment of Hölderlin after his appropriation by Nazi propagandists.

describes the relation of the literal translation to the original through the metaphor of the reassembly of a vase from its fragments, in that "a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vase" (78). This literal mode takes its fullest form, according to Benjamin, in the interlinear text (82). In the context of translations between languages with different scripts, this representation would have to be tripartite. To extend the idea to a context befitting of translations into Arabic, an ideal interlinear text would have to contain the original text in the original script, a transliteration of the original into the script of the target language, and a literal translation of the original into the target language. While Rifqa has not produced specifically transliterated interlinear texts independently, his original poems in the 2009 volume *Shāʿir fī Rārūn / Poète À Rarogne / Dichter in Raron* appear alongside French translations by Antoine Boulad and German translations by Daher Srour. This volume also includes landscape paintings of the village of Raron by Katrine Ullman. These poems, translations, and paintings attempt to capture the inspiration of landscape and *stimmung* of a particularly productive landscape for Rilke, that of Muzot in Switzerland's Rhone Valley. It was in this manor house that Rilke completed *Duino Elegies* and wrote the full text of *Sonnets to Orpheus* in early 1922. While not horizontally interlinear, the original poem and its translations are presented in a vertically interlinear manner. A brief example of this translation style appears below:

Im "Kunstleratelier" besinnt sich	A l'*Atelier de l'artiste*	في ‹‹مشغل الفنّان››
Ein Fenster,	Une fenêtre médite	نافذة تتأمل،
Schweift hinter die Berge	Errant derrière les montagnes	خلف الجبال تهيم،
Und vergisst zurück zu kehren.	Oubliant d'en revenir	تنسى أن تعود

<div align="right">(Shāʿir fī Rārūn 20)</div>

The English translation of these four lines is as follows: "In 'the workshop of the Artist' / a window meditates, / behind the mountains wanders, / forgets to return." These scant lines represent Rifqa's attention to things—a window in this instance—and his attempt to breathe into them a kind of life energy or reflective agency in the style of Rilke's "thing poetry" or *Dinggedicht* discussed here in the third chapter. The efficiency of the Arabic language is on full display in Rifqa's short poem; to the fifteen words used in the German translation and the fourteen used in the French, Rifqa's original lines come in at eleven, largely due to the inclusion of subject markers contained within the verbs. Additionally, the feminine gender of the word *nāfidha*, or window, alongside the gendered verbs that follow and refer to it, ensure that readers do not confuse human agency, i. e. the absent artist whose referents would be masculine, with the life inside objects.

This volume is organized dextrosinistrally, mirroring the right-to-left directionality of the Arabic script, rather than sinistrodextrally, which represents the left-to-right reading directionality of German, English, and many other European languages. Dextrosinistral organization emphasizes that this volume, while also communicating in French and German as well as visually through illustrations, is intended largely for Arabic readers. However, within this larger organization, the vertically interlinear presentation of the poems mirrors natural reading directions of each language on the page. An Arabic reader would begin to read a page from the right-hand side, which is the side where the Arabic text is placed. A German reader would begin to read from the left-hand side of the page, making the left-most position natural for German readers. The French translation exists in the middle position, which is interesting as a possible representation of Rilke's compositions in French toward the end of his life. Overall, *Shāʿir fī Rārūn / Poète À Rarogne / Dichter in Raron* highlights both poetic experience—Rifqa's original

poetry captures both a metaphysical and physical sense of Being in and being-in Rilke's most

productive landscape. A further experience is created when one reads the translations side-by-

side, whether one reads each version separately or reads individual lines from the three

translations in tandem. This effect is amplified when combined with Ullman's visual

representations of Raron that accompany the text.

Translation exists as dissolution of individual poetic voice through the interaction of one

or more creative intermediaries as well as a productive synthesis that reveals interconnectivity

between languages and between what languages *do*. Particularly when presented in tandem,

whether with vertical or horizontal interlinearity, traces of processes and labor are present. The

translation does not alter the original text nor the language tradition from which the original text

emerges. A translation may introduce changes into the language into which the original work is

translated. Rifqa's translations of German poetry do not change German poetry or the reception

of it within the German language tradition. His translations do, however, bring into the purview

of Arabic readers of international poetry new stylistic approaches and constellations of content

that serve to invigorate, in the very least, Rifqa's production of original poetry in Arabic. In "The

Task of the Translator," Benjamin writes,

> For just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a
> complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is
> transformed as well. While a poet's words endure in his own language, even the greatest
> translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to
> be absorbed by its renewal. Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation
> of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special
> mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth
> pangs of its own. (Benjamin 73)

The relationship between an original text and its translation is one that enriches the

language into which the original is translated. While the focus of this discussion is to explore the

contributions of Rifqa's translations to Arabic poetry, two volumes of his original poetry, *Diary*

of a Woodcutter and *Poems of the Red Indian* were translated into German by Ursula and Simon

Yussuf Assaf and published as *Tagebuch eines Holzsammlers* and *Gedichte eines Indianers* in

1990 and 1994, respectively. Translations in each of these volumes are presented on facing pages

and demonstrate consistent line-to-line correspondences when read in tandem; in other words,

the first line of the Arabic original can be read alongside the first line of the German translation

by maintaining a vertical reading direction, and the second line of the original alongside the

second of the translation. Each of these volumes are organized following the left-to-right reading

direction of the German language, emphasizing that these volumes are intended for German

readers.[82]

After reading through Rifqa's extensive body of original work, his revision strategies

begin to resemble translations of his own work. In the following series of poems that comprises

"Min Fuṣūl al-Hijra wa al-Dhākira" / "From the Seasons of Migration and Memory" in the 2005

volume *Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr / Lanterns in the Sea*, Rifqa includes Latin letters to represent phrases

of parting in Spanish, English, and French. The elegy for the Sailor resembles the elegy for the

Woodcutter included in Chapter 3, an elegy dedicated to Yusūf al-Khāl.[83] The first section of this

long elegy, which is dispersed through the pages of the final section of the book rather than

presented as a unified poem, appears below.[84] The distanced third-person narrator offers parting

words in four languages, those listed above and in Arabic, to the Sailor whose time is drawing to

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[82] The effects of Rifqa's German translations may be a fruitful further area of exploration; however it is currently outside of the scope of this dissertation project.

[83] *Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr* is not dedicated to a specific person, and so the untitled poem referenced below will be referred to as an elegy for the Sailor or the 2005 elegy. *Yawmiyyāt Ḥaṭṭāb / Diary of a Woodcutter* was dedicated to Yusūf al-Khāl and is referred to in this dissertation as the elegy to the Woodcutter, the elegy to al-Khāl, or the 1988 elegy.

[84] The words in bold text in the following sections of the elegy to the Sailor are in bold in the original poem and represent the beginnings of different poems of the elegy cycle.

a close. The first four stanzas are written in the present tense and occur before the death of the

Sailor, and the remaining stanzas are rendered in the past tense and more fully resemble an elegy.

Under an emaciated moon	**تحت** قمرٍ هزيل
on a chair in front of his cottage	على كرسيّ أمام تخشيبته
he meditates,	يتأمّل،
his eyes burdened by the stars,	عيناه مثقلتان بالنجوم،
with the scent of absence,	برائحة الغَيَب،
he knows that the dusky fish is	يعرف أنَّ السَّمكَ الدّاكن
in the darkness of the predawn frontiers	في غبش التخوم
and in his boat no spears	وفي قاربه لا حربةٌ
and no oars.	ولا مجاذيف.
Adios, Amigo	Adios, Amigo
Farewell, my Friend	Farewell, my Friend
Mon Ami	Mon Ami
Oh Sea,	أيّها البحر،
Oh anxious distances,	أيّتها المسافات القلقة،
Oh splendid madness!	أيها الجنون الرّائع!
Goodbye, spear,	وَداعاً، أيّتها الحربة،
the nets,	أيّتها الشّباك،
oh depths of the sea,	يا أعماق البحار،
long was the struggle with the whales	طويلاً كان الصّراع مع الحيتان
and parched was the yield.	ويابسةً كانت الغلّة.
It is best for him now	خيرٌ له الآن
to unfold the straw mat,	أن يمدّ الحصير،
near the beach behind the stones	قريباً من الشّطّ خلف الصخور
to keep vigil nightly	أن يسهر
to count the stars and play cards	أن يعدَّ النجوم ويلعب الورق
He was a fisherman, he anchored	**كان** صيّاداً، رسا
in the darkness of the storms	في ظلمة الأنواء
from sea to sea	من بحرٍ لبحرٍ
and he dissipated	وتلاشى،
became a vague whisper	صار همساً مبهماً
in the seas of poetry	في أبحر الشّعر
to us he leaves his seas	لنا خلّى بحارة
After a lifetime	**بعد** عمْرٍ
In the madness of the hunt	في جنون الصِّيْد

From sea to sea   من بحرٍ لبحرٍ
He returned unseen   عاد غَيبيّاً
Far from the face—he doesn't tell—   بعيدَ الوجه – لا يحكي –
A ray of light   شعاعٌ
From the flash of a wave in his eyes,   من وميض الموج في عينيه،
From a new vision.   من رؤيا جديدةٍ.
He returned a Sailor, he sees   عاد بحّاراً، يرى
What the tide and island do not   ما لا يراه المدُّ والجزْرُ
And what the distant winds will probe   وما تسبره الرّيح البعيدةِ،
He returned a Fisherman of the Expanse   عاد صيّادَ المدى
To the hut, to memory,   للكوخ، للذكرى،
And in his palms he sleeps   وفي كفَّيهِ يغفو
Beneath the pages of the poem   تحت أوراقِ القصيدةِ

From the darkness of the hollows   **من** غبش الأغوارْ
He returns to recount   يعود كي يروي
to the children in the hut   في الكوخ للصغارْ
the story of the ghouls and the dragon   حكاية الغيلان والتّنّين
in the islands of the moons,   في جزائر الأقمارِ،
he returns to tell   يعود كي يحكي
of ships whose anchors are destinies   عن سفنٍ مرساتها الأقدارْ

From the sea's haze   **من** سديم البحرِ
In the farthest reaches of the sea   في بحر الأقاصي
He returned to the jungle to build   عاد للأدغال يبني
From the roots of the laurel   من جذور الغار
From elemental clay   من طينٍ العناصرْ
A hermitage   منسكاً
In it rest the wind and sun   ترتاح فيه الرّيح والشمس
And the migrating stork.   ولقلاقٌ مهاجرْ.
He returned a Woodcutter   عاد حطّاباً
His eyes the ripe fruit of the forest   ثمارُ الغابِ عيناه
And dreams of the kilns.   وأحلامُ المشاحرْ.

(An intermittent echo from an aging oak:)   (صدىً متقطّع من بلّوطة هرمة:)
No seas   لا بحارٌ
No expanse to lure him from afar   لا مدىً يُغريه من بَعْدُ
No glare from the lighthouses.   ولا وهجُ المنائرْ،
(A clearer echo as if nearer to him:)   (**صدى** أكثر وضوحاً كما لو أنه في الجوار:)
Long ago   من قديمٍ
In his hut he had friends: له في الكوخ رفاقٌ:
A sickle, an axe   مِنجلٌ، فأسٌ
And at dawn a bird   وعند الصبح طائرْ

English	Arabic

Painting the forest in a circular ambience

يرسم الغابات في الجوّ دوائرْ

After dark isolation, he emerges from his hut
to a nearby stone, on his head grasses
seeking sustenance from his body, under a
ray of light flowing from the cracks between
tree trunks he stretches, images from the time
of the hunt in the sea awaken.

بعد عزلة داكنة يخرج من خربته الى صخرة
قريبة، على رأسه عشبة تتغذّى من جسده،
تحت شعاع يتسرّب من فجوة بين الجذوع
يتمدّد، صوَرٌ تستفيق من زمن الصيد في
البحر.

I

He remembers:
An old cottage
Of reeds
And in the corner a spear,
And under a sun bending
On rocks there are nets
And a fisherman
His eyes are one sea after another
After many seas

I

يتذكّرْ:
تخشيبةٌ عتيقةٌ
من قَصَبٍ،
وفي الزوايا حربةٌ،
وتحت شَمسٍ تنحني
على صخورٍ شَبَكٌ
وصائدٌ
عيناه بحرٌ خَلْفَ بحرٍ
خَلْفَ أبحرْ

II

He remembers:
The middle of the sea
Keeping vigil with the fish
Suddenly from no-where
Rattling
Perhaps from his skull
In the smoke of the battle
Becoming dim in History.

II

يتذكّرْ:
وَسَطَ البحرِ
مع الأسماك
يسهرْ
فجأةً من لا – مكانٍ
حشرجاتٌ
ربّما من جمجمهْ
في دخان الحرب
في التاريخ صارت عَتَمهْ.

III

He remembers:
On a bed
With herbs of silence
The waves dozed
Like a child
Under the sun of eternity
Suddenly a wind, beacons of the ports
Were extinguished
Became the ashes of the elegy.
It's the ancient sea, the riddle
Behind what is revealed by the eye
And the fire of the alphabet.

III

يتذكّرَ:
في سرير
من حشيش الصمتِ
كان الموج يغفو
مثلّ طفلٍ
تحت شمس الأبديّة
فجأة ريحٌ، منارات المواني
انطفأت
صارت رماد المرثيّةْ.
إنه البحر القديم الأحجية
خَلْفَ ما تكشفه العَينُ

ونارُ الأبجديّةْ اللهِ

IV

He remembers:
The time of Fishing was an illusion
The struggle of the sharks and the whales,
Nothing remains
Other than a hut, a pick, an axe
And at the dawn a bird
Hovering draw the face of God
Circles in the atmosphere.

IV

يتذكّرْ:
كان وهماً زمنُ الصّيدِ
صراعُ القرش والحيتان،
لا شيء تبقّى
غير كوخٍ، مِعْوَلٍ، فأسٍ
وعند الصّبح طائرْ
حائماً يرسم وجه
في الجوّ دوائرْ.

V

He remembers:
From the fruits of the forest
There is enough for the Woodcutter,
and more.

V

يتذكّرْ:
من ثمار الغاب للحطّابِ
ما يكفي، وأكثرْ.

(*Qanādīl fī al-Baḥr* 115-124)

Both elegies open with the focal character quietly resting in front of his modest rural dwelling and reflecting upon his advanced age and isolation, the Woodcutter in front of his *khūk* and the Sailor outside of his *takhshība*, which suggest roughly the same meaning and have here been translated respectively as *hut* and *cottage*. The specific name of each dwelling is tied directly to the character, particularly given the similarities between the first lines of each poem. The 1988 elegy begins with the lines, "In front of his hut / under a blue star / the Woodcutter dreams." The 2005 elegy begins, "**Under** an emaciated moon / on a chair in front of his cottage / he meditates, / his eyes burdened by the stars, / with the scent of absence." Throughout the later elegy, the narrator considers the Sailor's voyages metaphorically as movements toward poetic inspiration. As the 2005 elegy progresses, the Woodcutter appears in the eighth stanza as the new form of the Sailor after he has returned to *terra firma* following a voyage. The narrator describes the transformation of the Sailor following his return: "He returned a Woodcutter / His eyes the ripe fruit of the forest / And dreams of the kilns." The Sailor becomes the Woodcutter upon his return from a productive venture of creative labor; the Sailor's memory of successfully hunting a whale

and drying its meat in stanza three is the metaphorical equivalent of the Woodcutter's gathering of wood to stoke the fires that power kilns, which have the ability to transform malleable clay, brought forth from the earth, into items of use.

When compared to the 1988 elegy for the Woodcutter, the 2005 elegy for the Sailor foregrounds Rifqa's creation of a third space of revision within his original poetry, almost as if he is translating his previous poems through new approaches to language. The inclusion of "Adios, Amigo / Farewell, my Friend / Mon Ami" in Latin script underscores the translational element in Rifqa's revision of his own elegy over time. At the content level, the transmigration of metaphor between recurrent focal characters in this elegy points to the merging of Rifqa's poetic subjectivities into a single agent of inquiry. While the example of Latin script cited above is a only single signpost in a vast poetic geography, or perhaps the faint glimmer of a lantern in the sea, it signals an expansion of the use of poetic language taken directly from other languages within a tradition that largely if not completely exists in a single language.

Tamārīn fī al-Haykū, or *Exercises in Haiku*

Tamārīn fī al-Haykū (2010), one of Rifqa's final works, demonstrates the adoption of yet another methodology that moves toward the creation of a third language space. Rifqa intentionally borrows a syllabic form from the Japanese language tradition in order to experiment within poetry in Arabic. Much like the liberation from traditional concepts of meter that accompanied the advent of free verse, or *al-shiʿr al-ḥurr*, Rifqa's adoption of haiku as a form rests on a new conception of the metrical unit in Arabic prosody. Rather than into syllables, traditional Khalīlian prosody divides metrical units into groupings of fixed length, or "pegs" (*watid,* pl. *awtād*), and groupings of variable length, or "cords" (*sabab*, pl. *asbāb*), composed of long and short units based on applied vocal stress. Pegs and cords comprise the foundation of

interlocked verbal units that when properly combined produce traditionally acceptable prosodic meters in a system based on verbal stress and length rather than a syllabary, as languages such as English have.

Rifqa's adaption of the haiku form emphasizes the spaces between words rather than a sonorous experience. The introduction to *Tamārīn fī al-Haykū* likens the tendency to view haiku as a sound experiment to attempting to "capture the sea clouds in a small jar":

تعريف
بعد انحسارها مئات السّنين، تطلّ تجربة الهايكو على غير منطقة من العالم المعاصر.
كيان هذه التجربة الشعرية إشراقة تلفح الشاعر اليقظ، فيتر جمها الى لغةٍ بسيطة—كثيفة—كونيّة.
في كينونتها هذه هي أبعد ما تكون عن ظاهرة الصّوت، إنها لغة الصمت الداكن الجذور.
ظاهرياً، هذه التجربة بديهية التحقيق، غير أنها في الواقع شيء آخر، إنّها كمن يحاول أن يحصر غيوم البحار في جرّة صغيرة، من هنا تحمل هذه "المجموعة" عنوان "تمارين"، إنها التمارين التي تسبق الإبحار الى المجهول.

(*Tamārīn fī al-Haykū* 1)

Introduction

   After its decline for hundreds of years, the experience of Haiku looks out upon another region of the contemporary world.

   The essence of this poetic experience is a bright awakening for the watchful poet; let it be translated into simple language—compact—universal.

   In its existence, it is far from being about the phenomenon of sound; the language of dark silence is the root.

   Outwardly, this experience is an intuitive exploration, but it is actually something else; it is like trying to confine the sea clouds in a small jar. From here, this "collection" carries the title "exercises." They are the exercises that precede the navigation of the unknown.

Does the influence to move toward haiku as a form arrive via Rifqa's interest in Japanese poetry, or did Rifqa arrive at haiku through an intermediary tradition, such as the popularity of haiku in German or American poetry? At present, an exploration of the popularity of haiku in Western Modernisms is outside of the full scope of this research project. Rifqa's continued emphasis on the ability of the space between words to generate meaning, particularly in increasingly compact forms, points to an enlivening potential of language experimentation. In the following example, Rifqa adjusts the standard haiku syllabic pattern of five-seven-five into one

that builds from three to four to seven syllables; my translation works to approximate his structure.

(5)   (5)

A graveyard,   ،مقبرة
An agéd oak: :بلّوط هَرِم
The wind loves lamentations   الريّح تحبّ الأنين
                                                                (*Tamārīn fī al-Haykū* 4)

Rifqa's juxtaposition of the static images of graveyard and stately oak against the wind's affection for *al-ānīn,* or "plaintive wails," creates a sense of movement between human lamentations rising from the cemetery and the whine of the wind through an established oak. The simple spatial proximity of these two images to the final poetic statement creates an entire world of experience in a very compact form, which at its core reflects the phenomenological poetry Rifqa has been honing throughout his long career.

Conclusion

For the duration of this dissertation project, much attention has been paid first to illuminating the complexity of interactions and interconnections that accompany the translation and synthesis of European and sometimes American poetic traditions and ideas into modern avant-garde Arabic poetry. For each of the periods discussed, from the early twentieth century Syro-Lebanese *Mahjar* poets in North and South America, through Arab Romanticism and *Iltizām* poetry in Lebanon in the 1940s and 1950s, and into the rise of Modernism in the 1960s, there is a changing relation to modernity and a growing sense of middle class, particularly by the 1960s. Rifqa's original poetry demonstrates lifelong practice toward his goal of intentionally creating a genre of philosophical poetry within Arabic poetry. The movement toward Rifqa's goal is scaffolded by his translation of German Romantic poetry and philosophy. Rifqa's

synthesis of German Romantic poetics into his original Arabic compositions demonstrates a strategy of selective adaptation and synthesis of useful information and pathways that began to rise strongly in the late nineteenth century *Nahḍa* and were used to introduce linguistic technologies such as punctuation, enjambment, and, through ground gained by early translation efforts, the eventual rise of free verse in the 1940s. Regarding Shidyaq's free-verse translation of the Bible, Muhammad M. Badawi suggests that *Nahḍa* translations were specifically intended to respond to the needs of a changing society: "Arab translators did not view their task as one of slavish transposition, but rather of adaptation to the needs of a new public" ("Background" 31). Translation, as suggested here and as shown throughout previous chapters in this project, became a strategy utilized by Arab intellectuals during the *Nahḍa* to modernize from within by engaging useful information from different language traditions.

Two major developments that are most visible in Rifqa's poetry are the mediation of philosophical concerns related to modernity, particularly the individual's experience of time and technology, and the expression of a growing bourgeois subjectivity that reaches for a sense of purity in a fragmented and fragmenting world. Both of these concerns parallel pathways of inquiry in German Romanticism regarding the development of the concept of nation and the individual's role in a modernizing society. Due to Rifqa's careful reading of and deep engagement with Heidegger and German Existentialism, his original and translated productions bear some of the markers of this particular discourse community. Adorno's concept of the "jargon of authenticity" places an original or pure subjectivity at the core of the relationship between poetry and fascism in post-war German Existentialism. The idea of a pure essence or unified Being can carry with it tendencies to flatten or eliminate difference, particularly when wielded from a position of power. Adorno's concern that fascist worldviews had persisted by

condensing into a discourse of poetry and philosophy following World War II points to a fear of the continuation of the kind of thinking that leads—that had just led—to genocide and utter devastation. Adorno identified traces of the ideological underpinnings of the bourgeois subjectivity that remained under the surface of a particular discourse community in the German academy following World War II.

Rifqa's poetry emerges from a milieu with a significantly different entrance into the world philosophical and poetic scenes. In other words, Rifqa's translation and original production in the shadow of the German Romantics and Existentialists comes from a non-central position in terms of power. In the interest of importing, translating, and synthesizing a poetic tradition tied directly to philosophy—and a philosophical tradition tied directly to poetry—Rifqa worked to build a philosophical poetic within avant-garde poetry in Arabic. In doing so, he also participated in the expansion of both the Lebanese academy in the tumultuous first decades of independence and the German academy following the restructuring of German culture after World War II. Rifqa's extensive corpus of scholarship and translation exemplify the *Nahḍa* intellectual strategy of reaching out to different bodies of knowledge in order to enrich one's home culture, which is further reinforced by innovations in form and content that he integrated into his even more extensive collection of original poetry.

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Appendix

A Madman among the Dead: A Play by Adūnīs[85]

A tragedy in four scenes

This small fragment depicts the world of a soldier who left the war, which afflicted him with a slight mental disorder and a disfigurement at the same time. He always imagines himself talking with voices of those he had seen killed before his eyes: that one had a split-open forehead, another's entrails were scattered, one in the throes of death, and yet another torn to pieces, pieces.

The Characters
The mad disfigured Soldier, Voices, the Echo

The First Scene
The Soldier, The Echo
(The night is tranquil, clear. The Soldier, close to his isolated home at the edge of the village, stands over a deep valley).

The Soldier: (He sings as he ties the laces of the military shoes that stayed with him, for some reason):
A hammer made of blood
Lifts me and with it I fall
As if it imprisons me in a lamp[86]   with its resounding call
The Echo: *all...all...*
The Soldier (When he finished tying his shoes):
The hills are levelled out inside of me
In me Time is harvested
Life's myth
and the Beginning and Death
are engraved into my form   etched upon my Self.
The Echo: *self...self....*
The Soldier (his singing is strained):
I was and still am
a thing made of strife
of despair and wounds
if I had died I would have rested
Death, the thing that surrounds me,
higher than a shadow

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[85] Adūnīs, written 1956 and originally published in 1957 in *Shiʿr* 1.1; Translation by Delilah Clark 2018

[86] This reference to being captured in a lamp reflects folklore related to *al-jinn*, or supernatural spirits.

stirs under the palm of my hand   passes through my mind
like a castle of sand
The Echo: *and...and....*
The Soldier (he sits and sings):
For which beauty, good, or right
do I fight others?
For which cause
do I sully myself with spite, within me, my veins and every emotion, every cell?
(He stops for a moment and then continues)
For nothing, I dye my eyes with falsehood
and a forehead is my land
I strangle my pulse,
and make a partition between myself and existence
The Echo: *tense…tense….*
The Soldier (continues his song, unties his shoes again):
The silence of echoes speaks in my ear
insisting I have become disfigured
that I am, now, revolting
What was potential in my soul and my full form grows feeble
Everything I wished for was a mirage, everything I collected was mere wind.
(He rises, then continues with a bit of a shudder):
There is anxiety in my veins
Sleeplessness in my eyelids
And of how I detest the anxiety within me
and the sleeplessness
and the stars of night, the night, this horizon
The Echo (It is heard long and sharp): *on…on….*

The Second Scene
(The Soldier stretches on the grass, like he wants to sleep. The stars increase in brilliance. There appears in the encompassing silence one abyss after another):

A Voice: Oh, passerby
Pass by my brother
and search through my house
for a shroud for a dead man
an ancient robe
bright and elegant,
I embroidered it myself,   with carnelian brocade
Oh, passerby
The Echo: *by…by….*
Another Voice: And oh Shadow

about me, what is being said?
Who died and who remained?
Who prevailed and who was enslaved?
Who changed the stars
and the land and its boundaries
Oh, Shadow
After me, after my death   what was said? What will be said?
Has the question ceased?
Has the impossible become possible?
You, the Shadow
The Echo: *oh…oh….*
Another Voice: In my small pocket was a poem
my veins and sinews wrote it and I gave it new life
What has become of it? And where? I feel I am absent, its light intended to bring it back.
The Echo (it is not heard).
Another Voice: I hear the whispers of a child drowned in tears
frolicking within my ribs
I feel him before me   a kindred spirit
He cavorts in the hills   lost in the grassland
The Echo: *land…land….*
The Soldier (He jumps to his feet, frightened, turns his face left and right, and stares at what is before him):
What does the echo want from me...what does it want?
Within me, from its report,   A thousand mouths or more
(He continues gazing into the horizon, his hands two pieces of wood, his chest a cave):
Is it enough for you, oh voices, the whole expanse tells tales about you
and bits of news.
What is shame? What is the cave?
What glory is there like honey to be bought?
What is the difference, in my death, if the star were to engulf me or if tar were to suck me
      under?
Those are traps of worthless blood   So let the fire swallow up its kindling
Our existence is merely a haze   and we in the haze are destinies
Life has no secrets   and in death there is nothing new to see
The Echo (stronger this time and more intense): *see…see….*

(The Soldier rises, shoes still untied, bareheaded...his right hand moving like a single piece of cloth hanging by a nail on the wall of his shoulder and the left as if it were hugging his side)

The Third Scene
(The Soldier is still standing. He sits near to his previous position. At this moment, a meteor falls from the sky, and the barking of a fox disturbs the encompassing quiet. These two happenings

elicit in him, it appears, strange and ambiguous emotions mirrored in the furrows of his face; he stretches out again, wishing that he could sleep.)

A Voice: Live for the moment
And attack it
Own it
Everything after it is an illusion and its expression.
The Echo (it does not hear).
Another Voice: Say to my child
See the world and all things like me
The Echo: (he could hardly hear) *me...me….*
Another Voice: Make my chest and the scraps of flesh on it and its crucifix
songs for the beloved
The Echo: (It does not hear)
Another Voice: I hate all people--all of them   I hate God and life
What things scare those   who went ahead of them and died?
Then they live in my blood   and upon my eyeball is a pebble
Tomorrow they fill my grave with pebbles and my days fragment
I hate people and life
The Echo: *life…life....*
Another Voice: I was living like the albino crow, a mere particle in a cage
The Echo: *age...age....*
Another Voice: Like my shoes
The world brightens my pleasing sun
and like my face
all is essence
The Echo: *sense…sense….*
Another Voice: At my pocket
The world ends and all unknowns start
neither in my awareness nor in my life's intuition is there any doubt
The Echo: *out…out….*
The Soldier (he was talking without his awareness):
Who am I, which chaff
has taken the form of a fable?
(He continues, quick with anger)
The filth of emptiness
and the filth of lies and fraud
And the filth of the haze
and death and vainglory, useless
and impossible,
dust amassed of frozen destiny melts away in my veins
A Voice (Blending with the Echo):

That, that filth
upon the brows of the people defiles every tomorrow
Echoes: *row...row....*
The Soldier (continues like he hadn't heard anything):
Like a stone
I do not feel
I cannot
My existence is embodied in a tattered shoe, in its rain
A Voice (Rising strongly, sharply):
Get up
Flee from death—roll your sleeves up and run.
The Soldier (He shakes himself to his feet, then sits again, legs stretched out, with signs of perplexity/stupefaction/bewilderment on his face):
How...how, how do I rise?
While Death in my sinews
inside me
opening his eyes to see my disfigurement and then closing them
(He stops for a moment, then says in continuation):
In my body resides the weight of time
The weight of destruction and the ruin
in my body there is the hand of the shroud
the hand of decay
(After a brief moment and with a lack of care)
In the body there is pure Being and non-Being
Like the waves in the struggle never resting
my life is bereft of yesterday and any present.

The Fourth Scene
(The Soldier gets up and walks with steady steps on the slope of the valley, bareheaded, and his shoes remain untied).

The Soldier (muttering)**:** What is going to happen?
A Voice (deeply and long, sounding at first like an echo):
Paralysis, miscarriage...it flies.
The Soldier (He kicks the gravel with his left foot):
What is an ancient god?
The Voice and the Echo together: All that was other than it
The Soldier (Looking up):
Where is the invisible? What are the divine secrets?[87]

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[87] The term المُغَيَّب/ *al-mughayyab* means "hidden, concealed, or invisible." The plural of *al-mughayyab, al-mughayyabūn,* points to "the hidden, transcendental things, the divine secrets" (Wehr 807). This term relates to the Occultation, or *ghayba,* of the twelfth and final imam within Shiʿa belief. The Twelfth Imam, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Mahdī, was born in 868CE. He disappeared at age five, was believed to be concealed for his

The Voice and the Echo together: It is in the mind, in fear it is mollified
The Soldier (turning his gaze aside): What is the beginning?
The Voice and the Echo together: All that became an ending
The Soldier (With the fingers of his left hand, he presses his brow while his right hand is in his pocket)
What is the truth?
The Voice, only: An officer who used a whip to clear his way
The Soldier (looking behind him toward his house):
What is time?
The Voice and the Echo together: A frog's croak, and sand, and smoke
The Soldier (He slows his measured walk):
What is life?
The Voice and the Echo together: Five small children
like pearls
built a hut of grass and died
(The Soldier tries to continue walking. He stumbles and falls, then rolls down the slope...in this moment, everything becomes mixed up, the Voices and Echoes, the voice of the Soldier, and the sound of his fall...the world appears to turn to haze, as if everything inside of it were singing):

Because we are potential
and bubbles and mirage
because we are youths
the soil is enlivened by us
And so are the worms and the ruin
Because we are from nothingness   we keep running after nothingness
a river of blood,
live nothingness
and from its very beginning, live nothingness
And dismembered limbs and a bullet
The wordiness and the summary
And the strange absurdity
And the fire and the flame
Live death
Live the emptiness and live the uselessness.
Die, kill yourself
or be victorious.

Damascus
2/2/56

---

protection throughout his lifetime and preserved from death in his old age by Allah, which is referred to as the Occultation. Shiʿa hagiographies present al-Mahdī as a messianic figure whose eventual return will herald the ascendance of Islam around the world.

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