COSMOPOLITAN PROMISES: VISUAL CULTURE AND POLITICS IN 1960s BEIRUT

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Cosmopolitan promises: visual culture and politics in 1960s Beirut

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the intersection of political and aesthetic fields in visual and material culture. It probes the particularity of this nexus in the context of Beirut's long 1960s, extending from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. Caught between two violent moments in Lebanon's history, Beirut's long 1960s is also marked by regional processes of decolonization and complicated by shifting imperial powers in an emerging global Cold War order. The thesis is an investigation of the historical conjuncture in which "Beirut: the Paris of the East" concretised in the 1960s as a hegemonic nodal point, and against which Beirut was claimed — violently — as "the Arab Hanoi".

The study expands the scope of historical analysis of the modern Middle East by drawing from its uncharted archives of printed matter and associated graphic design practice. It suggests that an understanding of political relations needs to account for visual and aesthetic fields in the hegemonic constitution of subjectivities in everyday life. Antagonistic relations under formation in the space of Beirut's long 1960s were not only linked to domestic articulations of class, sect and nation; rather, and crucially, this thesis argues, these social relations were politically entangled with transnational circuits of visuality.

The analysis deploys a combined post-Marxist, postcolonial and transnational approach that foregrounds a decentred account of power in understanding global modernity and hegemonic articulation of social relations. The archive of printed matter is examined along three overlapping yet disjunctive transnational circuits of visuality that articulated wider geographies of political and aesthetic relations in laying claim over Beirut. The first is concerned with the constitution of the city as a Mediterranean site of tourism and leisure within an emerging global economy of travel and consumer desires. The second looks into the rise of Beirut as a nexus of pan-Arab publishing, formed by an influx of capital, printing technologies, intellectuals and visual artists, which conjugated a capitalist economy of publishing with political transformations in the Arab world. The third situates Beirut within Third Worldist political geography and connects it, through the Palestinian Resistance, to a transnational discourse of anti-imperialism and revolutionary struggle.

Against celebratory reminiscence of the "golden years", this thesis conceives of Beirut's long 1960s as a liminal juncture, an anxious time and space when the city held out promises at once politically radical and radically cosmopolitan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

AKCNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. Transnational Circuits of Visuality: A Post-Marxist, Postcolonial Approach ……. 31

— Discourse, Articulation and Hegemony

— Decentring the Nation from Global Design History

— Decentring the West from Global Modernity

— Transnational Circuits of Visuality

— Historiography

2. Dislocating the Nation: Mediterranean-scapes in Lebanon's Tourism Promotion …… 56

— A Summer Resort for the Arab East

— *L'estivage se meurt, vive le tourisme*

— Mobilizing Graphic Design: Consumer Cosmopolitanism and Fashionability

— Global Tourism on the Mediterranean

— The Switzerland of the East

— The Cradle of Civilization

— Mediterranean Universalism

— Conclusion

3. Aesthetic Autonomy at the Burning Edge: Arabic Literary Journals in the Shadow of Cold War Modernism …… 87

— The 1958 civil war and Beirut's politico-aesthetic divides

— The Visual Culture of *al-Adab* and *Shi'r*

— *Hiwar*: the Politico-Aesthetic Crisis

— 'Cultural Freedom' in a Global Cold War Order

— Conclusion

4. The Visual Economy of 'Precious Books': Publishers, Modern Art, and the Making of Aesthete Arab readers …… 123

— Arabic Typography and the Legacy of the *Nahda*
— Beirut: the Arab Capital of Transnational Publishing
— Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books': 'a New book for a New Public'
— Conclusion

5. Ornament is No Crime: The Double Claim of Aesthetic Authenticity from Cairo to Beirut …….. 157

— Egypt's Cultural and Aesthetic Decolonization
— Helmi el-Touni: the Beirut Years
— Beirut's Arabic Book Fair
— 'Egypt Writes, Lebanon prints and Iraq reads': the Case of the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing
— Conclusion

6. Art is in the 'Arab Street': The Palestinian Revolution and Aesthetics of Solidarity …….……. 190

— Beirut: a Cosmopolitan Site of Revolutionary Struggle
— The Aesthetics of 'Arab Hanoi'
— Drawing the Palestinian *Fida'i*
— Imagining the 'Land of Oranges' in Word and Image
— Global Counterinsurgency, Local Proxy: Beirut Divided
— Figuring Violence in the Body of the Book
— Conclusion

7. Draw Me a Gun: Radical Children's Books in the Trenches of 'Arab Hanoi' ……..… 234

— Arafat's Imaginary Gun
— AK-47s and the Aestheticization of Armed Struggle
— Solidarity and the Transnational Imagination
— Dar al-Fata al-Arabi: Radical Children's Books in the Trenches
— Conclusion

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

APPENDIX OF FIGURES

ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter 2: Dislocating the Nation

Fig. 1: Advertisement for Lebanon 'The Day they abolished winter', designed by M. B. Sehanoui, for the NCTL, in *The Economist* Dec. 27 – Jan 2, 1969–1970.

Figs 2–3: Posters from the series 'La Syrie et le Liban: pays de tourisme et de villégiature', PLM 1927. Lithographic printing. Collection: B. el-Hajj.

Fig. 4: Press ad for Hotel Kassouf, Lebanon. In *al-Sayf fi Lubnan*, 23 May 1934.

Fig. 5: Lebanon, the Summer Resort of Arab countries. The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing, *c.*1950s. Lithographic print. Size: 70x100 cm. Collection: A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 6: *Liban*. Leaflet. The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing, 1955. Collection: A. Bou Jawdeh.

Figs 7–9: *Le Liban*. Tourism pamphlet, cover and inside pages, designed by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL *c.* 1968–1970. Size: 21x23 cm. Collection of the designer.

Figs 10–14: Series of tourism leaflets for Lebanon, cities and archaeological sites, designed by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL *c.* 1968–1970. Size: 10x18 cm (closed). Collection of the designer.

Fig. 15: Series of tourism leaflets for Lebanon, cultural particularities: food culture, arts and crafts, and nightlife, designed by M. Bassili Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, 1970. Size: 10x18 cm (closed). Collection of the designer.

Fig. 16: Stationery, designed by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, 1970. Collection of the designer.

Fig. 17: Set of souvenir cards, designed and illustrated by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, 1970. Collection of the designer.

Fig. 18: *Líbano*. Poster designed and illustrated by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, *c.*1970. Size: 68x98 cm. My collection.

Fig. 19: *Lebanon*, *Hotel Guide*. Designed and illustrated by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the

NCTL, 1969. Size: 21x23 cm. Collection of the designer.

Fig. 20: *Liban.* Poster designed and illustrated by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, *c.*1970. Size: 34x50 cm. Collection of the designer.

Figs 21–23: *Lebanon Break 1971*. Pamphlet, inside pages and drawing detail, designed and illustrated by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, 1971. Size: 21x14 cm (closed). Collection of the designer.

Figs 24–26: Series of photographs taken in Beirut, Hamra street, early 1970s. Collection of the Ministry of Tourism, Lebanon, Photo Archive.

Fig. 27: Front Cover. *La Revue du Liban,* 12 October 1969.

Fig. 28*:* Front Cover. *La Revue du Liban,* 25 June 1960.

Fig. 29: Front Cover. *Al-Anwar,* '*Lubnan Shatiʾ al-Jamal'* (Lebanon the coast of beauty). *Al-Anwar* special supplement*,* Sunday 13 June 1971.

Fig. 30: *Siyahatuna* (Our tourism) special issue*. Nahar al-Riyada wa-l-Tasliya* (Sport and Leisure supplement), *An-Nahar* Sunday 16 April 1972.

Figs 31: Press ad for sun-tanning lotion. In *al-Shabaka* 12 June 1960.

Figs 32: Press ad for hair removal cream. In *al-Anwar,* special supplement, Sunday 13 June 1971.

Figs 33–34: Press ad for women's beachwear. In *Nahar al-Riyada wa-l-Tasliya* (Sport and Leisure supplement), *An-Nahar,* Sunday 16 April 1972.

Fig. 35: *Libano, Beirut.* Poster designed by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, *c.*1970–72. Size: 48x69 cm. My collection.

Figs 36–38: *Lebanon a Holiday Guide*. Pamphlet designed by M. B. Sehnaoui, for the NCTL, 1972. Size: 19x22 cm. Collection of the designer.

Chapter 3: Aesthetic Autonomy at the Burning Edge

Fig. 1: Front cover of *al-Adab*, vol. 1, no. 1 1953. All reproductions of *al-Adab* are from *al-Adab* digital archive http://al-adab.com/archive.

Figs 2: Front cover of *al-Adab*, vol. 2, no.1, 1954.

Figs 3: Front cover of *al-Adab*, vol. 3, no.9, 1955.

Figs 4–5: *al-Adab* inside pages, vol. 2, no.1, 1954.

Fig. 6: Front cover of *Shiʿr*, no. 5, vol. 2, 1958. Designed by Helen al-Khal.

Fig. 7: Front covers of *Shiʿr*, nos 1–5, 1957–58. Collection A. Bou Jawdeh.

Figs 8–9: *Shiʿr* inside pages, vol. 8, no. 29–30, 1964.

Fig. 10: Front Covers of *Hiwar*, nos. 1–3, 1962–63. All reproductions of *Hiwar* are from the collection of A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 11: New cover design by Waddah Faris for *Hiwar*, vol. 2, no. 13, 1964.
Fig. 12: Front cover of *Hiwar*, by W. Faris, vol. 2, no. 15, 1965.
Fig. 13: Double-page with drawings by W. Faris, *Hiwar*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1964.
Fig. 14: Drawing by W. Faris, *Hiwar*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1964.
Fig. 15: Drawing by W. Faris, *Hiwar*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1964.
Fig. 16: Drawing by W. Faris, *Hiwar*, vol. 2, nos. 5–6, 1964.
Figs 17–18: Drawings titled 'Juliana Seraphim's inferno', *Hiwar*, vol. 3, no. 6, 1965.
Fig. 19: Drawings by Ibrahim el-Salhi, *Hiwar*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1964.
Fig. 20: Drawings by Kadhim Haidar, studies for his 'martyr epic' painting, *Hiwar*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1965.
Fig. 21: Front cover *Mawaqif*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1969. My collection.
Fig. 22: Abdelqader Arnaout and Nazir Nabaa, '*al-Mawt Tifl Aʿma*', *Mawaqif*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1969.

Chapter 4: The Visual Economy of 'Precious Books'

All Dar an-Nahar books listed here are from the collection of A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 1: Press ad for Ounsi al-Hajj (poetry) and Paul Guiragossian (drawings) (1967) *Nashid al-Anashid,* Dar An-Nahar, Beirut, in *Mulhaq An-Nahar*, 20 August 1967.
Fig. 2: Press ad for Michel Assi (ed.) and Elie Kenaan (drawings) (1969) *Ajmal al-Muwashahat,* Dar An-Nahar: Beirut, in *Mulhaq An-Nahar*, 6 April 1969.
Figs 3–6: Front cover and inside pages of Anis Frayha (ed.) and Dia al-Azzawi (drawings) (1967) *Malahim wa Asatir* (Epics and Legends in Sumerian Literature), Dar An-Nahar, Beirut. Designed by Ajjaj Arrawi.
Figs 7–9: Front cover and inside pages of Yusuf al-Khal and Ghassan Tueini (eds.) (1968) *Yasuʿ al-Masih*. Dar An-Nahar and Imprimerie Catholique Beirut. Designed by Ajjaj Arrawi.
Figs 10–12: Front cover and inside pages of Jubran K. Jubran (1968) *al-Nabi* (The Prophet), Dar An-Nahar, Beirut. Designed by Ajjaj Arrawi.
Fig. 13: Folio 94 Verso: *maqama* 31. Caravan of pilgrims, *Maqamat al-Hariri*, miniature painted by Yahya al-Wasiti, 1237; Iraq. Bibliothèque nationale de France, manuscript Arabe 5847.
Fig. 14: Page from *Maqamat al-Hariri,* letterpress, Bulaq, Cairo, 1856. Digitized by Google, Inc. from the original held at University of Michigan. Public Domain.
Fig. 15: Page from *Maqamat al-Hariri,* lithography Tabriz, 1856/7. Digitized by

Google, Inc. from the original held at Princeton University. Public Domain.

Figs 16–20: Front and back covers, and inside pages from Chafic Abboud (1970) *Maqamat al-Hariri*, Dar An-Nahar, Beirut.

Chapter 5: Ornament is No Crime

All the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing (AIRP) books reproduced here and cited below are from the collection of A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 1: Poster for the Arabic Book Fair, 1974. Designed by Helmi el-Touni. My collection.

Fig. 2: Photograph of the Arabic Book Fair in West Hall at the American University of Beirut, 1958. Collection Arab Cultural Club.

Fig. 3: Photograph of the Arabic Book Fair at the 'Glass Hall' Ministry of Tourism bldg. Hamra Street, 1974. Collection Arab Cultural Club.

Fig. 4: Poster for the Arabic Book Fair, 1975. Designed by H. el-Touni. My collection.

Fig. 5: Poster for the Arabic Book Fair, 1979. Designed by H. el-Touni. My collection.

Fig. 6: Poster for the Second Poetry Encounter, Arab Cultural Club, 1974. Designed by H. el-Touni. My collection.

Figs 7–9: Covers for the book series *Qissat Thawrat 23 Yulio* (the Story of the 23rd of July Revolution), Beirut, the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing (AIRP) 1977. Designed by H. el-Touni.

Figs 10–11: Covers for N. al-Saadawi (1977) *al-Wajh al-ʿAri lil Marʾa al-Arabiya* (The Hidden Face of Eve) and (1977) *al-Marʾa wa-l-Siraʿ al-Nafsi* (Women and Neurosis), Beirut AIRP. Designed by H. el-Touni.

Figs 12–13: Covers for M. Darwish (1973) *Habibati Tanhad min Nawmiha* (My Lover Awakes from her Sleep) and (1973) *al-ʿAssafir Tamut fi-l-Jalil* (Birds die in Galilee), Beirut AIRP. Designed by H. el-Touni.

Figs 14–18: Covers and inside pages from the books series *Riwayat Tarikh al-Islam li-l-Fityan wa-l-Fatayat* (Stories from the History of Islam for Boys and Girls), original text by Jurgi Zeydan, edited by Mahmud Salim (1978), Beirut AIRP. Designed and illustrated by H. el-Touni.

Figs 19–26: Cover and inside pages of *Abu ʿUbeida bin al-Jarrah,* no. 15 from the book series *Tarikh al-ʿArab wa-l-Islam li-l-Fityan wa-l-Fatayat* (The history of Arabs and Muslims for Boys and Girls), 1977, Beirut AIRP. Designed and

illustrated by H. el-Touni. Collection A. Bou Jawdeh.

Figs 27–34: Cover and inside pages of *Uthman bin ʿAffan,* no. 9 from the book series *Tarikh al-ʿArab wa-l-Islam li-l-Fityan wa-l-Fatayat* (The history of Arabs and Muslims for Boys and Girls), 1977, Beirut AIRP. Designed and illustrated by H. el-Touni.

Figs 35–38: Covers from the children's book series *Min Wahi Kalila wa Dimna* (In the spirit of the Animal Fable Kalila wa Dimna) 1977, Beirut AIRP. Designed by H. el-Touni, illustrated by Bahgat Othman.

Figs 39–40: Cover and inside pages from the children's book series *Mughamarat Ibn Battuta* (The Adventures of Ibn Battuta) 1977, Beirut AIRP. Designed by H. el-Touni, illustrated by Bahgat Othman.

Chapter 6: Art is in the 'Arab Street'

Figs 1–4: Poster series designed by Waddah Faris for Friends of Jerusalem, Beirut 1968, featuring artwork by Dia al-Azzawi, Jumana Husseini, Khalil Zgheib, and Rafic Charaf. My collection.

Fig. 5: Stamp series designed by Waddah Faris for Fatah, featuring the work of various Arab artists, Beirut *c.* 1968–69. Reproduced from Mikdashi & Shaath (1985) *Falastin fi Tawabe' al-Barid 1865-1981 (Palestine in Postage Stamps 1865–1981),* Beirut, Dar al-Fata al-Arabi.

Figs 6–10: Postcard series commemorating the '10th anniversary of the Palestinian Revolution 1965–1975', PLO, Beirut 1975. Featuring artwork by: Kamal Boullata, Mohieddine Ellabbad, Mona Saoudi, and Nawal Abboud.

Fig. 11: Poster 'This is my path in struggle, oh brother complete my battle' artwork by Nazir Nabaa for Fatah, c. 1968. Collection Palestine Poster Project Archive (PPPA).

Fig. 12: Photograph of a street in Algiers, with poster designed by Mustapha al-Hallaj, Friday 25 July 1969, during the 1st Pan African Cultural Festival. Photograph by Guy Le Querrec (Magnum). Collection Palestine Poster Project Archive (PPPA).

Fig. 13: Poster 'We are all Resistance', PLO, *c.*1968. Designed by Ismail Shammout. Size: 50x70 cm. My collection.

Figs 14–16: Pages from the booklet *Muwjaz Tarikh Falastin al-Musawwar* (An Illustrated short history of Palestine), designed by I. Shammout, PLO, Beirut 1972. Size: 23.5x16 cm [closed]. Collection A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 17: Poster *Long live the International Solidarity Against Imperialism and Zionism,* Palestinian National Committee for the 10th World Festival of Youth and Students Berlin (G.D.R.), PLO, 1973. Designed by I. Shammout. Size: 50x70 cm. My collection.

Fig. 18: Poster 'Victory, Vietnam – Palestine', PLO, 1973. Designed by I. Shammout. Collection Palestine Poster Project Archive (PPPA).

Fig. 19: Poster 'Jerusalem is Ours and Victory is Ours', Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Designed by Burhan Karkutli. Size: 91x66 cm. My collection.

Figs 20–22: Pages from *Drawings for the Land of Oranges,* the Committee for the Commemoration of Ghassan Kanafani, Beirut 1973. Designed with drawings by Dia al-Azzawi. Size: 18.5x21 cm [closed]. My collection.

Fig. 23: Poster 'The Palestinian Cause', the Guardians of the Cedars, *c.*1976. Size: 44x59 cm. Collection A. Bou Jawdeh, retrieved from Signs of Conflict: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War. www.signofconflict.org.

Fig. 24: Poster 'To those who have made the epic of steadfastness in Tal al-Zaʿtar…', The Arab Socialist Union, 1976. Designed by Kameel Hawa. Size: 50x70 cm. My collection, retrieved from Signs of Conflict: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War www.signofconflict.org.

Figs 25–28: Pages from *The Body's Anthem,* Dar al-Muthallath, Beirut 1980. Reproduction of silkscreen prints and ink drawings by Dia al-Azzawi. Size: 30x30 cms. My collection.

Figs 29–32: Front and back covers, and inside pages of *Ahmad Zaatar,* poem by Mahmoud Darwish, illustrations by Kamal Boullata, bilingual edition by Palestinian Union of Artists and Journalists, Beirut 1977. Size: 14x20 cm. My collection.

Chapter 7: Draw me a Gun

All Dar al-Fata al-Arabi books reproduced here and cited below are from my collection, unless specified otherwise.

Figs 1–6: Front cover and pages from *al-Bayt* (The Home), Zakariyya Tamer (story) and Mohieddine Ellabbad (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, Beirut 1974. Size: 9x9 cm.

Fig. 7: Photo of Fidel Castro and comrades celebrating the victory of the Cuban revolution, 1959. Collection CBS Photo Archive, Getty Images.

Fig. 8: Poster, '1959-1969 Tenth Anniversary of the Triumph of the Cuban rebellion'.

Designed by René Mederos, 1969, Cuba. Screenprint. Collection Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 9: Poster, 'The South', Lebanese National Movement, Lebanon, c. 1978–80. My collection retrieved from Signs of Conflict: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War www.signofconflict.org.

Fig. 10: Poster, *El Salvador*. Solidarity poster with the FMLN, OSPAAAL, Cuba 1981. Designed by Rafael Morante, 1981. Silk-screen, 47 x 59 cm. Retrieved from www.ospaaal.com.

Fig. 11: Photograph of Leyla Khaled, 1969. Collection Getty Images.

Fig. 12: Poster *Tell my People …* by Judy Seidman with Medu Art Ensemble, Gaborone. 1982. Retrieved from www.judyseidman.com

Fig. 13: Poster 'Palestine, revolution until victory', al-ʿAssifa c.1969. Designed by Nazir Nabaa. Collection Palestine Poster Project Archive.

Fig. 14: Poster, 'Through armed struggle, we shall liberate Palestine'. PLO, Unified Media, 1970s. Collection A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 15: Poster, *March 9th Marty's Day*, PFLP 1970s. Designed by Mark Rodin (aka Jihad Mansour). Collection A. Bou Jawdeh.

Fig. 16: Poster, 'Palestinian Armed struggle', PLO 1969. Designed by Ismail Shammout. Collection Palestine Poster Project Archive.

Fig. 17: Flyer *Bring the War Home*, The Weather Underground, Chicago 1969.

Fig. 18: Logo, Red Army Faction. Germany 1970.

Fig. 19: Pamphlet cover page, *Organized Self-Defence Groups*, Black Panther Party, San Francisco, circa 1970.

Fig. 20: Magazine, *Tricontinental* no. 60. Havana Cuba, 1972.

Fig. 21: Books from the series *Qaws Quzah* (Rainbow), published by Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, Beirut.

Figs 22–23: Front cover and inside double-page of *Balun Rima* (Rima's Balloon), Dalal Hatem (story) and Yousef Abdelke (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size 9x9 cm.

Figs 24–25: Front cover and inside double-page of *Ghurab Bi-l-Alwan* (The Coloured Crow), Zakariyya Tamer (story) and Badr & Bahgat (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size 9x9 cm.

Figs 26–27: Front cover and inside double-page of *al-Qafas al-Zahabi* (The Golden Cage), Zakariyya Tamer (story) and Nawal Abboud (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size 9x9 cm.

Fig. 28: Front cover of *Bayt li-l-Waraqa al-Bayda'* (A Home for the White Page), Zakariyya Tamer (story) and Mohieddine Ellabbad (illustrations), from the series *al-Mustaqbal li-l-Atfal* (the Future for Children), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size 15x15 cm.

Figs 29–30: Front cover and inside double-page of *Ma'idat al-Qutt* (The Cat's Dinner Table), Zakariyya Tamer (story) and Mohieddine Ellabbad (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size 15x15 cm.

Figs 31–32: Front cover and inside double-page of *Siyam al-Tha'lab* (The Fasting of the Fox), Darwish Nasr (story) and Badr & Bahgat (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size 15x15 cm.

Figs 33–34: Front cover and inside double-page of *al-Shira' al-Abiad* (The White Sail), Muhammad Abd-el-Azim (story) and Higazi (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1975. Size: 15x15 cm.

Figs 35–39: Front cover, inside pages and back cover of *al-Samt wa-l-Mukhayyam* (Silence and the Camp), Zein-el-Abedin al-Husseini (story), Helmi el-Touni (illustrations), from the series *Hikaya 'an al-Watan* (Stories about the Homeland), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1977. Size: 11x17 cm. Collection A. Bou Jawdeh.

Figs 40–45: Cover and inside pages of *The Children of Ghassan Kanafani*, G. Kanafani (story), Burhan Karkutli (illustrations), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, 1977. Size: 14x20 cm.

Figs 46–48: Inside pages from books in the series *al-Salasil al-'Ilmiya al-Mubassata* (Simplified Sciences), Dar al-Fata al-Arabi 1977. Designed and illustrated by Mohieddine Ellabbad. Size: 14x22 cm.

Figs 49–52: Pages from *Kashkul al-Rassam* (The Illustrator's Sketchbook) by Mohieddine Ellabbad, Dar al-Fata al-Arabi 1988. Size: 20x29 cm.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

Arabic words and names have been transliterated according to a simplified system. All diacritical marks have been omitted except for the *ʿayn* and hamza. Names of individuals are spelled according to their preferred English or French transliteration when commonly adopted as such. The prefix "al-" is used rather than "el-" for names generally except when individuals concerned have adopted a preferred transliteration (e.g., el-Touni or Ellabbad).

All translations from Arabic and French sources in this thesis are mine, except when otherwise specified.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of how design, visual culture and politics intersect under particular configurations of historical conditions. It probes the particularity of this nexus in the context of Beirut's long 1960s, specifically focusing on graphic design to interrogate its role in the constitution of subjectivities in the modern everyday, in and through the circulation of its printed artefacts.

As both aesthetic and functional public devices, these prints inform, instruct, seduce, amuse, inspire, and repel but more importantly: they call upon individuals to act as social subjects. They perform their everyday labour in the ephemeral form of posters, flyers, leaflets and cards; in relatively more permanent periodical publications; and in the authoritative form of books. At home, in the street, in shops and at work, the ubiquity of printed graphics in the mediated spectacle of modern life — especially from mid twentieth century onwards — paradoxically renders these prints hardly visible. It is their mundane familiarity that constantly eludes the uninquisitive eye. And yet their visuality commands power. It is articulated in the semiotic work of images, photographs and illustrations, embedded in the cultural meanings and symbolic codes they imply. It is embodied in typographic compositions, in the visual modality of reading that typography prescribes. It is at play in the discursive intertextuality of image and text within the print and outside it; in its decentred relations and referrals to other images, texts, practices, ideas, people, objects and places — real, imagined or promised — and the affective dimension, emotions, desires and anxieties that these conjure. It is also in the aesthetic experience of the overall graphic composition, in the pleasure or distaste it provokes, that the everyday visuality of printed matter inconspicuously commands power; and, occasionally, incites reactions in the form of material

interventions — censoring, subverting and tearing — to mute its visual impetus when that is particularly undesirable.

This thesis engages with printed matter as a specific cultural form that crosses between visual and material culture, defined by the reproducible image/printed object and its circulation in multiples. It is also concerned with the act of designing as a practice, with designers, the aesthetic discourses that preoccupy their practice, their connection with particular institutions which commission, issue and circulate prints, the discursive relations that connect these prints to other cultural forms and practices and that connect designers with the publics who view, read and handle them. This whole web of social relations constitutes the realm of graphic design that I seek to unravel. My investigation is premised on an understanding of social relations as implicated in differential relations of power and of visual and material culture as sites of hegemonic struggle. I deploy a post-Marxist perspective that foregrounds a decentred account of power and hegemonic articulation of social relations. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's revision of the concept of hegemony (2001 [1985]), drawing on poststructuralist theories of discourse and conceptualising social relations as politically instituted, provides the conceptual and analytic tools that guide my study in scrutinizing the political dimension of visuality. This is a modality of discursive struggle that post-Marxist theory has left unexplored. I propose that an understanding of political relations needs to account for visual and aesthetic fields in the hegemonic constitution of subjectivities in everyday life; and extend this framework to conceive of graphic design as a site of struggle — a creative signifying practice and a place of politics, engaged in making meanings, embodying aesthetic sensibilities, and carrying them in and through the discursive horizons of the production and circulation of its everyday printed artefacts.

Global Art and Design History

Modernist discourses and practices of art and design, even despite their self-defeating contradictions, can be described as visionary and didactically far-reaching. The desire for societal and cultural change, the embracing of new

technologies and the radical rupture with aesthetic traditions, artistic patronage and religious institutions, have all had their appeal well beyond Europe. In the modern Middle East, the colonial encounter, in tandem with capitalist economies and new technologies of public mediation, precipitated these transformations and displaced local craft-based Islamic art traditions from their aesthetic centrality in society. It is this dislocation that artists and designers in the Arab world wrestled with. Some embraced and others contested it; either way it was widely debated in the tumultuous processes of mid-twentieth century decolonization. My analysis probes precisely this complex and multi-facetted interface between competing local claims for cultural modernity and global paradigms of modern art and design at this historic juncture. I want to offer an understanding of the ways in which local actors — Arab artists, designers and intellectuals — struggled with colonial legacies, engaged in decolonization processes and wrestled with the disenchanting experiences of post-independence Arab states, within a complex temporality of shifting global geographies of power and empire. My investigation unpicks the nuances and tensions in which competing discourses of cosmopolitan modernity, pan-Arab cultural politics of decolonisation and Third Worldist revolutionary anti-imperialism overlapped and contended with one another in formations of aesthetic subjectivities in the modern Arab world.

In doing this, my study contributes directly to current debates about modernism beyond the Euro-American canon. The question of how to write a history of design from the long-silent margins remains of course a contentious one. I advance a two-fold decentred approach, which, through postcolonial critique (Mitchell 2000a), displaces the West in understanding global modernity, and, through a transnational framework (Appadurai 1996), attends to the dislocation of the nation from a privileged site of particularity. This double decentring strategy, which I propose and develop in Chapter One, seeks to trouble a putative binary between the 'West' and the 'non-West' and to destabilise understandings of these notions — and indeed that of the nation — as bounded localities wherein identities are firmly sealed and homogenously enacted. Far from constituting a de-politicized form of multicultural pluralism,

this approach accounts for the work of hegemony in the everyday, in which graphic design and its artefacts are important sites of struggle. It offers a textured insight into the overlaps, articulations and divergences between competing circuits of visuality, taking shape under contingent historical and geopolitical conditions. I refer to *transnational circuits of visuality* to account for the movement of images, image-makers, discourses about image-making and the realm of the visual, in its aesthetic dimension, as a force-field entangled with politics. This transnational framework seeks to complicate a bipolar interface between global and local cultural encounters and instead to understand local actors' anxious wrestling with modernity, appropriating and adapting aesthetic forms and cultural flows — and at times radically subverting these as they cross national borders, form political solidarities and actively participate on a global stage in radical acts of resistance to world powers.

This thesis, then, expands the scope of emerging design histories of the Cold War era to the Middle East. The shift in geographic foci intervenes in current debates on the role of art and design in the global cultural war, to suggest that it was not in fact so 'cold'. In the contexts of decolonisation and shifting imperial powers in the Arab world, the cultural war between the two superpowers took place in tandem with European and US military interventions in the region and in the heat of an Arab-Israeli conflict. This political conjuncture exacerbated local tensions in quests for cultural modernism, especially over the fraught relations of art and politics. Furthermore, in the late 1960s, a new revolutionary interstitial political movement was articulating its contestation, from the Third World, to the global imperial order of the two world powers. Revolutionary anti-imperialist politics adopted armed struggle as its *modus operandi*. Art and design in this context, far from materialising cultural diplomatic relations among state actors, articulated the politics of solidarity among revolutionaries from Cuba, through Africa and the Middle East and all the way to Vietnam and China. In this globally expansive revolutionary geography, Beirut acted as a nodal site in and through which an aesthetic of solidarity with the Palestinian liberation movement converged and circulated along transnational circuits.

Beirut's Long 1960s

This study is focused on Beirut, historically extending from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. Beirut's long 1960s is caught between two moments of domestic strife in Lebanon's history, the second, more momentous in scale, leading to a long and protracted civil war. While the 1960s are foregrounded in retrospect as Beirut's "golden years" — a cosmopolitan site of modern art and leisure in the Arab East — the period was also marked by domestic socio-economic disparities, regional processes of decolonization and the complications of shifting imperial powers in an emerging global Cold War order. I investigate the historical conjuncture in which "Beirut: the Paris of the East" concretised in the 1960s as a hegemonic nodal point, and against which Beirut was claimed — violently — as "the Arab Hanoi". Antagonistic relations forming in the space of Beirut's long 1960s were not only linked to domestic articulations of class, sect and nation; rather, and crucially, I argue, these social relations were politically entangled with transnational circuits of visuality.

In his essay 'De la Suisse orientale au Hanoi arabe, une ville en quête de rôles',[1] historian and political analyst Fawwaz Traboulsi traces a genealogy of modern Lebanon by way of Beirut's ascribed roles, from the tourist economy of the "Switzerland of the East", developed by nationalists in the wake of Lebanon's modern formation as a nation-state in 1920, to its radical antithesis the "Arab Hanoi", arising from the constitution of Beirut as the capital of the PLO from 1970 to 1982 (Traboulsi 2001: 28–41). My thesis builds on Traboulsi's observation in order to enquire into the historical conditions of the politico-aesthetic emergence of an "Arab Hanoi". I suggest, however, that before the latter's radical materialization, the Swiss touristic model had already been displaced in the 1960s by the emergence of Beirut as the "Paris of the East". This displacement shifted the national touristic discourse and its scopic regime from the mountains to the Mediterranean coastal capital. Historically locating this substitution is crucial if one is to

[1] (From the Switzerland of the East to the Arab Hanoi, a City in Search of Roles)

understand the new place the capital city occupied in the economy of leisure and to reveal the dislocation between mountain and Mediterranean coast in the post-independence national imagination. This historical nuance also allows us to understand how transnational discursive formations and associated circuits of visuality overlapped and contended with one another in and through Beirut's long 1960s.

The study expands the scope of historical analysis of the modern Middle East by drawing on hitherto uncharted archives of printed matter, shedding light on understudied design practices and cultures of the visual attached to print technologies. In doing so, it fills a major gap in the literature on the history of graphic design in the region. Art historians have generally neglected printed matter, even when Arab artists whose work they studied moved fluidly across disciplinary boundaries and socio-cultural categories that privilege narrow frameworks of 'art'. In the absence of training in graphic design at the time, it was academically trained artists who, quite commonly, took on the design of printed matter. While some maintained a hyphenated art and design practice, others espoused graphic design as a political praxis, expanding the purview of their art to the reproducible realm of everyday print culture. By being attentive to the fluidity across aesthetic practices in visual culture and to the political dimension of these practices, the analysis inevitably pokes the big elephant in the room of modern art history: art's autonomy. I rely here on critical debates within the tradition of Marxist aesthetics and politics to respond to this problem, as and when it arises.

Critics and historians of modern art in post-independence Lebanon have generally stressed its cosmopolitan, European orientation and attributed this to a host of factors, most popularly, the multi-sectarian socio-political composition of Lebanon and the strong ties of a Lebanese Christian community to Europe. This standard view generally foregrounds the exception of Lebanon in an Arab region, where national affirmations were prevalent in artistic processes of decolonisation. Thus in her pioneering *À la recherche d'une modernité Arabe*, Sylvia Naef distinguishes Lebanese from Iraqi and Egyptian artists, in terms of their lack of concern with quests for cultural and national

locality in their art. She characterises their approach as a generally depoliticised and individuated art practice, premised on the modern dictum of *l'art pour l'art* (Naef 1996: 161–63). She observes: 'The distinguishing characteristics of Lebanese art, in addition to its being influenced by Western art, is the absence of political art' (170). Conversely, Sarah Rogers argues that a purported artistic cosmopolitanism is precisely the political construct of a Lebanese nationalist discourse, historically articulated by a dominant Christian political élite (Rogers 2010). I propose that if we change the guiding questions and "national" framework in which these arguments are lodged, we will find something else: something at once radical, cosmopolitan and not Eurocentric.

Focusing on the city — Beirut — rather than on the nation — Lebanon — as my site of investigation, I adopt a non-essentialist understanding of place that takes into account, as Doreen Massey urges, a 'global sense of the local'; a place, she describes, formed by networks of social relations 'meeting and weaving together at a particular space and time where a large portion of those social relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the space itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent' (Massey 1991: 28–29). I examine the archives of printed matter along overlapping yet disjunctive transnational circuits of visuality that articulated wider geographies of political and aesthetic relations in laying claim over Beirut. The first is concerned with the constitution of the city as a Mediterranean site of tourism and leisure within an emerging global economy of travel and consumer desires. The second looks into the rise of Beirut as a nexus of pan-Arab publishing, formed by an influx of capital, printing technologies, intellectuals and artists, which conjugated the economy of publishing with political transformations in the Arab world. The third situates Beirut within Third Worldist geopolitics and connects it, through the Palestinian Resistance, to a transnational discourse of anti-imperialism and revolutionary struggle. The question of cultural modernity is lurking in all three transnational circuits of visuality. Outside the struggle over this question as articulated in different contemporary discourses, I am wary of an analysis that represents cultural artefacts of either of these discursive formations as a

simple binary between, on one hand, a passive absorption of a "Western" modernism and, on the other, an "authentic" affirmation of an "indigenous" cultural identity. While competing discourses across different circuits of visuality may politically contend with one another over this very issue, the cultural and aesthetic articulations of these politics are not reducible to a simple dichotomy — the West and its Other. Nor are they impermeable to one another, let alone mutually exclusive monolithically fixed categories. To configure it otherwise undercuts the complexity in which modernity is sought, enacted and wrestled with in and through the everyday material culture of Beirut and across the politics that make up post-colonial subjects more widely.

This multifaceted — post-Marxist, transnational, postcolonial — framework enables one to uncover exactly what national perspectives elide. First, I emphasize how Beirut in the 1960s developed as a nexus of Arab artistic encounter, aesthetic experimentation, intellectual debate and political contestation. Its cosmopolitanism was not directed only at European modernism and not limited to a Lebanese nationalist subjectivity. Rather, it was formed by an influx of competing aesthetic discourses and the mobility of its enunciating subjects, not least, Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi artists/graphic designers who weaved through the city, in and out of its flourishing art galleries and publishing industry. Second, I contend that this cosmopolitanism was also radically political, demonstrating how in the contingency of Third Worldist politics of transnational solidarity, the cosmopolitanism of "Beirut: the Paris of the East" was displaced in the service of revolutionary "Arab Hanoi" and thereby transformed.

Against any celebratory reminiscence of the 'golden years', my argument conceives of Beirut's long 1960s as a liminal juncture, an anxious time and space when the city held out promises at once politically radical and radically cosmopolitan.

The Schema of Arguments

Chapter 1 develops the conceptual and theoretical framework introduced here. In chapter 2, I examine the promotional prints issued by the National Council

for Tourism in Lebanon during the 1960s–70s and map their relations with a wider discursive field that constituted Lebanon as a Mediterranean site of modern leisure and tourism. I demonstrate how the Tourism Council sought to substitute an older visual culture of Lebanon as a regional mountain summer resort for the visuality of modernity on the beach, flourishing on the European side of the Mediterranean basin from the French Riviera all the way to the Greek islands. I trace the purported Mediterranean geography and associated tourism discourse genealogically back to the nationalist discourses of the country's most influential intellectuals. My analysis reveals how Lebanon's 1960s–70s tourism-related visual culture contributed to the articulation of a Lebanese subjectivity premised on separatism from the Arab context. I argue that Beirut 'the Paris/Riviera of the East' discursively emerged in and through the material folds of 1960s tourism promotions, associated practices and aesthetics. In doing so, the new tourism discourse displaced the preceding imagination of Lebanon as 'the Switzerland of the East'.

In chapter 3, I examine Arabic literary journals published in 1960s Beirut in order to analyse the discourses and visuality of printed publications and the entanglements of aesthetics with politics. I focus on the controversy surrounding the journal *Hiwar,* which was connected to a global network of similar journals, intellectually and financially administered by the Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF), in a covert CIA operation. In unpacking *Hiwar*'s politico-aesthetic paradox and shedding light on the important visual dimension of the journal, I demonstrate how it instituted a model of visuality in Arabic publications that forged an aesthetic interface between Arabic literature and the visual arts. Moreover, I suggest that *Hiwar* needs to be analysed as a historically situated intervention in the discursive field of Arab politico-aesthetic relations that is complicated by the temporalities of two geopolitical scales of power relations: one regional, involving (Arab) processes of decolonization, and the other global, caught in a binary cultural Cold War. I argue that the controversy surrounding *Hiwar* provoked a politico-aesthetic crisis, which, in conjunction with the momentous 1967 Arab defeat in the six-

day war with Israel, contributed to a reconstitution of antagonistic discourses concerning aesthetic autonomy in that same literary field.

Chapters 4 and 5 attend to the emergence of Beirut in the late 1960s as a nodal site in a transnational economy of Arabic publishing. I explore the aesthetic form and design of Arabic books in the context of a network of changes in the visual arts, printing technologies, the political economy of publishing and politics of cultural decolonisation in the Arab world. Relations between these four fields are analysed through a multifaceted lens, focusing on the book as at once a product of intellectual and artistic practice, an artefact of visual and print culture and a commodity in a capitalist economy of publishing. I situate this design practice within genealogies of the Arabic book in Islamic art history and the shift from scribal to print culture during the Arab *nahda*. While doing so, I also probe the interface between local aesthetic motivations in the post-independence conjuncture and global paradigms of design and associated circuits of visuality in print culture. Chapter 4 examines the nexus of modern art with Arabic book publishing through the paradigmatic example of Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books series'. Through this case study, I explore how in the making and marketization of the Arabic book as an aesthetic object, new Arab readers were anticipated and constituted. The significance of Dar an-Nahar's books as a case study lies also in probing discursive and aesthetic sensibilities of the book as sites of political struggle. Its import derives from the comparison I draw in the following chapter with another case, no less paradigmatic, but of a different genre of book and public, The Arab Institute of Research and Publishing. In chapter 5, then, I shed light on the mobility of artists/graphic designers in the transnational context of Arabic publishing, examining the Cairo-Beirut circuit of visuality by probing the politico-aesthetic relations and cultures of the visual carried through the influx of design expertise. My focus on Helmi el-Touni's move to Beirut in 1974 and his settling there for a decade exemplifies the Cairo–Beirut circuit of visuality in the field of publishing. I trace the aesthetic and political relations articulated in and through el-Touni's professional practice as a graphic designer, while analysing in particular two sustained consultancies he undertook with major

Beirut-based institutions — Beirut's Arabic Book Fair and the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing. The comparison between the latter and Dar an-Nahar's books reveals the overlaps and aesthetic distinctions in the visual culture of Arabic books: the analysis unpacks the politics of graphic design between, on one hand, a modernist double claim of aesthetic authenticity, Arab nationalist and radically populist, mobilised by the Cairo-Beirut circuit of visuality, and on the other, the staunchly cosmopolitan modernist visual economy of 'precious books'.

In the interstices between these two politico-aesthetic printscapes, yet another circuit of visuality emerged. Tied to the rise of the Palestinian liberation struggle, this circuit located Beirut as a nodal site within the geopolitics of revolutionary Third Worldism. The discourses, aesthetics and visual culture forming, and being formed by, this circuit of transnational relations is the object of analysis in chapters 6 and 7. I demonstrate in these two chapters how the cosmopolitanism of the 'Paris of the East' was displaced into the radical cosmopolitanism of 'Arab Hanoi'. Printed matter, from posters to books, in content and aesthetic form, was recruited in the revolutionary quest for a new Arab futurity. Chapter 6 investigates the aesthetic emergence of Palestinian revolutionary struggle in and through the printscapes that marked Beirut's public culture and street life. I analyse the circuits of visuality that reclaimed the Arab city as a revolutionary nodal site in the imagination of its inhabitants and in networks of solidarities, Arab intellectuals and artists — Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi and Egyptian — who crossed paths in Beirut's long 1960s. I argue that an intertextuality across aesthetic forms — poetry, song and the visual arts — was symptomatic of politics of solidarity and mutually constitutive of relations of solidarity, in and through the portability of revolutionary artefacts. Chapter 7 focuses on the publications of Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, a vanguard pan-Arab Children's publishing house linked to the PLO, which launched from Beirut in 1974. I examine how it came to represent a radical node of solidarity among Arab artists, intellectuals and writers committed to the Palestinian cause and to revolutionary change in the Arab world. In tracing the social life of a particular publication, from production in

Beirut to international itinerary, I reflect on the historical junctures and disjuncture of the Palestinian struggle with global politics; circuits of visuality of revolutionary armed struggle; tensions between radical art and diplomacy through multinational institutions; and last but not least, the utopias and disenchantment of a generation of politically committed Arab artists and intellectuals.

My primary sources consist mainly of printed matter, ranging from ephemera (posters, leaflets, pamphlets and mail art) to illustrated periodicals and books, produced and published in Beirut. The selection closely analysed here illustrates my argument on graphic design as a site of discursive struggle and exemplifies the operation of transnational circuits of visuality in and through Beirut's long 1960s. Owing to the absence of local institutional archives that specialize in design and/or visual and material culture, I have taken upon myself the task of constituting an informal one. Over the past decade, I have been gathering these sources and related data, from diverse institutions, building relations of collaboration with private collectors, locating and interviewing graphic designers and other relevant actors whenever possible. I have digitized and catalogued the dispersed sources and gathered them in electronic searchable databases.[2] The resulting digitised collections and supporting sources — personal interviews and press archives — constitute the groundwork of my research.

[2] The volume of these collections amount to approximately 1700 Arabic posters, illustrated books and ephemera printed between the 1940s and 1980s. That is in addition to the archives of, specific Arabic periodicals studied, my earlier project on political posters of Lebanon's civil war, the online Palestine Poster Project Archive and the special collections of posters at the American University of Beirut Library.

Chapter 1

Transnational Circuits of Visuality: A Post-Marxist, Postcolonial Approach

> Culture has ceased (if ever it was– which I doubt) to be a decorative addendum to the 'hard world' of production and things, the icing on the cake of the material world. The word is now as 'material' as the world. Through design, technology and styling, 'aesthetics' has already penetrated the world of modern production. Through marketing, layout and style, the 'image' provides the mode of representation and fictional narrativization of the body on which so much of modern consumption depends. Modern culture is relentlessly material in its practices and modes of production. And the material world of commodities and technologies is profoundly cultural (Hall 1996b: 233).

The interconnection between design and culture in the everyday modern world, as Stuart Hall points out above, requires little validation today. Scholars of design have critically engaged with this interconnection and probed its historical dimensions. In his seminal mapping of the field of design history, Clive Dilnot (1984) made a plea for a socio-historical understanding of design. He concluded with the example of the, then pioneering, approach of the British journal *Block*, recognising the concerted efforts of its authors (eg. Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, John Walker, Tony Fry, Phil Goodall, and Dick Hebdige) to study designed objects and images through the critical lens of cultural studies (Dilnot

1984a: 21–3). A number of studies since have expanded the social definition of design and accordingly proposed various critical approaches and historiographies. In a specially edited issue of the *Journal of Design History*, Hazel Clark and David Brody write: 'Twenty-five years on, the prescience of this [Dilnot's] call is underlined by the fact that scholarship has become more interdisciplinary, and the geographical foci of global discourses have been reassessed, certainly beyond Euro-American concerns' (2009: 304). In the same issue however, Teal Triggs (2009) observes that scholarship in graphic design history remains sparse in comparison with growing attention to architectural and industrial areas of design history. I would add that within the scant compass of literature on graphic design history even less attention is given to its political dimension. With the exception of works that address graphics of overtly political nature, we are left with very few investigations on the question of how political relations are articulated in graphic design activity and carried through the visuality and materiality of its printed artefacts.

My investigation into the nexus of design, visuality and politics begins with an understanding of visual and material culture as sites of hegemonic struggle, and of cultural practices as implicated in relations of power. Although, informed by a framework that has preoccupied much of cultural studies, I take a post-Marxist perspective that foregrounds a decentred account of power relations and hegemonic articulation of culture. As I will expand on shortly, I believe this approach is crucial to any critical analysis concerned with the intersection of politics and culture in the Middle East — past and present beyond essentialist understandings of cultural identities. It points to the historical contingency in the institution of particular identities. And it enables an analysis of the complex articulation of cultural, national and sectarian/religious identities in their entanglements with one another as well as in their relation with class. Beyond its relevance to the empirical particularity of the Middle East, this theoretical approach has indeed characterised a later strand in cultural studies (Bowman 2007, Hall 1996a, Hall and Birshall 2006, Slack 1996). Economic determinism, the model of the base and superstructure and false consciousness among other classic Marxist constructs have been

subject to critique within cultural studies (Hall 1996a: 265). Furthermore, the field's initial focus on class identities was disrupted by engagements with pressing issues around feminism, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, which were mostly informed by new notions of power and subjectivity and emerging theories around discursivity and textuality (ibid: 268–71). Cognizant of the critique of poststructuralist theory for emphasizing the play of signification over politics, Hall makes clear that:

> There is always something decentred about the medium of culture, about language, textuality, and signification, which always escapes and evades the attempt to link it, directly and immediately, with other structures. And yet at the same time, the shadow, the imprint, the trace, of those other formations, of the intertextuality of texts in their institutional positions, of texts as sources of power, of textuality as a site of representation and resistance, all of those questions can never be erased from cultural studies (Hall 1996a: 271).

I share Hall's position, and that of cultural studies more broadly, in seeking to affirm the impetus of the discursive, the decentred play of signification in visual and material culture, whilst not ignoring the materialities of power that arrest, impregnate and circulate through the discursive potentialities of culture in its everyday manifestations. I wish to extend this cultural framework to conceive of graphic design as a site of struggle — a creative signifying practice and a place of politics, engaged in making meanings, embodying aesthetic sensibilities, and carrying them through the discursive horizons in which its artefacts get produced and circulated. A post-Marxist political framework of analysis, as developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, offers such a critical strategy. Their revision of the concept of 'hegemony' to approach political power in terms of a poststructuralist account of discourse of discourse provides key concepts and analytic tools that guide my study in scrutinizing the political dimension of design.

Discourse, Articulation and Hegemony

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]) propose a new theorization of the political institution of social relations building from, and revising, Althusser's theory of 'overdetermination' and, most notably, Gramsci's 'hegemony'. They reconceptualise the latter political processes by way of poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theory, to dislodge economic determinism from the former and rule out essentialist accounts of antagonism from the latter.

For Laclau and Mouffe, 'a discursive structure is an articulatory practice', which constitutes and organizes social relations:

> Articulation is any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contrast we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated (2001: 105).

Laclau and Mouffe outline three specifications grounding their understanding of the discursive. First, they draw upon the characteristic of regularity through dispersion of a discursive formation as conceived by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1989 [1972]).[1] Like Foucault, they refute the premise of a logical coherence, or an a priori transcendental subject, to be characterizing the relation between elements in a discursive structure. Second, in conceiving the dimension and extension of the discursive, Laclau and Mouffe claim that every object is constituted as one of discourse and affirm the material character of every discursive structure (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 107–8). Discursive articulation cannot be purely linguistic, it permeates and is

[1] Foucault argues that a discursive formation is governed by a system of dispersion between the elements, accounting for coherence as constituted through heterogeneity, coexistence, interplays of differences, contradictions, substitutions and transformations (Foucault 1972: 41–42).

embodied in the entire material density of institutions and practices through which a discursive formation is structured (ibid: 109). For instance, the discursive articulation of Lebanon as a site of Mediterranean leisure and tourism in the 1960s, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, transforms conceptions of Lebanon and is embodied in new cultural practices and associated institutions. Discourse is not the expression of a real constituted outside of it, 'on the contrary discourse is a real force which contributes in the moulding and constitution of social relations' (ibid: 110). Their third specification concerns the openness and closure of a discursive formation. Here they are critical of structuralist conceptions of society as a sutured, fully constituted totality. A discursive structure they contend 'is never a given or delimited totality, the relational logic will be incomplete and pierced by contingency. The transition from the "elements" to the "moments" is never entirely fulfilled. In this they refer to Derrida's decentring of a discursive structure and the openness of the play of signification (ibid: 112). However, according to Laclau and Mouffe, the entire openness of meaning is not possible either. Discourse, resulting from an articulatory practice, is an attempt to arrest the flow of signification and construct a centre; the resulting partial fixation is what they call 'nodal points'. This fixation is never complete because of the openness of the social — pierced by contingency in a field of overdetermination, and resulting from a surplus of meaning in the field of discursivity (ibid: 113).

Laclau and Mouffe move beyond the political deadlock of plurality criticising poststructuralist theory. They are concerned with the political frontiers erected between 'discursive formations' and argue that 'the problem of the political is the problem of the institution of the social' (ibid: 153). For this purpose, they develop a political theory of discourse centred on three concepts: political subjectivity, social antagonism, and hegemony (Howarth 2000: 105). In thinking of the category 'subject' Laclau and Mouffe align themselves with poststructuralist critiques of the transcendental and rational subject, the subject as a coherent essence and origin of social relations. They refer to '"subject positions" within a discursive structure' (Laclau and Mouffe:

116). An individual may identify with a number of different subject positions. For instance in the case of Lebanon, someone could claim to be 'Lebanese', or 'Christian', or 'Arab' or 'working class' or a particular combination of these identities. Laclau moves on to distinguish between subject position and political subjectivity (1990: 60–1). While the former accounts for the constitution of individuals as subjects within a discursive structure, political subjectivities are formed when social identities are in crisis and structures need to be recreated. The subject has to identify with certain political discourses (Howarth 2000: 108–9).

In their account of antagonism, Laclau and Mouffe differ from the understanding of conflict as an opposition between two pre-constituted identities. The relation of antagonism is an experience of the limit of the social, a frontier effect, preventing an identity from fully constituting itself (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 125–27). 'Every "society" constitutes its own forms of rationality and intelligibility by dividing itself; that is, by expelling outside itself any surplus of meaning subverting it' (ibid: 136). They contend that the discursive articulation of antagonistic relations is possible through the logic of equivalence, arguing that 'because a negative identity cannot be represented in a direct manner — i.e. positively — it can only be represented indirectly, through an equivalence between its differential moments' (128). An equivalence between different and disconnected discursive forms subverts positivity and gives material form to the negativity constructed in the antagonism. The logic of equivalence thus simplifies political space into two antagonistic poles (130).

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe link up the different theoretical categories so far discussed to yield the concept of hegemony. The articulatory moment is not enough for the politics of hegemony to be at work, it also requires a field of operation 'criss-crossed by antagonisms'; 'without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak strictly of hegemony' (136). Here they are close to a Gramscian analysis of hegemony and his concept of the historic bloc. The articulation of elements within the historic bloc is what they consider to be a discursive formation. The antagonistic terrain in which it gets constituted is

thus what they call a hegemonic formation (137). Diverging from Gramsci, however, on the supposition that the division of the social space into opposing fronts is a 'war of positions', Laclau and Mouffe maintain that the existence of two camps may be an effect of the hegemonic articulation and not its *a priori* condition: 'The openness of the social is a precondition of hegemonic practices' (142). This leads them to a second point of contention with Marxist analysis, concerning power and the singularity of a hegemonic centre in a social formation: 'by definition, such a centre will always elude us' (142). Their decentred conceptualization of hegemony does not fall into a liberal claim of pluralism and total diffusion of power; they assert, this precludes the analysis of hegemonic nodal points (142). In sum, hegemony, for Laclau and Mouffe, is 'a political type of relation, a form if one so wishes, of politics; but not a determinable location within a topography of the social. In a given social formation, there can be a variety of hegemonic nodal points' (139).

The social, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is instituted by the political: 'the problem of the political is the problem of the institution of the social, that is, the definition and articulation of social relations in a field criss-crossed with antagonisms' (153). In her later book *On the Political*, Mouffe maintains that 'the social is the realm of sedimented practices, practices that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution and which are taken for granted, as if they were self-grounded' (Mouffe 2005: 17). Social identity, as such, is not the starting point of politics and conflict but rather something that is constructed, maintained and transformed in and through political struggle. The forms of articulation of an antagonism, far from being determined, are the result of a hegemonic struggle (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 168).

Following on from Laclau and Mouffe, I pursue the following questions in my research project: how do issues of culture, nation, sect and class intersect in the articulation of discursive statements like 'Beirut the Paris of the East'? What hegemonic formation does it belong to and who/what subjectivities does it summon or exclude? How are relations of antagonism constitutive of this particular formation? Which hegemonic nodal points are discursively linked, to

constitute an oppositional formation, in and through which Beirut could be violently claimed as the 'Arab Hanoi'? And in turn, how are these materialized in and through culture and by extension design?

These questions take on further complexity in accounting for the context of Beirut in the 1960s. Two additional frameworks need to be deployed for that purpose. The first has to reckon with the problem of national formation in a decolonising context, where issues of modernity and cultural locality were subject to hegemonic struggle, contestations and transformations. The second problem requires accounting for the transnational dimension of politics and power relations operating in Beirut at the time. In what follows, I shall outline a critical transnational perspective to design history informed by postcolonial critique and cultural globalization theory.

Decentring the Nation from Global Design History

My study 'ventures beyond the pale', to borrow Judy Attfield's words (1999), in terms of the geographical territory that has produced the modern design canon and claimed its universal validity. I situate my work among emerging scholarly efforts to write the histories of modern design from the margins, outside a traditionally Euro-American history. I refer to the geography of margins here less in the terms of a relation of centre to periphery (Fry 1980) but rather in the sense of the 'disavowal' of a single-centred modernity (Bhabha 1994). A number of prominent scholars in the field have been pressing for the necessity of a globally inclusive design historiography (eg. Adamson et al. 2011; Huppatz 2015; Margolin 2005; Woodham 2005). The growing number of conferences and literature dedicated to the subject and attending to different geographies indicates an increasingly shared interest in that direction.

The question of how to write this history, as Victor Margolin (2005) pointed out a decade ago, involves points of divergence. His approach takes an exhaustive world history perspective that opens the definitions of design to wider terrains covering 'the conception and planning of visual and material

culture' that would not exclude the non-industrialized parts of the world (239). Margolin argues that

> Writing a world history of design with an emphasis on how empires, nations, and other political entities have used it to advance their political and economic agendas, while also showing how designed objects and images have contributed to the formation of national and global sensibilities, links design to the larger problems of the world (242).

Likewise, Anna Calvera proposes a multi-sited global design history map, which works itself outwards starting with the local as the initial site of research (Calvera 2005). She advocates the latter as an approach to peripheral geographies that have been invisible on the world map of design history. 'To get a place in history and enter inside its boundaries' she argues, 'it is necessary to have a history, and to have a history, it is necessary to build up local and national histories and begin to tell them' (Calvera 2005: 375). I do recognize the importance of a history written from the purview of the site of locality and expanding outwards. This is what I set out to do in my project. However, Calvera does not clarify what she means by the local. How does this site of particularity not fall into a binary relation to the global, denying from the outset of any research project the complex dynamics in which the global and the local interact and contend with one another? If anything, her text confounds the local with the national, a problem that I think is shared across a number of emerging design histories, specially the ones hailing from the long-time silent margins. In their efforts to fill the gaps on the global map of design, historians have mostly centred on the national as the locus of their enquiries. But I want to argue that in looking for the production of locality in design at the scale of the nation we run the risk of objectifying it; and in doing so, becoming complicit with the homogenizing voice of modern nation-states, excluding what does not get subsumed under its national project.

The internationalization of cultural studies in the last decade of the twentieth century faced a similar problem. In efforts to prioritize the particular

over the universal, the nation-state was privileged as the site of particularity (Stratton and Ang 1996). The resulting form of a globalized cultural studies was criticized as an unproductive intellectual endeavour likened by Frederic Jameson to 'a kind of United Nations plenary session' in which each group was given respectful (and "politically correct") hearing' (cited in Stratton and Ang: 365). Jon Stratton and Ien Ang have argued that this risks concretizing differences into fixed mutually exclusive categories. They suggest that rather than valorise uncritically any asserted particularity, 'cultural studies needs to reflect on the concrete processes of particularization itself, and to interrogate its politics' (ibid: 367). A postcolonial framework, they suggest, offers one such critical strategy.

The same critique and suggestion could thus be extended to globalizing design history, which takes the national for granted as a site of cultural locality and difference. A depoliticised focus on cultural particularity as a site of difference in global design history risks falling into a multiculturalism that locks each local site into an essentialized whole. This eschews the work of hegemony at different scales (global/local) of power relations and in between them. Evidently, some studies have been more successful than others in unpacking the constructed nature of a given national identity and ensuing design style. David Crowley's study of design in Poland is undoubtedly a pioneering effort in that regard, particularly in including Europe's own (Eastern) margins in the map of design history (Crowley 1992). Nevertheless, such a nationally bound lens is not adequate to cases like Lebanon (and others) where the national is a contested terrain, fraught with political incongruity.

In contradistinction to an overarching narrative of world history and a nationally circumscribed one, Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello and Sarah Teasley propose a global design history approach which 'recognizes the multiplicities and fragmented condition in which we experience and enact design, as part of being in the world' (2011: 2–3) and which 'demands that all design be understood as implicated in a network of mutually relevant, geographically expansive connections' (6). Their conceptualization for a globally sensitive and decentred logic of design history, along with their

proposed models, intersect and resonate most with the aims I have set out in my project. Rather than ask what is Lebanese, or what constitutes Arab design, I am interested in understanding how graphic design in the context of 1960s Beirut articulated identities and negotiated them between the global and the local. In other words, I ask what the 'Paris of the East', and conversely the 'Arab Hanoi', looked like in the visual and cultural materialization of antagonistic discourses of locality. I am all-ears to the geographic decentring devices already at play discursively in such statements: Paris–East and Arab–Hanoi.

Examining the history of design from a transnational perspective requires critically attending to the global dimension of politics operating in and from Beirut at the time. The hegemonic formations and ensuing subjectivities involve struggles not only of different domestic registers — cultural, sectarian, national, economic — as post-Marxists have argued, but also of different geo-political scales of power relations and antagonisms that are not circumscribed by the contours of the nation. I deploy a postcolonial perspective to critically study the interface of the global with the local in design history. As I shall be discussing, postcolonial critique deters binary conceptions of this cultural interface, which is essential to unpick the global enterprise of modernity and to study its everyday material cultures.

Decentring the West from Global Modernity

Edward Said's study of Orientalism, as a discourse of European scholarship on the Orient, has been crucial to our understanding of the process by which the East was set against the West and constituted as its inferior Other. The study of the nexus of power and knowledge that animated an Orientalist discourse, along with associated institutions and colonial practices, Said contends, is requisite to 'understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage — and even produce — the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period' (Said 1979: 3). Power in this form — embedded in discourse as a system of knowledge and through

dividing practices between self and other — Michel Foucault has argued, objectifies and transforms individuals into subjects (Foucault 1982). It ties people to an identity imposed on them, which they must recognize and which subjects them to others in this way. Said's study, in drawing on Foucault, is thus a critical genealogy of a discourse through which the oriental subject was historically constituted.

Postcolonial theory, building on from Said's *Orientalism*, has helped decentre the West in understanding the global enterprise of modernity, displacing now tired notions of 'influence' and 'imitation' of a Western origin and reconceived cultural encounters as forms of transculturation, appropriation and transfiguration (Bhabha 1994; Chakrabarty 2007; Goankar 2001; Mitchell 2000a and 2000b). Its different scholars, despite their varied theoretical reasoning, have criticized the cultural binaries claimed by imperialism in the construction of 'the West' and the 'non-West' as bounded categories. Homi Bhaba has argued that the non-West is not a location of pure cultural difference to the West. He urges us to think beyond narratives of originary subjectivities and primordial antagonisms and focus instead on the emergence of 'the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference' in the articulatory processes of colonial and postcolonial cultural hybridity (1994: 2). Timothy Mitchell contends that 'the production of modernity involves the staging of differences' (2000a: 27); it is not a product of the West but of its interaction with the non-West. He elaborates that the modern is staged as representation, in open-ended differential relations to an original that only exists as an authoritative yet elusive promise. This process lends modernity the immense capacity for replication and expansion, and at the same time makes it vulnerable to disruption, open to displacement and re-articulation. Accordingly, Mitchell sharply concludes that the universal claim of modernity is never fully attained, or indeed attainable.

Nonetheless, postcolonial theory has involved heated debates over the uses and misuses of 'the postcolonial' as an analytic concept and disciplinary field. Most pertinent here is Ella Shohat's questioning of the political agency of the term (Shohat 2000). She warns that in (US) academic contexts the term is

subsumed under liberal multiculturalism and that the terminological shift since the 1980s eclipses another more politically potent paradigm, that of the Third World:

> The terminological shift indicates the professional prestige and theoretical aura that the issues have acquired, in contrast to the more activist aura once enjoyed by *Third World* within progressive academic circles. Coined in the 1950s in France by analogy to the third estate (the commoners, all those who were neither the nobility nor the clergy), the term Third World gained international currency in both academic and political contexts, particularly in reference to anticolonial nationalist movements from the 1950s through the 1970s as well as to the political-economic analysis of dependency theory and world system theory (Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin). (Shohat 2000: 127)

Shohat acknowledges that the heydays of revolutionary Third Worldism and the promise of a unified struggle have collapsed since, not least due to internal contradictions linked to power relations within (ibid: 128). The prefix 'post' signifying a passage to a new period, as in 'after' colonialism, she argues, sits ambiguously with the theoretical critique implied in the 'post' colonial, as in going 'beyond' anticolonial nationalist theory. The beyond of postcolonial theory, Shohat elaborates, would make more sense in an intellectual genealogy when placed in relation to Third World nationalist discourse, if articulated as 'post-anticolonial critique', as in moving beyond 'a relatively binaristic, fixed, and stable mapping of power relations between colonizer/colonized and centre/periphery. Such rearticulations suggest a more nuanced discourse, which allows for movement, mobility, and fluidity' (ibid: 134–35). Furthermore, Shohat is concerned that a generalized postcolonialism runs the risk of 'downplaying multiplicities of location and temporality' of decolonisation (some of which still ongoing as she rightly points to the example of Palestine) and undermines the persistence of contemporary neocolonial political, economic and military interventions and struggles against these (130–31). I

take on board her cautionary remark on the spatio-temporality of 'the postcolonial' yet hold on to the critical analytic framework that postcolonial theory enables, as a necessary intellectual project precisely against the persistent legacy of colonialism in the contemporary ossification of a "Western civilizational" matrix, all too violently exclusionary since 9/11/2001. I understand postcolonial critique as a project aimed at destabilising the "West" as a bounded category and decentring it from a privileged site of modernity. I use the hyphen to refer to 'post-colonial' time, a historical conjuncture marking a transition from direct colonial rule to a moment of independence, and distinguish it from the 'postcolonial' critical framework as an intellectual project.

As this thesis is concerned historically with the complex temporality of decolonisation processes in the Arab world, it engages anticolonial nationalist theories, namely the work of Frantz Fanon (1965), to contextualise contemporary anticolonial political discourses and related nationalist formulations. Nonetheless, through postcolonial critique, I situate Fanon's discourse in the conjuncture of Third Worldist theory and move, as Shohat suggests, 'beyond' its intellectual project in my analysis of discursive articulations and decentred power relations.

This critical conceptual formulation of the postcolonial is all the more pressing in the analysis of aesthetic practices of the Arab world particularly of the post-independence period. Art historians have often too readily adopted the conceptual categories of nation and culture in triumphalist affirmation of a post-independence "modern" yet "authentic" Arab, Iraqi, Syrian or Egyptian art (see Meier 2010). The inclusion of 'non-Western modernism' as a category of analysis in global art history scholarship since the 1990s, writes Prita Meier, 'often in-advertently reproduces this geography of cultural difference, where the non-Western must be a real place of authenticity' (Meier 2010: 19). Artists themselves may very well have made such place-specific claims of cultural and national authenticity in their art practice at the time. But their aesthetic and discursive claims, Meier urges, need to be historically situated in the modernist paradigm of aesthetic authenticity, and not conflated with the art historian's

frameworks of analysis (22). I would add, following on from Shohat, that place-specific claims of aesthetic authenticity need to be read in the contingency of the anticolonial nationalist moment and ensuing political subjectivity but *beyond* its intellectual project. In other words, these need to be analysed, in post-Marxist terms, as politically contingent claims rather than as the expression of 'authentic' local identity with essential cultural attributes fixed in time. Historical analysis, of art/design, could then through postcoloniality, simultaneously, critique the imperialist project of a 'Western' modernity and its antagonistic outside, the 'non-West', and move beyond the putative binaries of anti-colonial discourse towards more nuanced and decentred readings of power relations in global cultural encounters.

In similar vein, reflecting on the intensification of globalization processes in recent history, Arjun Appadurai (1996) invites us to rethink the centrality of the West as a purveyor of cultural flows and forms and to examine how a multiplicity of forces, not only economic ones, determine the complex entanglements of global modernity. He argues that 'the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models' (32). He proposes a framework for exploring disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics by looking at the relations between five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes. The suffix –scape, he explains, 'allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes', and 'also indicate that these are not objectively given relations' but rather 'deeply perspectival constructs' (33). While Appadurai is concerned with contemporary issues of globalization, scholars of the Middle East contend that this disjunctive order of the global economy is not a new phenomenon. Such complex global interactions are characteristic of modernity in the colonial period (Mitchell 2000b; Khuri-Makdisi 2013) and have been at work through older mass media such as print and film (Armbrust 2000a, 2013). This thesis builds on these arguments and expands their scope to include the production and circulation of particular forms of visuality in 'mediascapes'. The lens on graphic design thus

foregrounds the dimension of what can be termed *printscapes* in the disjunctive landscapes of global cultural flows. The transnational framework Appadurai outlines helps me to consider the context of Beirut in the long 1960s — in its multi-directional (East–East, South–South and West–East) flows of capital, incoming designers, political discourses, cultural practices and forms (including images and aesthetics), operating as he contends within overlapping, disjunctive landscapes whose centres shift according to the different kinds of cultural affirmations, economic flows and networks of political solidarities taking shape regionally and globally.

In sum, my project is committed to a double decentring in design history: the first, through a postcolonial lens, displaces the West in understanding global modernity and the second, through a transnational framework, attends to the dislocation of the nation from a privileged site of particularity. The decentring strategy I propose here, far from constituting a de-politicized form of multicultural pluralism, indeed accounts for the work of hegemony in the everyday, in which design is one important site of struggle. The political, postcolonial and global cultural optics I have mobilized thus far, need to be articulated in conjunction with the dimension of visuality in the global circulatory practice of *printscapes*.

Transnational Circuits of Visuality

Appadurai speaks of 'modernity as embodied sensation in the movies in Bombay' (1996: 2). He links the circulation of images through media to that of people through migration in accounting for the 'work of the imagination' as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity. The work of the imagination for Appadurai is material; it is 'a collective social fact' (5). His theorization builds on the Frankfurt School's engagements with the mechanically reproduced image, Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community and the French idea of the imaginary (*imaginaire*) as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations (ibid: 31). He argues, *contra* Adorno and Horkheimer

and with Cultural Studies more generally,[2] that everyday media cultures can bring pleasure to its varied publics as well as provoke resistance and inspire agency: 'It is the imagination in its collective forms that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labour prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action and not only for escape' (7). The work of the imagination that he conceptualizes is transnational, shared and materialized in and through the flow of people and images. His analytic model provides the basis for what I refer to in this thesis as *transnational circuits of visuality,* [3] which I elucidate here.

In arguing for an understanding of 'visuality' that does not reduce investigations in visual culture to linguistic models, W.J.T. Mitchell urges a move beyond the semiotic model of analysis, to attend to the aesthetic and affective authority of images. He reverses the question from 'What do pictures mean?' to 'What do pictures want?' (1995: 544). While maintaining the relevance of a semiotic interpretive analysis (2005: 47), Mitchell presses the aesthetic and the sensorial embodied dimensions of everyday forms of visuality. I take his question to mean not so much literally an enquiry into some sort of enchanted visuality, but rather a provocation to reflect on 'the visual construction of the social' (48) in the framework of this project; in other words, to consider the mutually constitutive role of visuality as a field shaped by and shaping social relations. How are we to conceptualise, and indeed analyse, the role of visuality, in disjunctive landscapes of global cultural flows, and in the political framework of decentred hegemonic articulations? I find it useful to think of visuality as a force-field and to imagine its movement in the form of

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[2] Appadurai is referring to Adorno and Horkheimer's "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).

[3] I owe the formulation of 'circuits of visuality' to Luciana Martins, from the title of her "Circuits of Visuality in the Making of the Kadiwéu Image World" that she presented at the University of Brighton IOTA seminar series on 23 February 2016. My conceptualisation of 'transnational circuits of visuality' here, however, is distinct from how she used 'circuits of visuality' in this paper to describe image-making as deployed on European expeditions to South America in the 19th century and the contemporary exhibition of such expeditionary visual archives.

transnational circuits. Hence I use the formulation *transnational circuits of visuality* to capture the nexus of visuality, global flows and political relations and account for the movement of images, image-makers, ideas about image-making and the realm of the visual, in its aesthetic dimension, as a force-field.

A *circuit of visuality* is formed by the visual field of relations produced in and through the mobility of particular sets of images. I am less concerned with the mobility of a single image and object-centred approaches, but rather with an image's aesthetic and discursive inter-relationship with other sets of images. For instance, I look at how particular tourism ads for Beirut in the late 1960s are connected discursively and aesthetically to a set of other contemporary images of Mediterranean beach-time leisure produced and circulating elsewhere than in Lebanon. One could describe this dispersed yet relatively coherent interrelationship of images as a hegemonic visual culture, in which socially instituted cultural meanings, symbolic codes and aesthetic sensibilities are widely shared. Nonetheless, as Deborah Poole has convincingly argued, the concept of 'visual economy' is more useful than 'visual culture' for thinking globally about the circulation of images as part of a comprehensive social organization that is materially structured around issues of production and exchange (Poole 1997). She elaborates: 'It is relatively easy to imagine the people of Paris and Peru, for example, participating in the same "economy". To imagine or speak of them as part of a shared "culture" is considerably more difficult' (Poole 1997: 8). I take her distinction as a cue to consider transnational *circuits of visuality* as conduits for shared visual economies rather than shared visual cultures. We can speak, for instance, of a shared visual economy in and through the internationalization of the graphic design practice, brought forth by the enlargement of capital, associated advertisement practices and the advent of in-house graphic designers in small and big corporations regulating 'house-style' schemes. We can also speak of a shared visual economy when comparing aesthetically an Op art painting by Bridget Riley, a psychedelic poster for the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco, a typeface designed by Push Pin Studio in New York — produced as a transfer type and internationally distributed by Letraset, the logo and sign system for

the 1968 Mexico Olympic, an ad for Mary Quant clothing in the same year and a poster designed to promote tourism in Lebanon. But we cannot speak of the same visual culture across these different instances. In every instance, these aesthetic forms are translated and appropriated into the particularity of a given culture and its demands in terms of visuality, or transfigured and subverted into oppositional counter-culture codes. We can likewise extend the idea of a shared visual economy when we discuss the circulation of technologies of production and reproduction. Thus the visuality of modern printed forms — books, magazines, newspapers — with their respective typographic conventions, standardized paper formats and binding methods can be said to be shared between, say, French and Arabic publications. Likewise modern conventions of seeing/reading as embodied activities are also shared through the global circulation of visual economies of publishing and printing. But, here again, these media do not necessarily constitute one and the same visual culture, not least due to the differences in scripts (Latin and Arabic) and writing/reading directions (left to right vs. right to left). While there are, then, globally shared visual economies that emerge through media technologies, there remains divergence in visual cultures.

Nonetheless, the global circulation of images is not limited to economic forms of organization. It is not only linked to the circulation of capital and/or technologies of public mediation. We need to account for the complex overlaps and disjunctures in global cultural flows between various other forces, as Appadurai proposed. Otherwise how do we understand the mobility of sets of radically political images and transnational relations of solidarity forming in and through related printscapes at a given moment? One example here is the circulation of the figure/image of the 'freedom fighter' across the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s, which carried in its visuality the ideological codes of various armed liberation struggles. It is more relevant here to discuss the formation of a *transnational circuit of visuality* that linked different sites of struggle, rather than to speak only in terms of a shared visual economy of the 'freedom fighter'. The concept of *visuality* encompasses the possibility of analysing the configuration of a visual 'culture' or 'economy' when

appropriate without being limited to either organisational structure of social relations.

Moreover, a *circuit of visuality* also involves the movement of particular ideas about, and aesthetic practices of, image-making. Discourses of modernism in art and design, with their respective philosophical underpinnings, disciplinary formations and aesthetic canons were on the move through different institutional channels and met different sites of enunciation beyond Euro-American geographies. In the post-independence Arab world, competing quests for a place-bound or universal modern art practice, or a politically committed versus an autonomous art, are tied to similar debates elsewhere in the world. The movement of discourses of modernism and associated debates within the Arab region through, for instance, the circulation of pan-Arab publications and the mobility of enunciating subjects — authors, artists and designers — constitute in themselves productive conduits for particular forms of visual practices, as well as understandings of visuality as a modern disciplinary field vis-à-vis a history of Arabo-Islamic aesthetic traditions.

Circuits of visuality are situated in macro-scale epistemic 'scopic regimes' manifesting a different combination of philosophical, aesthetic, and technological assumptions and practices (Jay 1988, 2011). In that sense we can imagine a globally pervasive 'society of the spectacle' in the long 1960s (Debord 1995). Yet the "what and how" of the spectacle is not equally pervasive; it is complicated by competing micro scale 'scopic regimes'[4] (Jay

[4] In his more recent 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity Revisited' (2011), Jay muses on the profuse deployment of 'scopic regimes' in the literature since and asks 'What can we say about "scopic regime" as a tool of critical analysis some two decades after its introduction into visual culture studies?' (57). It becomes apparent to him that the applications vary in terms of scale and hence can be tentatively divided into 'macroscopic' and 'microscopic' regimes (53). The former, much like his initial conceptualisation, are large-scale epochal configurations, 'however imprecisely defined provide at least benchmarks against which deviations and variations can be measured' (58). The latter applications focus on more 'narrow and circumscribed set of visual practices' (58). At either ends of the spectrum various force fields of visuality need to be at play to constitute what might be folded into the notion of the 'scopic' and to the relations of power embedded in the relatively coherent order of a 'regime' (59–60).

2011) that politically situate image-makers and viewing publics, those who are on view and those who are denied visibility and demand recognition in disparate circuits of competing visuality. A poster by the Lebanese National Council of Tourism celebrating Lebanese Georgina Rizk being crowned Miss Universe in 1971, the image of Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman to fly to space in 1963, the black and white photograph of Palestinian 'freedom fighter' Leyla Khaled leaning gently over her AK-47 following her involvement in a 1969 plane hijacking organized by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) are all, as cosmopolitan iconic images, embedded in a 'society of the spectacle'. Yet each image is inscribed in different politics of gender and international relations, which situate them in intersecting and disjunctive circuits criss-crossing their way through this spectacle demanding recognition. We can thus refer to *circuits of visuality* not only in terms of the interrelated mobility of visual artefacts, discourses, makers and publics, but also in their manifestation and reinforcement of scopic regimes, which embody power relations in and through visual interactions across geopolitical borders and other ideological frontiers.

Circuits of visuality have the politics of aesthetics written into them. Beyond 'scopic regimes' and what Jacques Rancière has called 'the distribution of the sensible', a sharing and dividing up that is at once political and aesthetic (Rancière 2006: 12-13), visuality embodies an experience of judgement of taste that has the potential of segregating the space of the social. Aesthetics are neither limited to the domain of artistic practices, nor are the prerogative of art critics. Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work on the social judgment of taste in *La Distinction* (1984) has foregrounded the political dimension of aesthetics in legitimating social differences along hierarchal relations between classes. In his analysis, aesthetic discourses transform objects and practices into differentiated signs within a structure of social relations that authorize group formation and, conversely, differentiation. For Bourdieu, taste is an expression of class habitus — an embodied form of class identity. However, when dealing with the precarious socio-political space of post-independence Beirut and transnational circuits of visuality operating in

and through the city, one is clearly not confronted with political distinctions and social aspirations that could be simply reduced to hierarchical relations between classes. Scholars in the areas of cultural studies and in history of design have rightly complicated the centrality of class mobility in the everyday experience of aesthetics and put into practice revised theorizations and empirical observations that account for the politics of gender, nation, youth cultures and counter-cultures (eg. Benett 2007; Hebdige 1988; Palmer and Dodson 1996, Sparke 1995). Distinctions from the purview of the judgement of taste need to be reframed within a combined post-Marxist and postcolonial understanding of political relations and ensuing subjectivities. In understanding the political dimension of taste in the work of hegemony, we need to ask how chains of equivalence are drawn at the level of the aesthetic, thereby defining a sensorial articulation of the antagonistic space. Furthermore, we need to understand how political relations between transnational *circuits of visuality* are entangled with complex articulations of class, nation and sect in, for instance, a context such as Beirut.

Finally, these 'circuits' are multiple, diverse and highly fluid fields of visuality. We can thus imagine various circuits intersecting, overlapping and diverging along different paths. Yet as force-fields entangled in relations of power, these circuits are articulated at various sites in hegemonic nodal points, which partially arrest their fluidity. This 'partial fixation', as Laclau and Mouffe have argued in the case of discursive fields, lends visuality the possibility of replication, appropriation and subversion at various sites/moments in a transnational circuit. Thus Bridget Riley's optical illusions come to signify and embody the youthfulness of the revolutionary guerrilla in a poster for Che Guevara designed in Cuba that in turn would travel to Beirut through relations of solidarity which recognize the image of Che in the figure of the *fidaʾi*, the Palestinian 'freedom fighter'. A decade later, this revolutionary figure is rearticulated by the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran in the image of the historic Shiite martyr al-Hussein. Recoded as *mujahid,* the 'freedom fighter' returns to Beirut in this new aesthetic form that connects the city with circuits of visuality politically drawn between Hizbullah and Iran;

the new figure of the *mujahid* displaces that of the old *fidaʾi*. Transnational circuits of visuality are entangled in hegemonic articulations, in the contingency of political relations and ensuing subjectivities.

Before proceeding with the application of this theoretical framework in the following chapters, it is important to elucidate the historical approach deployed.

Historiography

My primary sources consist mainly of visual and material artefacts of everyday public culture, printed ephemera and tools of mass mediation (eg. posters, press advertisements, books and brochures). I nonetheless fall back on the local press (articles, political manifestos, images and ads) as additional sources in order to map the discursive relations between the graphic artefacts and concomitant social practices, associated agents and institutions. I approach the latter sources (press archives) less in the manner of a historic contextualization of the visual and material artefacts in question, but rather in an attempt to understand their embeddedness and impetus in a discursive moment.

My analysis methodologically moves back and forth between the artefact, its designer, issuing institution, the discursive frameworks and circuits of visuality that surround its making and circulation. To do so, I deploy a combination of methods drawn from various disciplines including the history of art and design, visual and material culture, in conjunction with a multi-levelled semiotic and political discourse analysis. This interdisciplinary methodology enables me to interrogate the archive of printed matter and answer the aims and questions I laid out in the conceptualization of my project: not least, to understand how graphic design constitutes a site of hegemonic struggle, engaged in making meanings, embodying aesthetic sensibilities and carrying them in and through the discursive horizons of the production and circulation of its everyday artefacts.

My historical investigation, though centred on a post-Marxist discourse analysis, is informed by a combined archaeological and genealogical approach

to historical enquiry (Foucault 1972; 1977). I take from Foucault his decentred approach to historical enquiry, which questions the notions of continuity in historical analysis and the centrality of human consciousness as the subject of all historical development and actions. As a historian I retain from his archaeological method the imperative to: replace the taken-for-granted unities of historical periods with the task of constituting series of different types of events; to make the discontinuous an object of analysis rather than an obstacle for the historian to rid herself of; and to describe a field of relations between series, accounting for various temporalities and for the space of dispersion within the elements of the series and between series (1972: 8–12).[5]

Following Foucault I can avoid a conventional historiography of the archival document as the inert trace of an event in the past acting as a source from which 'historical facts' could be extracted and corroborated. Rather, the archaeological approach I deploy conceives of historical documents as discursively structured, material forms. It is compatible with the understanding I draw from Laclau and Mouffe of discourses as material practices (1985). I thus move from a historiography of facts to a 'description of the facts of discourse' (Foucault 1972: 31). The history I undertake describes within the archival material itself unities, discontinuities, series and fields of relations. The archive, in its incompleteness with regards to the historical *a priori*, forms the horizon of materiality (positivity in Foucault's terms) in and through which circuits of visuality and associated discursive formations can be mapped and described. 'Archaeology describes discourses as practices specified in the elements of the archive' (ibid: 148).

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[5] Foucault terms 'discursive formation' the series in question and sets out throughout his book to define its constitutive elements, characteristics and methods of describing such a formation. He develops and designates 'archaeology' as the new approach to the historical analysis of discourse. I will not be using Foucault's theorization of discourse, as I am working with the concept of discourse in the political, post-Marxist, framework outlined by Laclau and Mouffe. I will however deploy the historiographical approach of archaeology to the political discourse analysis I undertake.

The historical approach I take extends the conceptualization of designed objects and images beyond their passive definition as bearers of cultural meanings and archival status as historical evidence, to account for their mutually constitutive discursive structuring within a field of relations. As Clive Dilnot put it: 'In embodying the complex and diverse circumstances that gave rise to them, often in powerful and frequently unusual patterns or "constellations", designed objects and images, as well as the forms the design process takes, have an archaeological status' (Dilnot 1984b: 10).

Moreover, I also mobilize a genealogical approach to historical enquiry in my study. It entails locating the discontinuities, substitutions and displacements of elements across discursive moments, revealing in post-Marxist terms the historical contingency of their political act of institution. And, in Foucault's words, disturbing 'what was imagined consistent with itself' (Foucault 1977: 148). The genealogical perspective I take situates Beirut's 1960s in a temporal relation to the long and protracted civil war that broke off in 1975. The study of the antagonistic terrain between the 'Arab Hanoi' and the 'Paris of the East' is done with the war in mind. In other words, it is a pre-war genealogy that is not interested in the origin of conflict but rather in the historically contingent emergence of antagonism, hegemonic formations, dislocations and transformations.

Chapter 2

Dislocating the Nation: Mediterraneanscapes in Lebanon's Tourism Promotion

At the turn of 1969, a peculiar advertisement appeared in *The Economist* issue of Dec. 27 – Jan 2 [Fig. 1]. The ad featured two attractive young women posing fashionably in a prototypical Mediterranean beach setting on a perfectly sunny day. Their shimmering golden bikinis further intensify the sunshine while evoking the futuristic glamour of the day. Here's an image that would get anyone in the northern hemisphere dreaming of escape — at least from the December freeze. The country advertised is one where you can enjoy the much-desired sun, beach and associated fun, in utmost modernity.

This is Lebanon as represented, in the 1960s and early 1970s, by the Lebanese Council for Tourism, a then newly established state agency. Shortly after the appearance of the ad in *The Economist*, a Mr and Mrs Robertson wrote a letter of complaint in the English periodical, *New Statesman*, asking 'Why is a colour ad for the Lebanon running in last week's *Economist* posed against the Fraglioni of Capri?'[1] Their public inquisition illustrates how this ad might have stirred some confusion in the tourism imaginary of a Euro-

[1] The director of Touristic Promotions in Lebanon responded to this enquiry in the *New Statesman* on 23 January 1970, reassuring the couple and English readers that this is indeed a picture taken in Beirut, Lebanon (Boustros 1970).

American public to whom it was chiefly addressed, assertively expressed here at least by the distrusting couple.

The Economist ad and ensuing response provoke a series of questions concerning Lebanon's tourism publicity at the time. To begin with, why would the Lebanese state, by way of its Tourism Council and its agents — graphic designers included — choose to promote the country as a modern European-styled Mediterranean tourist destination? And second, what does this image mean in a context of conflicting politics of nationhood and belonging to the Arab world?

To answer these questions and untangle the politics that lay in the production and circulation of this ad, I take a close look at the promotional prints issued by the National Council for Tourism in the 1960s–70s. My study unpacks the discursive and aesthetic implications of graphic design by examining the tourism prints through two intersecting frameworks, that of global modernity and that of post-independence national formation. Methodologically, my primary sources consist of the tourism visual culture and printed ephemera — pictorial books, posters, brochures, leaflets, photographs and the like. Despite the importance of tourism to the political economy of Lebanon, the industry has received only cursory attention by historians. This chapter, thus, while primarily attending to an overlooked visual culture, fills a serious gap in Lebanon's tourism history. Due to the dearth of historical scholarship on this topic, I fall back on the local press (articles, images and ads) and the publications of state officials and entrepreneurs engaged in the tourism sector, as supporting archival sources, in order to map relations between the promotional campaigns intended for an external public of potential tourists and a domestic discourse on tourism, associated institutions, subject formations and cultural practices. I will be, on the one hand, mapping the tourism prints in their relations to a wider discursive field that constituted Lebanon as a site of modern leisure and tourism. And, on the other, I shall genealogically trace, in and through the tourism prints, the transformations, displacements and substitutions that Lebanon's tourism discourse in 1960s entailed.

Before addressing the 1960s tourism campaigns I undertake a genealogical enquiry into tourism promotions and practices since the formation of modern Lebanon in 1920 under French colonial rule. I argue that the Tourism Council sought to substitute in the 1960s an older image of Lebanon as a regional mountain summer resort with the visuality of modernity on the Mediterranean coast. My analysis relates this transformation first to the modernizing discourse of the state and that of hospitality entrepreneurs which sought to position Lebanon on the global map of emerging mass tourism, particularly the one flourishing on the European side of the Mediterranean basin from the French Riviera all the way to the Greek islands. At the outset, this approach was situated within a 1960s global framework of economic modernization of developing countries that looked towards the "developed" West for a tourism model to emulate. However, the lens of global modernity in its economic dimension becomes complicated once Lebanon's colonial history, its creation as a nation-state and ensuing national identity politics are brought to the fore. Accordingly, I move to critically interrogate the politics of a Mediterranean geography of belonging, especially in light of its antagonistic relation to contemporary politics of Arab nationalism. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's account of a decentred hegemonic formation (2001 [1985]), my study traces the purported Mediterranean geography and associated tourism discourse genealogically back to the nationalist discourses of the country's most influential intellectuals. I argue that Lebanon's 1960s–70s tourism visual culture, contributed to the articulation of a Lebanese subjectivity premised on separatism from the Arab context, endorsing a Euro-Mediterranean character of the nation in polity and culture, in and through which discourses qualifying Lebanon's capital city as the 'Paris of the East' emerged and held visual and material resonance.

A Summer Resort for the Arab East

Summer vacationing became a touristic practice in the newly formed state of Lebanon during French colonial rule (1920–43). Referred to as *estivage,* from the French root *été* (summer) or *villégiature* (village), this designated the

geography of Mount Lebanon as a summer resort. The touristic practice, very much inscribed within the era's European travels to the colonies, attracted foreigners positioned in the region to flee the heat of the summer on the coast or in the Arabian hinterland and retreat to the freshness of the Lebanese mountains (Kfoury 1959: 276). In coordination with the French Haut Commissariat, Mount Lebanon as a summer resort was encouraged and promoted as such by local authorities (al-Hassan 1973: 31–2; Kassir 2003: 363–69). It developed as a substitute economy to the declining sericulture — once an important economy of Mount Lebanon aimed for export to European silk markets. The Mountainous landscape had its share of idyllic representations in travel guides such as the 1925 and 1928 editions of *Guide de Villégiature du Mont Liban* (Fleyhan 1929: 37) as well as in the famed colonial travel posters of the period as part of the campaign 'Liban et Syrie, Pays de Villégiature' [Figs 2 & 3] (Kassir 2003 364–65; cf. Ghozzi and Slaoui 1997).

The practice of summer vacationing in the Lebanese mountains was taken on by an affluent Arab community, namely from Egypt, Palestine, and Iraq, who took seasonal summer residence in Mount Lebanon (Fleyhan 1929: 8). Facilitated by the new transportation networks, the trend gained currency in the thirties, rendering Mount Lebanon a summer tourist destination for the wider Arab East, including a domestic influx of wealthier Lebanese coming from the coastal cities (Kfoury 1959: 276–8; al-Hassan 1973: 31; Gratien and Pitts 2014). Thus *Estivage* met its Arabic equivalent of *istiyaf* — from the root of the word *sayf* meaning summer.

An Arabic independent periodical dedicated to the subject, titled *al-Sayf fi Lubnan* (Summer in Lebanon), published monthly in the year 1934, boasted across its pages the various Lebanese mountain sites for summer vacationing. Articles stressed the therapeutic escape from the city, yet maintained the provision of modern forms of leisure and nightlife entertainment, in addition to comfort supplied by new accommodation such as hot water, cleanliness and good service. Hotels are abundantly advertised across the pages listing in small type some of these modern services. The latter ranged from basic 2-star accommodation to grand hotels such as the famous

Hotel Kassouf in Dhour Choueir, whose ad stood out from the rest in size, aesthetic and rhetoric. It is designed to include a modern art deco styled illustration of the hotel's front façade with similarly fashioned accompanying typography and text, expressed primarily in French. The glamorous ad for Hotel Kassouf appeared in every issue of the 1934 volume of this periodical, indicating an appeal to a cosmopolitan élite of travellers in the region very much in tune with European tastes and lifestyles [Fig. 4]. With the exception of a couple of hotels in Beirut most ads promoted accommodation in the Lebanese mountains. The primacy of the mountains as a summer resort in Lebanon is expressed in an advertisement for an exhibition of Lebanese produce, which implores visitors to drop by the capital city on their way to their preferred tourist destination: 'Before going to the mountain, make a short visit to Beirut'. The periodical generally addressed a transnational Arab public of vacationers in its editorial content, news and advertisements. It promoted different travel agencies and means of transportation to reach Lebanon from different Arab cities and highlighted events such as the newly set up telephone lines connecting Lebanon with Egypt and Iraq. It also featured noted Iraqi and Egyptian visitors in every issue often accompanied with a quotation or article that eulogized the beauty and tranquillity of the Lebanese landscape. A former minister of Iraq, for instance, vaunts Lebanon as a quintessential Iraqi summer destination, listing three reasons to visit: cultural encounters with the literary Lebanese; the rejuvenating and therapeutic climate; and a meeting place for Arabs of different countries facilitating the exchange of Pan-Arab ideas and plans.

The post-independence Lebanese state, recognizing the importance of this growing economic sector, began to consolidate its efforts to develop, regulate and promote Lebanon's tourism. Gabriel Menassa's influential 1948 *Plan de reconstruction de l'économie Libanaise et de réforme de l'État* set the economic imperative and required policy for developing tourism as a national industry, stating on the first page of his introduction that 'Lebanon is a country of transit commerce and tourism. It is thus a moving plate of international

communications' (Menassa 1948: 1). Menassa sketches an ambitious project for developing Lebanon as a unique touristic centre in the Middle East advantaged by the following characteristics:

> A country of major archaeological history, exceptionally gifted by nature, bringing together the advantages of mountain and coast, winter sports and resorts (*centres d'hivernage*) of moderate temperatures on the Mediterranean (in 30 minutes one could reach the coast from a 1000 metre altitude), thanks to easy and fast means of transportation, Lebanon offers the possibility of an ideal country of tourism and the only resort for summer vacationing (*centres d'estivage*) and winter sports in the whole of the Middle East (Menassa 1948: 18).

Al-Mufawwadiyya al-ʿAmma li-l-Siyaha wa-l-Istiyaf (The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing), founded in late 1948 as part of the Ministry of Economy, was the first serious government initiative of the sort. Promotional prints published by the General Office further entertained the tourist imagination of Lebanon as a mountain summer resort. One such poster, which can be dated to the early fifties, is a case in point [Fig. 5]. The image is a painted scene that captures an idyllic moment of a cool afternoon in the quietude of the Lebanese mountains. An inviting table of fresh fruits, coffee and an earthenware water pitcher are typically set in the context of an outdoor porch of vernacular Lebanese mountain architecture, the cool shades of the vine tree notwithstanding. The composition is aesthetically akin to a practice of landscape painting in modern art in Lebanon at the time, which was culturally intertwined with building a national locality (Scheid 2005: chapter 3). In an intricate interplay of text and image — and here I am borrowing Roland Barthes' analysis of 'Italianicity' for a Panzani ad (1977: 34) — the title anchors the symbolic connotations of Lebaneseness in the painted vista (ibid: 37–34). Set in Arabic calligraphy it reads: 'Lebanon, the summer resort of Arab countries'.

Another leaflet, dating to 1955, features a typical scenic vision of the Lebanese mountain landscape overlooking the sea [Fig. 6]. It positions the looking subject in the mountains and sets the seascape in the horizon, therefore making the Mediterranean sea a scenic sight one enjoys from the altitude of the mountain during summer. An earlier iteration of this landscape can be found on a postage stamp for Lebanon issued in 1936. The stamp reproduced a painting by Moustafa Farroukh, a pioneer Lebanese modern artist of the interwar period who particularly championed Lebanese landscape paintings. Farroukh had submitted his painting in 1935 to a competition held by a committee for promoting tourism to Lebanon (Scheid 2005: 223-24). This particular perspective, combining mountain and sea in the same landscape, set the 'scopic regime'[2] (Jay 2011) of Lebanon as a Mountain summer resort. On its back, the 1955 leaflet listed around 58 mountain towns as '*centres d'estivage*' (summer resorts) and described them by their altitude from sea level, climate and scenic particularities. This leaflet, produced by the Office of Tourism, followed a 1954 governmental decree, designating and regulating *marakiz istiyaf* (summer resorts) according to specific urban criteria, thereby setting conditions to be met by local municipal councils in Mount Lebanon for listing towns as such.

The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing is generally credited with having paved the way for Lebanon's tourism sector, through the institution of new policies and the planning of major projects in the 1950s. It established tourism information offices, a tourism police, a notable school of hospitality management, refurbished archaeological sites, built the first ski resort in Lebanon and a landmark Casino, among other modern leisure activities. The École Hôtelière de Beyrouth is a particular case in point.

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[2] I am referring here to micro-scale scopic regimes in 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity Revisited' (Jay 2011). Rather than epochal and epistemic scopic regimes, the latter focus on more 'narrow and circumscribed set of visual practices' (58), with the understanding that various force fields of visuality need to be at play to constitute what might be folded into the notion of the 'scopic' and to the relations of power embedded in the relatively coherent order of a 'regime' (59–60).

Established in 1950 as a public technical school, it provided a specialized training in hospitality management along the international modern standards of the day. Its curriculum focused on graduating chefs qualified in 'Lebanese cuisine'[3] as well as European, maîtres d'hôtel, and waiters who were technically prolific and assured in three languages: Arabic, French and English. By the late 1950s, the school was widely perceived as the beacon of a successful model of cosmopolitan hospitality and modernized culinary services which ensured according to press reviews not just quality gastronomy and service but also embodied associated aesthetics: 'artistic presentations of dishes', 'refined taste', 'order and cleanliness' (Sleimane 1958).

The different projects initiated by the Tourism Office already indicate a desire to share in the rising global tourist economy of the mid-1950s. Lebanon, in fact, joined the International Federation of Tourism in 1951, and the Chairman of the Lebanese Tourism Office, Michel Touma, presided over the International Federation from 1955 to 1956. The 1950s also witnessed a formidable increase in the number of incoming tourists. Within the span of 6 years, the numbers of visitors grew from a rough 60,000 in 1949 to 901,429 in 1955 (Kfoury 1959). The rise of the petrodollar in the Arab Gulf prompted a new flow of business and leisure travel to Lebanon specially facilitated by the opening of an international airport in 1951. Studies suggest that the tourism

[3] Lebanese cuisine, specially formed of mezze, is a modern culinary variation on the Syro-Ottoman tradition of Levantine gastronomy, which gained its 'Lebanese' national designation with the rise of restaurants and tourist hospitality services in Lebanon and with the opening of 'Lebanese restaurants' by immigrants across the world (Kassir 2003: pp. 464–65). Interestingly, the figure behind the establishment of the École Hôtelière de Beyrouth is the Lebanese cook of international repute, Georges Rayess, whose classic recipe book *The Art of Lebanese Cooking* (1966) was the first of the sort to be published in English. Rayess in 1950 was the director of the General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing. The latter reflects the tight correlation between the development of tourism in Lebanon and the rise of entrepreneurship and training in culinary services, which, through the historic contingency of modern national formations, appropriates a regionally shared culinary culture as a nationally circumscribed specialty for touristic consumption.

industry grew to become one of the pillars of Lebanon's national economy (Kfoury 1959: 278–82).

L'estivage se meurt, vive le tourisme

On 12 September 1955, an article with the headline 'L'estivage se meurt, vive le tourisme' (summer vacationing is dying, long live tourism) appeared in the Francophone magazine *La Revue du Liban*. The author, Jean-Prosper Gay-Para, a locally renowned entrepreneur behind many of the emerging tourism services and hospitality establishments in Beirut at the time, declared the end of an era of mountain summer vacationing. In this article, and in more that followed, Gay-Para appeals to an élite public of Lebanese Francophone readership to press for a paradigm shift in the local tourism economy from a 'monotonous traditional' practice to a modern one in tune with a burgeoning international tourism industry (Gay-Para 1962: 49–50). Gay-Para presents four important reasons why this shift ought to occur. The first, he claims, is due to new means of transportation. Affluent Arab visitors travelled by land to spend their summers in the Lebanese mountains. Now, with commercial air travel, they could go anywhere in Europe, which presented serious competition that threatened Lebanon's main tourism clients. However, air travel, Gay-Para encourages his readers, should motivate Lebanon to reach out to new tourists beyond the Arab region. The second reason concerns the appeal of the beach as a new summer resort, gaining in popularity compared with the mountains. Beach holidays offered modern and trendy leisure activities such as sunbathing, swimming and other water sports. The third pertains to the development of hotels and the growth of hospitality services, particularly in the coastal capital city Beirut, serving emerging business related travel to Lebanon. Finally, Gay-Para concludes that the emergence of a modern youth culture in the coastal cities, not as conformist as in the mountain villages, promises 'adventures'. Gay-Para's prescient advice begins to explain the modern girls on a beach set-up in *The Economist* ad. The Lebaneseness of the mountain resort and its appeal to an Arab public, as we saw in an earlier poster, was replaced with the modernity of the beach and the 'adventures' that it promises to an international

public. This wider public is summoned by the mere act of placing an ad in a periodical like *The Economist*.

The growth of the tourism industry and associated hospitality training and services constituted an institutional discourse around tourism that circulated among its different subjects — authorities, students, and workers. Hospitality, as a flourishing industry and as a qualifying theme was already getting written into a Lebanese subjectivity constituted trough the discursive practices of state projects, entrepreneurs such as Gay-Para as well as an emerging class of professionally trained workers — from waiters and maître d'hôtel, to chefs who mastered "Lebanese cuisine". The Tourism Office was active in raising awareness domestically on the importance of this sector to the Lebanese economy. Aside from the specialized training, the Office also advocated the inclusion of tourism as part of the civic education course in primary and secondary curricula (al-Hassan 1973: 38). In his 1973 monograph on the history and future prospects of tourism in Lebanon, Hassan al-Hassan director of what was to become later the Ministry of Tourism, stresses the legacy of the Tourism Office in matching external publicity with internal public awareness (ibid). For al-Hassan a successful tourism can be reached not only by relying on tourists incoming from abroad but also on how they get treated and welcomed by the host population. In a modernizing mind frame, he proposes the constitution of what he refers to as a 'tourism people': Lebanese citizens mobilized in their everyday to be welcoming and hospitable towards visitors and therefore fulfilling their duty in partaking in the progress of tourism and the development of their national economy (al-Hassan 1973: 37). His strategies point to the articulation of tourism with a vision of nation-building, not only at the level of political economy but in the cultural sense of an imagined national community (Anderson 2006), 'a people', mobilized for tourism. The tourism discourse as such is made to intersect with that of the imagined nation through various relations of equivalence in concepts of hospitality including gastronomy, modernity, progress and good citizenship. I will come back to discuss this intersection in greater detail later in this chapter. It is important,

however, to point out here the complexity in which a tourism discourse circulates and forms its subjects, not only among the immediate local actors and experts in the hospitality industry, or the public of tourists to whom promotional campaigns are generally addressed, but also within the political space of the nation and its 'people'. The local press as a matter of fact was an important media outlet for the circulation of a discourse on tourism. It is evident in the regular columns accorded to hospitality entrepreneurs such as Gay-Para and also in the special attention given to the subject of tourism by the mainstream press during the 1960s in dedicated weekly supplements. Evidently, judging by the mere number of ads in such special supplements, the attention paid off. Nevertheless, the rhetoric reflects a widely shared enthusiasm for Lebanon's touristic promise. Some journalists engaged their readers with pressing public demands and advocated for their resolution. Other articles acted as public mouthpiece of the state tourism officials, giving them voice to address the Lebanese public with their vision for touristic growth, plans and statistics. Al-Hassan in this context had his share of words reminding Lebanese citizens that 'Lebanon is the country of hospitality and generosity, the Lebanese are known to welcome guests with a heartfelt smile' (*al-Anwar* 1971: 7).

While the Office of Tourism played a foundational role in instituting Lebanon's post-independence tourism economy along globally defined modern parameters, it was, however, the National Council of Tourism in Lebanon (NCTL), a governmental organization born out of administrative restructuring in the early 1960s, which strove to locate Lebanon on the global map of tourism on the Mediterranean, as I discuss below.

Mobilizing Graphic Design: Consumer Cosmopolitanism and Fashionability

The NCTL was founded in 1962 with the aim of developing and modernising the tourism sector in Lebanon with the following stated objectives: to establish new tourism facilities and activities including tourism targeted at youth markets; to promote tourism and to research and study the tourism market (al-

Hassan 1973: 47). A significant budget was allocated to the promotion of tourism abroad, which was performed through offices opened by the NCTL in major tourist markets mostly in European cities, in addition to one in New York and another in Cairo. Al-Hassan reproaches the NCTL for having largely neglected the Arab market (al-Hassan 1973: 52). His criticism can be corroborated by the abundance of promotional communication in foreign languages (Italian, German, English, and French) and the complete dearth of Arabic. Breaking with its predecessor's Arabic slogan 'Lebanon: the summer resort of Arab countries', the NCTL rearticulated Lebanon's tourism image and discourse for a largely European and north American public.

The offices abroad operated like public relations and marketing departments — publishing articles about Lebanon in leading magazines, providing advertising material, participating in international tourism congresses and fairs, in addition to liaising with Lebanese consulates on tourism matters. Moreover, directors of offices abroad provided insights on international markets of tourism, potential tourists' interests and tastes, as well as general trends in publicity and facilities offered to tourists by competing countries. These insights informed marketing decisions and communication strategies taken at home by the NCTL board (Salem 1984).

Initially the NCTL outsourced the creation and production of most of its important publicity material. The Council commissioned professional photographers, including renowned international ones such as the travel photographer Fulvio Roiter, to document what it outlined as the main attractions of Lebanon. Roiter's photographs were first published in a 1967 book, *Liban: lumiere des siècles* (Lebanon: the Light of Centuries) complemented by the text of Max-Pol Fouchet — another acclaimed travel writer — and produced in Switzerland. The photographs were also used in a poster series for Lebanon, which was printed by Draeger in Paris, yet another famed European establishment.

In the late 1960s, however, the NCTL set up an in-house graphic design department to handle all its promotional publications. The Council chose Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui to spearhead this new venture. Sehnaoui had just

returned from the United States, where she had earned a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Arts from the University of Arizona. She was the first academically trained graphic designer to set up a practice in Lebanon. Throughout her 4-year tenure at the NCTL from 1969 to 1972, Sehnaoui furnished the youthful image and modern aesthetic that Gay-Para advocated and that the Council sought to achieve in positioning Lebanon on the international circuit of tourism on the Mediterranean. Like anyone trained in the United States or Europe at the time, she knew the aesthetic guidelines of graphic modernism.

The advocates of the 'Swiss School', otherwise known as 'International Modernism', in the 1960s set out clear guidelines of what qualified as 'modern' and 'universal' graphic design (McCoy 1994). Sehnaoui used an underlying modular grid to lay out graphical elements, especially in text-heavy multi-page publications, set her texts in modern sans-serif 'neutral' typefaces like Helvetica and its derivatives, resorted to graphic shapes based on basic geometry, and finally ensured an abundance of white space in the composition to assert the desired minimalist modern aesthetic [Figs 7–9]. Sehnaoui also began to create a graphic identity for the NCTL — another modernist design manoeuvre born out of the keen spirit of systemization particularly favoured by large corporations of the time. She designed a logo — still in use today with minor alteration — revising an older calligraphic expression of the word Lebanon in Arabic previously used by the Council. And, she created a set of graphical elements that were systematically applied across a wide range of printed matter, which the NCTL employed in its interface with the public [Figs 10–18].

Nonetheless, Sehnaoui's initial training in Fine Art, drawing and painting,[4] distinguished her work from the rational austerity of the 'Swiss

[4] During her residency in Alexandria, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui attended the Sylvio Bicchi Academy from 1957 to 1960 and trained in tempera technique in the studio of an Italian Painter, based in Alexandria, named Sebasti. In 1962 she joined the Fine Arts program at the American University of Beirut for two years before moving to complete her studies in Communication Arts at the University of Arizona, Tuscon in 1964.

School' and its standardizing effect (cf. Good and Good 2001). While modernists favoured the 'objectivity' of modern photography over hand-drawn illustration (Moholy Nagy 1999), Sehnaoui relied heavily on her own drawing skills using a variety of techniques to interpret and express her subject matter. Her more illustrative approach personalizes and humanizes the modernist machine aesthetic [Figs 18–23]. Moreover, Sehanoui's work for the Council can also be qualified as up-to-the-minute in terms of fashion. Her flashy colours, graphic motifs and some of her display typography are reminiscent of 1960s youth pop culture, namely the incorporation of psychedelic graphics into mainstream trends. The NCTL stationery she conceived in flashy fuchsia pink and orange catches the eyes like a huge psychedelic lollipop, and so do a number of her tourism posters and brochure covers [Figs 16–23]. In that sense, her graphic design affinities are more akin to her New York contemporaries, the Push Pin studio and Milton Glaser who, inspired by the graphic upsurge of a youthful counter culture, began to challenge the Swiss legacy in mainstream graphic design practice in the United States (Aynsley 2001: 152–55).

Generally, Sehnaoui's design approach endows her tourism prints with an aesthetic that expresses a particularly modern, youthful and fashionable Lebanon; when I asked about her vibrant colour palette, she responded: 'these were the Mary Quant years' (Sehnaoui 2013). Thus, the British icon of 1960s fashion is recalled in Sehnaoui's discussion of her own graphic work. The intersection of style culture across design disciplines is particular to the late 1960s period (Jobling and Crowley 1996: 214) but also telling of a context in Beirut in which the 'Mary Quant years' resonated. This brings us back to *The Economist* ad in the way that it foregrounds a certain style of fashion photography, particularly how it stages two women striking active glamorous poses.

Historian Samir Kassir writes of Beirut in the 1960s as the Arab capital for the assimilation of the latest European fashion, where young girls paraded in mini-skirts on the busy commercial streets of Beirut and in the universe of imported and local magazines that adorned the city's many bookshops (2003: 445–55). Here, the popular description of Beirut as the 'Paris of the East'

seems to find some degree of materiality, at least in terms of fashion. This is a discourse of consumer cosmopolitanism and fashionability that Sehnaoui and the NCTL seem to ascribe to and were keen to project. Beirut, the consumer paradise of the latest fashion, is reflected in a series of photographs commissioned by the NCTL and is a recurring theme in much of its promotional brochures, which reserve a special place for the capital city [Figs 24–26]. These photographs, mostly shot in and around the modern commercial shopping strip of Hamra, show elegant women admiring the window displays, or trying on clothes in one of its hip boutiques. The texts in the tourism brochures generally anchor and expand on the rhetoric of the images:

> Beirut, cultural and financial hub of the Middle East, is today a busy modern mercantile and shopping centre. […] It is difficult to describe the variety of merchandise and shops in Beirut with the galaxy of articles for sale: perfumes from Paris, cameras and radios from Japan, wines from France, Germany, Australia and South Africa, whiskey from Scotland and America, gramophone records, pens, watches, shirts, jewellery, etc. - the list is almost endless. Small shops are still the general rule, but large department stores and modern, well-stocked supermarkets are coming into vogue. Beirut is also a fashion centre and has a number of excellent couturiers. The boutique, too, has come to Beirut, and the Hamra is lined with these centres of French, British and American fashion (C.N.T.L. 1972: 11).

This visual spectacle of modernity, associated with a cosmopolitan world of fashion and consumption, is all too familiar to a local élite grown accustomed by the late 1960s to special fashion sections and associated advertisements in the local press, particularly the francophone ones. *La Revue du Liban,* for instance, introduced fashion sections under rubrics such as 'beauté à la Parisienne'; 'c'est la mode à Paris'; 'l'air de Paris', all presenting a globally pervasive type of highbrow fashion photography. In 1969, the same year in which the *Economist* ad was published, Beirut hosted two grand fashion shows

by the French haute couture labels Yves St Laurent and Christian Dior. The latter spectacles were featured as major news events by *La Revue du Liban,* which chose to stress the glamour by displaying large-scale photographs of the parading models on its front cover [Fig. 27]. The experience of 'Beirut as the Paris of the East' through the realm of fashion that the city offers as spectacle and commodity is literally captured in an article dating back to a decade earlier in the same periodical. The article, also featuring on the cover page, reports on a fashion show that took place in the unusual setting of the Beirut Hippodrome, a 1920s horserace track and park[5]. The author favourably comments on the aesthetics embodied in this new spectacle by writing: 'Nous avons eu l'illusion d'être à Longchamp' (We had the impression of being in Longchamp) (E.S. 1959: 52). Citing none but the glamorous Parisian horse track frames élite leisure activities in Beirut within a discourse of cosmopolitan modernity and aesthetics of Parisian chic. However, as I discuss shortly in the following section, the Mediterranean setting of the 1969 *Economist* ad, while ascribing to and extending the discourse of a cosmopolitan fashionable Beirut, articulates the aesthetics of a frivolous beach culture, more akin to the French Riviera than to that of the capital of haute couture.

Global Tourism on the Mediterranean

The geographic turn from the mountain to the beach in Lebanon was concomitant with particular interest in the Mediterranean as a modern leisure site in emerging mass tourism. The seductive images of a languorous yet modern beach culture spread from St Tropez, Cannes and Nice to Capri. Nations on the margins of the French and Italian Riviera, such as Spain, Greece, and Turkey sought to carve out a space on their shores to welcome the flourishing Mediterranean tourism economy. Lebanon was no exception.

[5] One of the buildings in the park, initially constructed as a casino, eventually housed the French mandate authorities in Lebanon. In the 1960s, the Beirut Hippodrome was holding races twice a week, 52 weeks a year.

The Lebanese coast as the new site of leisure and tourism that Gay-Para advocated in the mid-1950s formed the quintessential discourse of 1960s NCTL promotions. On posters, in ads, and across the pages of illustrated brochures, the Mediterranean landscape is full of promise. Photographs in bright colours bespeak sun-soaked modern leisure, young and trim bodies practising all sorts of water sports, sunbathing by the pool of some beach club or on long sandy beaches. And again, this was not a spectacle staged for tourists but part of a discursive, visual and aesthetic shift towards the coast of Beirut as the new geography of domestic leisure. The francophone as well as the Arabic press of the 1960s, especially towards the close of the decade and into the start of the 1970s, is ripe with images similar in rhetoric to those found in the NCTL promotions. These can be viewed alongside articles on the rising beach culture or in special weekly supplements dedicated to the subject or to tourism more broadly.

Generally, an enthusiasm about this new developing trend can be read across the texts and images, articulating an underlying tourism discourse that embraced modernity as a sign of progress. Interestingly, the rhetoric boasting of the Lebanese mountains that was scripted on the pages of *al-Sayf fi Lubnan* in 1934 is now transposed to the qualities and advantages of the sea in terms of aquatic sports, therapeutic qualities of the seawater, benefits of the sun and the relaxation that the beach landscape provides. One article is particularly significant in representing that geographic shift in Lebanese public discourse of leisure at the time. The author, Edouard Zoghbi, poet and journalist, in an autobiographical manner, pays tribute to the sea; he recounts how as a mountain boy accustomed to swimming in the mountain's rivers gave it up once he swam in the sea in 1959 (Zoghbi 1972: 3). Zoghbi, just like Gay-Para, here declares the Lebanese mountain as a thing of the past and embraces the modernity of the coast as the new site of leisure.

Beachwear fashion takes on valence in the increasingly visual rhetoric of the local periodicals, as well as in articles reporting on the latest European trends of bikinis and beach accessories for women and recommending where to buy affordable swimwear for the whole family. The bikini-clad young women

of the *Economist* ad find their parallel on front covers and inside pages of most of the local press covering the summertime beach leisure [Figs 28–30]. Within an Arab context, this gendered visual display of the semi-nude female body on the beach, coupled with the local ascendency of the mini-skirt in the late 1960s represented, as Samir Kassir sharply remarks, one of the powerful tropes of everyday life through which Beirut's modernity was celebrated (Kassir 2003: 481–82). With the rise of beach culture in the 1960s, a whole world of associated commodities, normative discourse notwithstanding, emerges in local press ads come summertime. Aside from the season's swimwear, the prevailing aesthetic of the body offered as spectacle on the beach occupied the new discourse of advertisements. 'Les yeux seront fixés sur vous … *Silhouette* vous donnera le corps dont vous serez fier cet été' promises an ad, in French on the Arabic pages of the Lebanese press, for the first private fitness club to open in Beirut in 1966. And so do a panoply of tanning oils and easy to use 'no pain'[6] hair remover creams in competing to deliver the desired beach-worthy body aesthetics [Figs 31–34].

On the other hand, among the problems addressed in the local press was the cost of access to the beach, limited in majority to private beach clubs and hotel resorts. Although different authors concede to the relative democratization of the beach leisure practice since the 1960s among the middle class, they press, however, for the development of well-maintained public beaches freely accessible to all. While a handful of beach clubs existed since the 1930s[7], a survey in a 1971 weekly supplement to the *al-Anwar* newspaper numbered 70 such clubs and resorts across the Lebanese coast, of which 83% were located in and around Beirut (*al-Anwar* 1971). The number of hotels in Beirut, as listed in guides to Lebanon, was by the mid-1970s 10 times more

[6] The rhetoric of 'no pain' is a recurrent promotion strategy of the international brands of hair remover creams, meant to differentiate these from the traditional tedious and painful process of oriental waxing. Here modernity is expressed in the discourse of the new products' efficiency and considerate care to the female body, liberating it from the pain of tradition.

[7] These include the St. Georges Hotel (1932) and the Bain Français in the Ain Mreisseh district; St. Simon (1935) and St-Michel (1937) in Beirut's southern outskirts.

than what was listed in the mid-fifties.[8] This increase is symptomatic of government development plans and policies, advocated by the NCTL, prioritising the seaside. For instance, a decree in 1963 facilitated credit loans for the development of tourism projects, hotels and beach clubs, by the coast. The majority of hotels were modern architectural buildings, with many rooms, built by the seaside in the recently developed Western side of the capital city. With names such as Riviera and Beau Rivage, the new seaside hotels referenced the southern French coast keeping in line with the French naming practice of the oldest beach clubs in Lebanon dating back to the mandate period, such as St. Georges; St. Michel, St. Simon and Côte d'Azur. The prefix 'Saint' to beach clubs became so prevalent in Lebanon that public beaches were referred to as *St-baleish* — *baleish* meaning for free in Arabic.

Beirut, at once the Paris and the French Riviera of the East, takes precedence in Lebanon's tourism promotion as of the late 1960s and eclipses the Lebanese mountain as the site of summer time tourism and leisure. If anything, the rhetoric of the 1930s press ad, 'Before going to the mountain, make a short visit to Beirut', gets geographically reversed. Any Lebanese tourist site promoted is now listed with its distance from the coastal capital city. In visual form this was translated in a reversal of perspectival vision. From the mountain one overlooked the sea in the horizon, and this typical scenic landscape visually accompanied the earlier discourse of the mountain as a summer resort. Now, from the Mediterranean Sea one could see instead the modern city that is Beirut with the Lebanese mountain chain in the backdrop of the composition, selectively captured in much of the photographs of the city in tourism promotions. This reversed scopic regime of Lebanon's tourism discourse positions its subject in the cosmopolitan modernity of the Mediterranean capital city. The latter view, particularly taken from Beirut's new urban development on the Western seafront, happens also to be the location of the *Economist* ad. The big rock formation in the background of the

[8] This figure is based on a comparison between two guide books: *Lebanon Today* (1974) which lists around 63 three and four-star hotels in Beirut and the southern suburbs up to Khaldeh and the *Guide Bleu* (1955) which lists only 6 of the same star rating.

ad, the city's landmark sight on the seaside promenade known locally as *Raoushe* (from the French le Rocher; the rock), prominently features in the city's manifold visual representations [Fig. 35, see also 37; 8 and 10]. It imparts the prototypical Mediterranean landscape, which Mr. and Mrs. Robertson mistakenly took for the Fraglioni of Capri.

The history of tourism promotion in Mediterranean countries such as Greece and Spain indicates transformations in visuality and tropes corresponding to those experienced in Lebanon at the time (Emmanouil 2012; Pelta 2013). These studies also concur that the new touristic image is inscribed within modernizing frameworks, mostly state-led, seeking to challenge perceptions of Mediterranean societies as Europe's traditional 'Other'. In his comparative study of the development of mass tourism in Spain and Tunisia in the 1960s and '70s, Waleed Hazbun observes how the rising popularity of 'sea, sun and fun' eventually led to the standardization of a generic form of Mediterranean tourism defined by northern European tastes (2009: 208).

The Lebanese case is perhaps no different from those of Spain, Greece and Tunisia in the standardization incurred from efforts to modernize the tourism sector along a European model. Yet there seems to be more at stake in Lebanon's geo-touristic turn towards the Mediterranean, which is not only constrained by the global tourism economy. Unlike Spain and Greece, which form part of Europe, Tunisia and Lebanon's Westward looking Mediterranean tourism complicates their cultural and political belonging to the Arab East. In Tunisia, beach tourism was seen as part of President Bourguiba's Western-oriented modernization and critiqued as such by the more conservative and religious communities (Hazbun 2009: 213). In Lebanon, the case differs slightly, due to the country's multi-sectarian political structure, ruling Christian élite and ensuing complicated identity politics, vis-à-vis its ties to the Arab and Muslim East since its formation. As I will discuss in the following section, the shift from mountain to coast dispels more than a story of global modernity when examined in relation to a genealogy of discourses of Lebanese nationalism.

The Switzerland of the East

Lebanon, as a modern nation state was established in 1920 under French mandate. It is the result of Franco-British colonial partition of the conquered Ottoman territories, in the aftermath of the First World War. The new nation was annexed from Syria and conceived as an extension of the original Mount Lebanon district, where a Christian-Catholic Maronite community had enjoyed, owing to European pressure, a degree of autonomy under Ottoman rule during the late 19th century. Historians of modern Lebanon agree that, at the time of partitioning, a politicized Christian community — predominantly Maronites of Mount Lebanon — saw in Lebanon a sense of national identification, an extension of the initial mountain refuge into a viable modern homeland in the wider Muslim Arab East. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Muslims and a significant community of the Christian population (specially non-Maronites) were voicing objections to the separation incurred by the newly formed state and expressed Syrian or Arab nationalist identification (Salibi 1993: 169; Traboulsi 2007: 80–85).

As such, an ensuing Lebanese nationalist discourse, articulated primarily by an élite of Christian intellectuals, was premised on a tight correspondence between the modern Lebanese nation and its embryonic political geography — Mount Lebanon. The exemplary literary expression of this is Charles Corm's 1934 ode to the Lebanese mountains *La Montagne Inspirée*. Focusing on symbolically specific sites, Corm's discourse in this book constructs a relation of necessity between Lebanese culture, natural landscape, Christian faith and Phoenician ancestry (Kaufman 2004b). Corm was an influential Beirut-based francophone intellectual; he advocated a Christian Lebanon, politically and culturally oriented towards the West and backed by France (ibid). His views were shared by a like-minded network of Lebanese nationalists representing the intellectual, mercantile and political élite

of Beirut, united initially around his journal *La Revue Phénicienne* published in 1919.[9]

Hence, the 'Lebaneseness' of the mountain summer resort in the tourism advertisements discussed earlier in this chapter projects more than a touristic vista. Rather, here tourism meets politics. 'Lebanon, a summer resort for the Arab countries', as the title promised, was not outside political inscriptions of the imagined nation. As a matter of fact, as expressed in the pages of *La Revue Phénicienne*, Lebanon's early nationalists envisioned Mount Lebanon's touristic promise as integral to national formation (Kassir 2003: 364; Traboulsi 2007: 92–93). In his 1934 book *Pour faire du Liban la Suisse du Levant* (To Make of Lebanon The Switzerland of the Levant), Jacques Tabet — a member of Corm's close network of Lebanese nationalists — presented the central arguments for developing Lebanon on the model of the Swiss Alps. He elaborates on the touristic potential as part of a triad of political and economic conditions common between the two countries.

Like Switzerland, Lebanon — by way of its mountains — provides the climatic, aesthetic, therapeutic and leisurely escape in the Levant. The 'new Phoenicianists', as Corm, Tabet and other members of this network identified themselves, had been involved in developing tourism in Mount Lebanon through the Syro-Lebanese Touring Club, which they took part in founding in 1920 in close collaboration with the French mandate (cf. Khoury 2008). The post-independence General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing pursued in the early fifties Lebanon's Swiss-modelled touristic promise yet rearticulated it along the political conjuncture of the post-1943 National Pact moment as 'a summer resort for the Arab countries'.[10] In 1944 Lebanon joined the Arab League of Nations as a founding member state. Tabet's tourism treatise propelled a wave of related political and economic policies, which would popularize the discourse of similarity through the statement 'Lebanon,

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[9] Corm published only 4 issues of this journal.

[10] The 1943 National Pact engineered in the wake of Lebanon's independence, brought Christian Maronite leaders to acknowledge the 'Arab face' of Lebanon in exchange of the recognition of Lebanon by Muslim Sunni leaders as an independent nation (Khazen 1991).

the Switzerland of the East' (Traboulsi 2007: 92). Appropriating the image of Switzerland in conceiving Lebanon's national identity was not therefore outside a political desire to evoke Lebanon's particularism in the Arab East in which the mountain geography, nature and landscape played an important role. However, the same desire and discourse, which also linked Lebanon to ancient Phoenicia, as I demonstrate below, mobilized an altogether different geography and *topos*: that of the Mediterranean.

The Cradle of Civilization

Similar to nation-building processes elsewhere in the world, modern nationalist discourses incorporate genealogical narratives of ancestry that justify the existence of the newly formed state. This is what Benedict Anderson describes as one of the three paradoxes of nationalism: 'The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists' (2006: 5). In the case of Lebanon, it was the resuscitation of glorious Phoenicia that played a foundational role in the articulation of a Lebanese nationalist discourse, which justified the expanded territory of the new nation and aimed to distinguish the Lebanese from its Arab context. In his study of the formation of a Lebanese identity in 1920s Lebanon, Kaufman traces the phenomenon of what he and other historians have referred to as the 'Phoenician myth of origin' (2014). He observes how Lebanese intellectuals, informed by a 19th century French orientalist interest in ancient Phoenicia as an extension of Western land on the Mediterranean, reclaimed Lebanon's Phoenician ancestry. In doing so, Kaufman demonstrates, nationalists constructed a Lebanese genealogy linked to the West and that severed ties to the Arabs. The foundational text of Youssef al-Saouda, one of the key intellectuals to which Kaufman refers, is important to cite in the context of my discussion. Al-Saouda writes in his 1919 book *Fi Sabil Lubnan* (For the sake of Lebanon):

> Every nation has a strong desire to return to its roots by drawing from the well of its past to its present the glory of its pedigree. Italy

> is proud to be the heir of mighty Rome with its victories, its glory and its banner. The Greeks glorify in their lineage to the important dynasty of personalities of the Iliad with its poets and philosophers. The civilized world thanks Italy and Greece and respects their descendants and the greatness of their forefathers. […] So is Lebanon proud to remember and remind us that it is the cradle of civilization in the world. It was born at the slopes of its mountain and ripened on its shores, and from there, the Phoenicians carried it to the four corners of the earth. The same as Europe has to be committed to Italy and Greece it also has to be committed to a land that is the teacher of Rome and the mother of Greece. (As translated and cited in Kaufman 2014: 61–62)

Al-Saouda reminds us here that the Phoenicians were the forefathers of Western culture and civilization and its disseminators in the Mediterranean basin. In making his case for Phoenician ancestry and Western genealogy, al-Saouda offers an allegory of Lebanon as 'the cradle of civilization'. His discourse summons a Lebanese subjectivity excavated by way of the country's Mediterranean geography and history as an addition to that of Mount Lebanon, which is of particular relevance to a discussion about the intersection between a discourse of nation building and that of tourism, especially in terms of imagined geography.

Lebanon as 'the cradle of civilization' is a recurrent trope across all the promotional prints issued by the NCTL in the 1960s. Al-Saouda's words are echoed almost verbatim in the introductory texts of Lebanon's tourism brochures and guides. One of them, for instance, opens with the following text in French:

> Lebanon, with its 200 Km of coast, stretches along one side of the Mediterranean shore and has always been a site where East meets West […] The Phoenicians, considered the ancestors of the Lebanese, lived on the coast […] At the height of their civilization

> their alphabet spread across the Mediterranean basin (C.N.T.L. n.d. : 1).

The back page of the same brochure, and that of several similar ones [Fig. 38], features a cartographic map of Lebanon with a North-South locator that situates the country in an eastern Mediterranean geography. The latter is graphically rendered like some generic ancient mythological map of the world. The reference to a Phoenician-Mediterranean heritage is hard to miss and is capitalized on as a touristic attraction. The 'cradle of civilization in the world' is visually materialized through highlighting Roman and Phoenician archaeological sites at the expense of the relatively more recent Islamic or Arab cultural heritage of the country's major cities. The centrality of the Roman ruins of Ba'alback in touristic imagery of Lebanon constitutes a particular case in point. In his study of popular culture and nationalism in Lebanon, Christopher Stone examines how the Ba'alback International Festival, established in the mid-1950s, transformed the ancient Roman ruins into a symbolic representation that stands for modern Lebanon.

Stone draws on Partha Chatterjee's theory of the 'classicization of tradition' in post-colonial nation-building (1993) to demonstrate how the festival founders, in close correlation with the Lebanese state and associated nationalist intellectuals, claimed cultural connection to the ancient site (Stone 2008). With highbrow international performances by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1959), the Royal Ballet (1961 and 1964), the Opera de Paris (1962), and Miles Davis (1971), among others, staged in the majestic ruins of Baʿalbak, the Christian national élite was keen to project, in Stone's words, 'a westward looking nation that had reclaimed its original Phoenician role as a cultivator of culture and civilization' (Stone 2008: 32).

Baʿalbak indeed gets the lion's share in touristic promotions, particularly since the foundation of the NCTL in 1962. Unlike preceding campaigns featuring inanimate majestic ruins, as was the case in French colonial travel posters, in the Council's posters the Baʿalbak site is always actualized and animated by the festival. I would add to Stone's argument that this particular imaging of modern Lebanon, in and through the Baʿalbak site,

was inscribed within a larger discursive formation taking shape across all the tourism promotions by the NCTL in the 1960s and through the early 1970s. Lebanon as 'the cradle of civilization' was indeed expressed in the mid fifties through the modern re-appropriation of the Baʿalbak site. My point, however, is that it got similarly and more widely articulated in the touristic turn towards the coast and particularly to the capital city Beirut as of the 1960s. After all, the Mediterranean basin was Phoenician and Roman territory par excellence.

The difference in touristic temporality between Baʿalbak and Beirut brings us back to Gay-Para, who in the mid fifties had pleaded for a move to the coastal city as a space for cosmopolitan leisure practices. Interestingly towards the end of his article Gay-Para sums up his arguments in a symbolic premonition: 'After Baʿalbak, Beirut should be the next Geneva of the East'. Gay-Para here is referring to the festival's role within the Swiss paradigm of Lebanon as a mountain summer resort. His words endorse Stone's argument of Baʿalbak constituting a symbolic representation of a modern cosmopolitan Lebanon. However, in Gay-Para's discourse Baʿalbak is already a thing of the past. Beirut, on the other hand, is the future.

With this I turn, by way of conclusion, to Michel Chiha, another member of the 'New Phoencianists', astute banker and key francophone nationalist intellectual. His linkage between the ancient Mediterranean Phoenician world and a purported modern 'Lebanese universalism', I argue, informs Lebanon's tourism promotion in the 1960s and is reinforced by the latter's discourse.

Mediterranean Universalism

Geographic determinism provides the cultural and economic argument for Michel Chiha's modern Lebanon (Trabulsi, 1999: chapter 2). He was influential in defining a liberal economic model for Lebanon that is organized, like that of old Phoenicia, around free trade and exchange across the Mediterranean basin. Chiha retains, in a post-independence framework, al-Saouda's discourse of unity between mountain and sea in the imagined geography of the nation (Traboulsi 1999: 21). However, he diverges from al-

Saouda and from his 'New Phoenicianist' colleagues who identify Lebanon, by way of its ancestral mountain, as a Christian refuge and homeland. His 'Phoenicianism', Fawwaz Traboulsi asserts, foregrounds a distinctly cosmopolitan cultural discourse of multi-sectarian coexistence in the Mediterranean narrative maintained by the economic interest of a 'people of merchants' (ibid: 45–46). In his seminal 1951 public lecture 'Lebanon in the World', Chiha transposes al-Saouda's foundational concept of Lebanon as the 'cradle of civilization in the world' from its historical framework to a contemporary understanding of 'Lebanese universalism':

> Our mission in the historical world meets up with our mission in the geographical setting […] Our Calling for Universalism begins with the Mediterranean, when the Mediterranean was the world. (Chiha 1994: 136)

It is through the words of Chiha that the map of the Mediterranean on the back of the tourism brochures reveals its subtext. In its geographic finitude and reference to old style aesthetics the map graphically represents a return in time to the Mediterranean as 'the world'. Affixed on the back of a modern promotional pamphlet, it acts as a seal of authenticity that claims historical anteriority to the promotion of Lebanon as a contemporary object. It implies visually '… since antiquity'. Like Baʿalbak, the Mediterranean here is culturally reclaimed within Lebanon's national discourse and actualized as a modern site of cosmopolitan leisure.

Now we can see that the Mediterranean beach site in *The Economist* ad tells us more than a tale of global modernity. In this context, it is worth mentioning the response of the NCTL to Mr. and Mrs. Robertson's allegations in the *New Statesman*. Signed by Michel Boustros, the director of touristic promotions, the letter asserts that the photo is not set in Capri, rather the rock is a famous Lebanese landmark seen by anyone who has visited Beirut. Not only that, but Boustros hints also at the universality of the landmark's link to humanity — especially in the Western classical philosophical tradition — by attaching the site to the myth of Prometheus; 'it is said that this rock was the

one on which the ancients believed that Prometheus was tied by Zeus and left at the mercy of vultures' (Boustros 1970).

Conclusion

Lebanon's touristic turn from the tranquillity of the mountain landscape to a globally tuned-in seascape is not simply the effect of the economic standardization of the global tourism industry on the Mediterranean. As I have shown, the two touristic scopic regimes (mountain and sea) are also politically entangled with two distinct, yet linked, discursive moments in Lebanon's national formation. Once viewed through this lens, the reversal in perspectival vision reads from 'Lebanon, the Switzerland of the Levant' to 'Lebanon's Mediterranean Universalism'. Both statements prescribe a European oriented Lebanese subjectivity. However, the latter dispels a modern cosmopolitan subjectivity centred on the Mediterranean capital city Beirut rather than the parochial tranquillity of Mount Lebanon. The shift in scopic regimes thus indicates a dislocation in the discourse that constituted Lebanon as the site of modern leisure and tourism.

With the onslaught of the civil war in Lebanon, Albert Hourani distinguished between two antagonistic ideological frameworks that have divided political subjectivities in Lebanon. The first is the ideology of the mountain, historically based on Mount Lebanon's parochial Christian Maronite nationalism. The second is the ideology of the city: a cosmopolitan mind frame, particularly evident in Chiha's Mediterranean civilization, that has guided the political development of Lebanon from 1920 onwards, from the time Beirut was incorporated in the new nation-state (Hourani 1976).

The study of Lebanon's tourism discourse that I have undertaken here reveals how 'Beirut: the Paris of the East' historically emerged and was manifest in the rhetoric and design of tourism publicity. Moreover, my analysis relates how 'Beirut: the Paris of the East' displaced 'Lebanon as the Switzerland of the East'. The latter idiom may have remained in currency but it no longer referred to the initial touristic promise attached to the mountain landscape, at least since the 1960s. The Swiss connection indexed primarily

Lebanon's infamous banking secrecy developed in 1956. 'Lebanon: the Switzerland of the East' now referred to the economic set-up that constituted the country as the safe deposit for the Arab riches, particularly private wealth escaping nationalizations in Egypt, Syria and Iraq and catering for the one arising from the new Gulf oil economy (Gates 1998, Traboulsi 2001). In the context of a mounting Arab-Israeli violent conflict in the late 1960s, Switzerland was also prescribed by the Christian-Maronite political élite as the successful model of political neutrality in the region for Lebanon to adhere by. The discourse of neutrality was articulated in opposition to a rising Arab nationalist and leftist support to Palestinian guerrilla operations from Lebanon. With the advent of the civil war in 1975, Switzerland conjured the desire for sectarian partition along independent confederations by the same political groups that called for political neutrality.

The temporality of Beirut's emergence as a Mediterranean site of tourism and leisure is different than the time of the city's inscription into the nation-state in 1920. Unlike the nationalism initially attached to Mount Lebanon, the Phoenician myth of origin that justified the inclusion of Beirut in Lebanon's newly formed political geography took touristic valence in the 1960s. The delay could be regarded as the required lapse for the political to sediment into social practices. But equally at play here, is the compelling force of a circuit of visuality in the 1960s and 1970s tied to a developing global tourism economy on the Mediterranean. As I have analysed, 'Beirut: the Paris of the East', unlike its Swiss counterpart, was not the treatise of some nationalist intellectual. In fact it is hard to attribute a precise origin and author to this statement. 'Beirut: the Paris of the East' aesthetically emerged in and through the material folds of the visual culture of tourism, discursively structured in a field of relations overdetermined by new state tourism projects, the national economy of a tourism industry, as well as the rise of a global tourism on the Mediterranean coast.

Furthermore, the case of Lebanon contributes to our understanding of how transnational circuits of visuality such as the ones associated with the Mediterranean as a site of modern leisure are appropriated at the local scale

and rearticulated discursively along a hegemonic nodal point of nationhood and its cultural materialisation. The relations articulated between elements of a tourism discourse and that of a national one I began to map earlier in this chapter can be picked up again here and extended. To the concepts of hospitality, progress and modernity, associated leisure practices, commodity spectacles, and aesthetic affinities we can add a European oriented cosmopolitanism substantiated by the Lebanese nationalist discourse of Phoenician ancestry and belonging to a Mediterranean cultural geography. However, as Laclau and Mouffe have argued, the articulatory moment is not sufficient for the politics of hegemony to be at work. It also requires a field of operation 'criss-crossed by antagonisms' (2001 [1985]: 136). In the 1960s, particularly in the aftermath of the short-lived 1958 insurrection and in the wake of the civil war in 1975, the Lebanese political space was particularly rife with antagonistic relations. As I shall discuss in the following chapters of my thesis, while Beirut lived its presumed Parisian 'golden age', it was witnessing political mobilizations, which articulated marginalized class and sectarian identities with pan-Arabist decolonization politics and Third Worldist revolutionary ones.

We can begin to see how a hegemonic nodal point gets constructed through a linkage between: tourism and hospitality services, conceptions of modernity, cosmopolitan cultural sensibilities, a liberal capitalist economy and associated patterns of consumption, and a Mediterranean geography of belonging tied to Europe through history and civilizational heritage. The logic of equivalence between such disconnected discursive forms, as Laclau and Mouffe assert, gives material credence to antagonism, the hegemony of which is discursively at work in the aesthetics and visuality of the *Economist ad* and the related archive of images, texts, legislations and practices discussed in this chapter.

It is perhaps a matter of odd coincidence (or perhaps not) that the tourism ad was published exactly a year on from an event in Lebanon that marked the pages of *The Economist* in stark contrast. On 28 December 1968, Israel

bombed Beirut's International Airport destroying around 13 passenger planes. The operation was claimed to be in retaliation to the hijacking of the El Al flight in the same year by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The next chapters will be concerned with unpacking the political relations between these events.

Chapter 3

Aesthetic Autonomy at the Burning Edge: Arabic Literary Journals in the Shadow of Cold War Modernism

> 'The story of Beirut is the story of books, it is the secret of its flavour and the cause of its death' (Nadi al-thakafi 1979b).

This statement, written by renowned Lebanese journalist, was inscribed on a page in the visitors' book of the Arabic Book Fair. It dates back to 1979, 35-year anniversary celebrations of the Fair, four years into the Lebanese civil war. Surely, the author is alluding to the war-torn city. Yet this collapsing together of narratives between a city and that of books warrants some critical unravelling. How can books, supposedly tools of knowledge and pleasure — intellectual and sensuous — be conceived to have had such a detrimental effect on a city, causing its death?

Through a focus on Arabic literary journals of the 1960s, this chapter aims to understand the visuality and materiality of printed publications and their entanglement with aesthetic and political fields of relations. It analyses the historical conditions in which Beirut developed as 'the capital of culture and publishing' in the spatial and temporal conjuncture of the decolonizing Arab world and its competing quests for cultural modernity.

In the short span of a year, between 1967 and 1968, three avant-garde journals and a war marked the Arabic artistic and intellectual scene: *Hiwar*

(Dialogue) was charged with treason and condemned to oblivion; *Shi'r* (Poetry), after a 3-year pause, had a short-lived resurgence that lasted only three years; *Mawaqif* (Positions) set out on a successful journey for nearly three decades. The humiliating military defeat of Arab states by Israel in the 1967 six-day war[1] resulted in further loss of Arab land and severe discursive and affective damage to the post-independence Arab nationalist state project. The relation between the 1967 war and the fate of these three avant-garde journals needs to be unpacked.

The understanding of art practice in its relation to politics underlines the connection of these journals to the historical event of the war and defines the differences between their aesthetic projects. While all three were radically modernist and vehement advocates of artistic autonomy, *Mawaqif*, which launched a year after the war accumulated the experience of its predecessors, while also learning from their failures. It re-articulated art with politics along a critical framework of creative practice, which forged an interstitial space between two putatively antagonistic currents — autonomous and political art — that had structured the post-colonial Arab literary field up until the 1967 defeat. Neither a discourse of politically committed art in the service of post-independence Arab nation building, nor an art practice detached from politics, was tenable in the post-1967 conjuncture. The shock of the defeat provoked a disillusionment that laid bare the failed governance of post-independence Arab states. It produced a political and intellectual turning point in 'the radicalization of critique' turned inward toward hitherto dominant anti-colonial nationalist discourses (Kassab 2010: 2 and chapter 2). *Mawaqif* developed in this context as a radical platform for critical self-reflection in intellectual, literary and artistic spheres and was aligned with a revolutionary new Arab Left emerging in the wake of the defeat. Moreover, *Mawaqif*'s editorial board included contemporary Arab visual artists and regularly featured their work among many others on its pages. In doing so, it strove to connect otherwise

[1] Post-independence Arab states did not just fail to keep to their promise of reclaiming the Palestine annexed by Israel in 1948, further Palestinian and Arab land (in Egypt, Syria and Jordan) was lost in this war in just a few days.

separate aesthetic fields in the modern Arab world: the visual and the literary. It was, however, not the first among the avant-garde Arabic journals to do so. This aesthetic model had been instated in none but the controversial *Hiwar* in the early 1960s.

Hiwar was connected to a global network of cultural journals intellectually and financially administered by the International Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF). The latter's exposure in late 1966 as a covert CIA operation precipitated a crisis that compromised the various journals and their contributors worldwide. The crisis, in the case of *Hiwar*, conjugated a regional politically tense decolonisation moment with a Manichean global Cold War order. The CCF, launched in 1950, was indeed one of the most important and long-standing projects of the US government, in and through which it fought communism, strove for cultural hegemony and ascended to power globally following World War Two (Saunders 2013 [1999], Scott-Smith (2002), Rubin 2012). The project involved, mostly unknowingly, a host of prestigious intellectuals, artists and cultural producers who opposed Communism, and, perversely, also recruited Leftist who opposed the Soviet Union's autocratic regime. The exposure left its many participants, across the world, in total disarray at the news of having been duped as "agents" in a cultural war.

The scandal momentarily stirred the literary field as well as the press in the Arab world before the journal was thrown into oblivion. A few months later another more disastrous scandal shook the Arab world: the 1967 defeat. For a long time since, *Hiwar* was abandoned to the cracks of history. Only recently, Elizabeth Holt has unearthed the journal's contentious relation with the CCF, shedding light on the clamour it caused among the literary circles of Beirut and Cairo (Holt 2013a). Through the critical lens of cultural materialism, Holt's analysis makes a compelling case for the interdependency of culture and politics. She observes that 'as the scandal unfolded on a global scale Arabic literature found itself caught in a paradox shaped by the inevitable materiality and politics of literary production in the Cold War' (84). *Hiwar*'s paradox, Holt argues, is two-fold: material and political. The first oscillates between the promise of autonomy, staged through the global institutional remit of 'cultural

freedom' hailed by the Congress and the generous material compensation offered by the same institution. The second complicates the materiality of this monetary compensation with the politics of the Cold War on the eve of the 1967 Arab defeat.

This chapter builds from Holt's characterization of *Hiwar*'s political paradox — promising aesthetic autonomy while serving (unknowingly) on the US side of the global cultural Cold War. It sheds light on the important visual dimension of the journal and the corresponding aesthetic discourse it foregrounded, which Holt leaves unattended. *Hiwar*, as I shall demonstrate here and in subsequent chapters, instituted a model of visuality in Arabic publications that forged an aesthetic interface between literature and the visual arts. Moreover, I argue that we need to understand *Hiwar* and its discourse of 'cultural freedom' not merely as 'Arabic outpost' of US cultural imperialism by way of the CCF (Holt 2013a). Rather, *Hiwar* needs to be analysed as a historically situated intervention in Arabic cultural periodicals based in Beirut. This context is complicated by the temporalities of two geopolitical scales of power relations: one regional, involving (Arab) processes of decolonization, and the other global, caught in a binary Cold War order. I argue that in order to appreciate the complications of the interface between the global and the local in this crisis, we need to understand the CCF, by way of *Hiwar,* as a hegemonic intervention in the discursive field of Arab politico-aesthetic relations. My understanding of hegemony here relies on the conceptualization of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001 [1986]) discussed in previous chapters. Particularly helpful is their revision of Gramsci's concept of the historic bloc: the articulation of elements within the historic bloc is what they consider to be a discursive formation; the antagonistic terrain in which it gets constituted is what they call a hegemonic formation (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 137). Through the optic of hegemonic articulation, I analyse *Hiwar*'s discourse of 'freedom' at the interface between local decolonisation quests for Arab modernity and the ascendency of liberalism in the global framework of the Cultural Cold War. I contend that *Hiwar's* controversy provoked a politico-aesthetic crisis that, in conjunction with the momentous 1967 defeat,

contributed to a reconstitution of antagonistic discourses concerning aesthetic autonomy in that same literary field, of which *Mawaqif* is one example.

Running through this treatment is an underlying set of questions concerned with a genealogy of discourses related to art practice, political commitment and aesthetic autonomy in the unfolding of a decolonising Arab quest for modernity. I read this genealogy by way of Adorno's theorization of art's double character, as stated in 'Art, Society and Aesthetics': 'Art's double character as both autonomous and *fait social* is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy' (Adorno 2013 [1970]: 7). In this text, Adorno views aesthetic relations as 'sedimentations' of social relations; the antagonism of the latter, however, appears as immanent problems of the former (7). This was an argument he laid in critique of the 'art for art's sake' principle (*l'art pour l'art*). Adorno was no proponent of political commitment in art either. But his understanding of artistic autonomy complicates the otherwise naïve conception of art practice devoid of politics, unconstrained by society: 'For absolute freedom in art, always limited to a particular, comes into contradiction with the perennial unfreedom of the whole' (1). In an earlier essay on 'Commitment' (1965), Adorno had criticised — on different grounds — both Jean Paul Sartre's call for a *litérature engagée* and Berthold Brecht's political theatre. In his arguments against both he affirmed the 'autonomous' artistic productions of modernism as a politically valid alternative (Adorno 2007: 147). To reiterate Frederic Jameson's riposte, Adorno's alternative is far from satisfactory (2007: 209). The modernism of avant-garde journals such as *Hiwar* and *Shiʿr* shows, not only that aesthetic autonomy is subverted by liberalism in the binary politics of the Cold War, but that radical aesthetic modernism, necessary as it is, is insufficient condition for revolutionary politics. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the aesthetic model of visuality advanced in these avant-garde journals was co-opted by nascent publishers in the commodity form of art books. I now move to outline the historical context, the politico-aesthetic field of relations in which *Hiwar* intervened.

The 1958 Civil War and Beirut's Politico-Aesthetic Divides

The struggle for decolonization of the Arab nations was coupled with the rise of pan-Arab nationalist movements that swept the region. These movements were particularly strong in the aftermath of the 1956 Suez Canal crisis — the failed tripartite Franco-British-Israeli attack on Egypt. More than the 1952 Egyptian revolution, Rashid Khalidi argues, the Suez crisis established Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir as *the* Arab leader and gave a decisive impetus to Arab nationalism as the leading ideology in the region (Khalidi 1993: 539). It was a decisive blow to the declining hegemony of Britain and France in the Middle East since WWII, and encouraged Iraqis, Algerians, Yemenis and others to claim their national autonomy and put an end to decades of colonial rule. After Suez, Khalidi adds, the question of Palestine shifted from a problem of dispossessed Palestinians to a transnational interstate Arab-Israeli conflict (545). These dvelopments ushered in an era of struggle in the Middle East between the emergent superpowers, the USA and the USSR, restructuring at the local level a new geopolitical order in the context of a global Cold War.

But the Suez war also challenged neo-colonial Arab regimes, which were tarred 'with the brush of complicity' — complicity not only with colonial powers but also, and more scathingly, with Israel (Khalidi 1993: 538). In Lebanon, the Suez war strengthened domestic opposition to Camille Chamoun's presidency (1952–58) and rocked the precarious status quo that had prevailed, at least since the post-independence 1943 National Pact. Christian Maronite domination was exasperated by the President's alliance with the US and Britain. The opposition linked disenfranchised Lebanese subjects — in large part Muslim communities who were economically excluded under Chamoun and politically marginalized by the sectarian constitutional structure of the nation-state — with the rising populist tide of Arab nationalism and its promise of socialist reform, Arab union and decolonization. The conflict intensified following this series of successive events: the Lebanese government's adoption of the Eisenhower Doctrine to "combat an impeding threat of Communism in the region"; the opposition lost the 1957 parliamentary elections, following blatant rigging including funding

and strategic support from the US to keep in parliament only those loyal to Chamoun and the Western political orientation of Lebanon (Attié 2004: 136–137); furthermore Chamoun was plotting for a second unconstitutional term. Opposition to Chamoun's regime blew up in a nation-wide insurrection in the summer of 1958. Earlier in that year, Baathist Syria had joined Egypt in a short-lived union, the United Arab Republic, led by ʿAbd al-Nasir. The formation of the UAR encouraged Arab nationalists in Lebanon and further fuelled their discontent about Lebanon's separatism from the Arab hinterland. The 1958 insurrection developed into a civil war, which articulated sectarian (Muslim against Christian) divisions along a nationalist (Arab versus Lebanese) axis of antagonism that was compounded by the geopolitics of the Cold War. The threatened regime called for UK and US military assistance to "safeguard Lebanon's independence" from a perceived Nasserite incursion. The UK and the US, who had planned military intervention only as a 'last resort' in a joint drafted contingency plan (Operation 'Blue Bat'[2]), only intervened when the Iraqi monarchy was toppled by an internal military coup on 14 July (Gendzier 1997). This was a severe blow to what was a British "stronghold" in the Middle East, and one of the largest oil-producing states in the Arab world. On 15 July, US marines landed on the shores of Beirut.[3] This was the first US military intervention in the Middle East. The ensuing postwar phase of American interventionist politics involved, among other matters, installing an 'acceptable presidential candidate' in Lebanon and securing the new regime with 'Development Loan Funds' that followed the withdrawal of troops in November of the same year (Gendzier 1997: Chapter 14). All this is of course very important historically to the new US role in Lebanon and the

[2] The operation Blue Bat 'was to involve air, naval, military, and amphibious forces "to assist the friendly government in the maintenance of order, to protect U.S.-U.K. nationals and interests, and in the event of the fall of the government, to reestablish the friendly government"' (Gendzier 1997: 286).

[3] The military intervention in Lebanon was coordinated with the UK, which dispatched its own armed forces to Jordan. US soldiers on Lebanese soil in 1958 amounted to 15,000 (see Gendzier 1997).

Middle East. But what needs to be added here is the covert cultural campaign, by way of the CCF and *Hiwar*, that followed the overt military and political intervention. And here, we need first to attend to the politico-aesthetic field of relations in which *Hiwar* intervened.

As adjacent post-colonial Arab states became increasingly authoritarian regimes (Picard 1993: 551) and the autonomy of intellectual and artistic fields was increasingly compromised (Mermier 2005: 19), Beirut remained the exception. In this conjuncture, the city developed as a space of Arab political refuge and intellectual encounter (Kassir 2003: 553–559, Mermier 2005: 57–67, Said 2012: 23). On a visit to Beirut in 1956 the acclaimed Egyptian novelist Taha Hussein announced that Beirut has 'dethroned Cairo as the cultural capital of the Arab world' (cited in Mermier 2005: 56). The displacement of Cairo may not have been on the level of quantity, writes cultural critic Khalida Said, but 'it surely was the case in terms of freedom, aesthetic criteria, and symbolic capital' (Said 2012: 23). By the end of the 1950s, Said notes, 'a poet had to pass by Beirut in order to get recognition and acclaim in the Arab world' (23). Beirut's post-independence cosmopolitanism anxiously hinged between two emerging roles: a nodal site in the geography of Arab cultural production and a bridge to Europe, as a Mediterranean site of leisure and tourism.

Beirut in the late-1950s and 1960s was developing as a 'literary and ideological laboratory' (Mermier 2005: 57) in the Arab world — a space of debate, aesthetic experimentation, and political confrontation between the various intellectual discourses that characterised Arab political thought and political identity formations. Baathist, Nasserite, Syrian Nationalist and Marxist intellectuals rubbed shoulders in cafés and quarrelled through the printed media — newspapers, magazines and books — of the city's manifold publishing institutions (Kassir 2003, Mermier 2005). New adventures in periodical publications shaped the political and aesthetic contours of an emerging literary field and corresponding visual culture. Antagonism about literary questions concerning, on one side, the autonomy of artistic practice and, on the other, the enlisting of the arts in decolonization struggles, constituted a major politico-aesthetic fault line. The politicization of culture in literary fields,

which seemed necessary to some at this historic juncture, was rejected and vehemently fought by others. This aesthetic and political divide is characterized in the discourses of two pioneering literary pan-Arab journals, *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*. I begin by discussing the emergence of these two leading journals by way of analysing the discursive formation of the politico-aesthetic divide that structured the Arabic publishing field and corresponding visual culture.

Al-Adab, launched in 1953 by the author Suheil Idriss, acted as a pan-Arab platform for a new form of literature, politically engaged with decolonization and liberation struggles in the region, from Egypt and Algiers to Palestine. In his first editorial, Idriss wrote:

> The present situation in the Arab world obliges every [nationalist] patriot (*watani*) to mobilize all his powers, in his particular field, to liberate the countries and raise their political, social and intellectual level. In order to be credible, literature ought not to isolate itself from the society in which it lives (translated in Klemm 2000: 53).

Idriss summoned a *littérature engagée*, as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre,[4] interpreted within Arab nationalist frameworks of anti-colonial struggle (Badawi 1992: 21–22; Klemm 2000: 53–55; Said 2012: 28). It was during his doctoral studies in Paris that Idriss encountered the works of Sartre and other French authors who supported the Algerian liberation struggle. In a public lecture he gave at the occasion of the launch of *al-Adab*, Idriss elaborated a manifesto for a politically committed Arabic literature:

> We call for the consolidation of Arabic literature and the elucidation of its directions, to adopt the mode of 'commitment' (*iltizam*) or 'engagement' or 'enlisting', call it what you please. A live literature that springs from society and flows back in it, becoming a live image of it; and an author who fuses his emotions

[4] The French term *engagement* derives from Jean-Paul Sartre's call for a politically committed literature in *Qu'est ce que la littérature* (1948).

> in the people's emotions and their needs, reaching to their problems (cited in Said 2013: 25).[5]

Al-Adab published a new generation of politically committed Arab writers, poets, critics and intellectuals from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan, while translating key texts by anti-colonial authors. It established a forum for an Arab literary vanguard, with diverging political inclinations ranging from Arab nationalists and socialists to Marxists (Klemm 2000: 54), which 'helped determine the course of modern Arabic literature' (Badawi 2006: 22). With *Al-Adab*, the discourse of *iltizam*, (commitment), gained public credence in the Arabic literary field of the 1950s and '60s (Klemm 2000: 54). Proponents of *iltizam,* however, diverged on the ideological framework of commitment and the autonomy of its aesthetic materialization. Marxists adopted a socialist realist model and expressed their divergence from *al-Adab*'s Arab nationalist framework in *al-Thaqafa al-Wataniya* (National Culture) — a short-lived Beirut-based cultural journal with Marxist inclinations prominent in the 1950s.[6] Disagreements within the *iltizam* literary movement developed no less about questions of freedom of the author/artist than with regard to the political party and the post-independence state. On that front, *Al-Adab* claimed to be independent[7] and Idriss had a clear position: 'It is clear that the author will not be committed (*multaziman*) if he is tied to the wheel of a political party that directs and governs his movement' (Idriss 1957, cited in Said 2012: 28). *Iltizam,* in Idriss's conception*,* thus grounded the commitment of literature with freedom, of both the writer and literary aesthetic form, as its necessary condition of possibility (Klemm 2000: 55).

The journal *Shiʿr,* launched in 1957, stood in opposition to *al-Adab*'s politico-aesthetic project. Its founders wanted poetry composed in the zeitgeist

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[5] Suheil Iddriss 'What's wrong with modern Arabic literature?', lecture given at *al-nadwa al-lubnaniya* (the Lebanese forum) on 30 March 1953 (cited in Said 2013: 26–28).

[6] *Al-thaqafa al-wataniya* lasted only till the end of the 1950s. When it stopped some of its authors published in *al-Adab* (Klemm 200: 56).

[7] *Al-Adab* was financially backed in its early days by the publishing house Dar al-Ilm li-l-Malayeen.

of the late-1950s yet unscathed by political ideology. *Shiʿr* was founded by Lebanese–Syrian poet, Yusuf al-Khal, who was joined by Ali Ahmad Said Esber, pen name Adonis — another Syrian-born pioneering figure of modern Arabic poetry. Through *Shiʿr*, they led an avant-garde movement in Arabic poetry from Beirut, providing a platform for experimentations in modern modes of poetic enunciation to authors across Arab countries (Said 2012: 105–06). Poets such as Nazir al-Azmeh (Syria), Muhammad al-Maghut (Syria), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (Palestine-Iraq), Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (Iraq), Fadwa Tukan (Palestine-Jordan) and Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Palestine-Jordan) contributed regularly to *Shiʿr*, while others, including Lebanese poets Ounsi al-Hajj and Shawqi Abu Shakra joined the editorial committee (Said 2012: 106–08).

Shiʿr foregrounded a poetic practice that would embody the new aesthetic sensibilities of a modernizing Arab society and articulate novel affective horizons. It developed as an important transnational platform, in and through which established and emerging poets would radicalize centuries of Arabic classical poetry, striving to liberate Arabic verse from the conservative hold of heritage and its aesthetic conventions. *Shiʿr* was thus committed to an avant-garde project of aesthetic modernism, premised on the autonomy of creative practice, valorising the emancipation of self and society from the grips of tradition. Nonetheless, *Shiʿr* was not concerned only with a formal renewal of poetry but also with reconceptualising the definition and role of poetic practice. Khalida Said summarizes *Shiʿr*'s project of liberating poetry 'as a liberation of humankind and humanist thought' (98). Furthermore, *Shiʿr*'s main protagonists understood poetic cultures as forming a universal heritage belonging to humanity as a whole, and thus prompted creative interactions across world cultures through the journal.[8] They regularly translated and introduced by way of lengthy studies the canons of modern and contemporary poetry from Europe, UK, North and South America,[9] in addition to selected

[8] Point six in the editorial of *Shiʿr*, no. 20, Autumn 1961 (as cited in Said 2012: 101).

[9] Translations include works from English by T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Auden, Blake; from French by Pierre Jean Jouve, G. Appolinaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Louis Aragon, Antonin

contemporary Turkish, Armenian and Iranian modern poetry. *Shiʿr* also published the poetry of leading Lebanese authors writing in French, such as Salah Steitieh and Georges Shehadeh, accompanying these texts with an Arabic translation (ibid: 115–16).

Shiʿr was vehemently criticised for swimming against the decolonisation tide politically and culturally. It was accused of being foreign to Arab culture, "an imitation of the West", and as presenting a rupture that had no continuity with the history of Arabic poetry. It was seen as a threat to the Arab cultural heritage. *Shiʿr*, which introduced a section of Arabic poetic heritage in the summer issue of 1960, responded to this accusation with a clear position: 'Heritage has no value if it did not live in us and with us. This can only take place through reconsideration and scrutiny in order for it to meet our tastes and respond to our current life' (cited in Said 2012: 119). Nevertheless, its modernising aesthetic project was framed as liberal and seriously attacked by proponents of a politically committed literature, Arab Nationalists and Marxists alike, particularly in *al-Adab*. Idriss went as far as publically indicting *Shiʿr* with the charge of treason, accusing its editors of collaborating with the US secret services (Idriss 2005, cited in Mermier 2005: 62–63). Underlying this political charge is an antagonism between two competing nationalist projects, Arab and Syrian nationalism, which violently collided in the summer of 1958. Armed partisans of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) in Lebanon joined the camp of loyalists to the Shamoun regime in suppressing the insurrection, which had rallied Arab Nationalist partisans among its key protagonists. The conflict sparked hostility towards the SSNP, which was suspected of being controlled by the CIA (Khalidi 1993: 543), its partisans were seen as traitors, scheming with the enemy against the fulfilment of a pan-Arab union. The political affiliation with the SSNP of both chief editors of *Shiʿr*, al-Khal and Adonis, had no little role in Idriss's virulent condemnation of the latter through *al-Adab*. Though the two journals had some writers in common, and contributors to *Shiʿr* were not necessarily partisans of the SSNP,

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Artaud, André Breton, Jaques Prévert; from German by Rainer Maria Rilke; from Spanish by F. Garcia Lorka and Pablo Neruda.

which would stand against its premise of artistic autonomy. The attack on *Shiʿr's* aesthetic project spread from Lebanon to Syria, Iraq and Egypt, where issues of the journal were repeatedly banned by state authorities. Eventually, a number of its regular contributors withdrew, most notably its cofounding editor Adonis. Under financial and political duress, the journal came to a temporary halt in 1964.

Literary aesthetics, as exemplified by *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*, acted as sites for the emergence and articulation of culture and politics in a decolonizing Arab context. The questions that preoccupied intellectuals and cultural producers alike, revolved around ontologies of 'Arab modernity' and its cultural materialization. A contentious history of European colonization and a discourse of modernity claimed as universal, yet founded on European particularism, complicated local decolonisation quests. Moreover, Cold War divisions interlocked with local political antagonism complicating further politico-aesthetic relations in Arab quests for aesthetic modernism. Antagonism in aesthetic relations embedded sedimentations of politically tense relations post-1958. The post-independence literary divide between, on the one hand, artistic autonomy and, on the other, a politically motivated *littérature engagée,* concerned the protagonists of an Arabic literary modernism. The quest for 'Arab' modernity mattered less to the Lebanese nationalist intellectuals. As discussed in the previous chapter, they had resolved the problem by claiming Phoenician ancestry, in contradistinction to an Arabo-Islamic one. Their discourse articulated a modern Lebanese subjectivity with a cosmopolitanism oriented towards Europe. Writing in French thus seemed normal to a large proportion of the Lebanese nationalist intellectuals, poets and novelists as well as to their Francophile readers. The discursive distinctions in the literary fields were multi-dimensional — linguistic, aesthetic and political. Aesthetic modernism was thus a contested site of struggle, involving the articulation of political relations with linguistic and aesthetic relations.

The Visual Culture of *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*

Much has been written about *Al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*'s contributions to Arabic literature and the discursive rift they embodied. But nothing is said about the design of these two leading journals. In what follows, I analyse the visual culture of *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr* with the aim of extending the analysis of literary discourses to their visual articulation in the materiality of print. Artist and critic Kamal Boullata contends that the divide in the literary field corresponds with aesthetic distinctions in the visual arts of Beirut:

> The [literary] currents had their counterparts in the visual arts: indeed, the intellectual ferment of Beirut's cultural environment brought writers and visual artists into close association, helping to elevate the visual arts to share the space traditionally dominated by the written and spoken word. The artists whose figurative language perpetuated a narrative pictorial art seemed to echo the metaphorical imagery popularised by the poetry introduced in *Al-Adab*. The poets associated with *Shiʿr*, meanwhile, valorised the more abstract and experimental artists and welcomed them into the discourse of contemporary Arab culture. (Boullata 2009: 126)

Boullata extends the chain of equivalence constituted on each side of the politico-aesthetic antagonism to include modalities of the visual. In his analysis, a populist figurative expression was linked to an Arab nationalist anti-colonial discourse hailed by *al-Adab*. While the more abstract formal expressions and experimentations characterised the works of the other camp, which adhered to a modernist framework of autonomous art practice closer to that of *Shiʿr*. Boullata is also referring here to the networks of collaborations and social relations that connected the poets of *Shiʿr* with contemporary visual artists at this time. The latter formed part of Beirut's 'vanguard cultural scene' in the 1950s and '60s (ibid: 173). They were men and women, poets, novelists, literary critics and artists, who met in, and weaved through, the city's new cultural centres and bourgeoning private art galleries. Indeed, the first among

these galleries, Gallery One, was established in 1963 by Helen Al-Khal, with her husband Yusuf al-Khal, the founder of *Shiʿr*.

Do we encounter in the visual culture of these literary journals the aesthetic distinctions Boullata has outlined? Does the materiality of printing, and mass production, challenge the neat separation between populist-figurative and abstract-experimental? What might an equivalent of *iltizam* be in graphic design? These questions will be pursued in part here and in chapter 5 where I discuss the politics of decolonization in the design of Arabic books. In what follows, I attend to these questions through a comparative analysis of *Al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*.

The first 12-month volume of *Al-Adab* (1953) reveals its modern graphic endeavour. The covers are designed using two colours alternating in each of the 12 issues [Fig. 1]. The name of the journal is hand-lettered, following a simplified geometry of orthogonal lines and set on one baseline. The complete absence of curvilinear shapes, swashes, and decorative motifs, which characterised the classical Arabic calligraphic script in all its styles, is an index of the modern aesthetics of the cover. Furthermore, the background colour stops just above the baseline of the name, cutting the shapes of the letters horizontally into two parts, creating along this cut a dynamic interplay of contrasting relations of colour, figure and ground between the letters and the paper. The space above this cut is filled with repeated parallel horizontal lines set at an equal distance reaching the top edge. In the centre of the composition sits the drawn portrait of a renowned literary figure featured with every issue. The majority are signed by Mustapha Farroukh, a pioneering Lebanese modern artist belonging to the inter-war generation.

The graphic design approach changes drastically in the second year [Fig. 2]. [10] The new cover recuperates all the elements of an Islamic art: Kuffic calligraphy, ornate arcade-shaped window frame and elaborate cartouches for

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[10] Unlike the previous volume, the first issue of the second year credits the illustrations to Farroukh, Radwan al-Shahal and Adina Sisku, and the calligraphy to Kamel al-Baba and Nabil Jaroudi.

the subhead. The effect is a romantic pastiche, reminiscent of an era of Arabic manuscript artistic tradition, awkwardly collated with modern illustrations among other graphic motifs. Judging from this drastic change, one can only deduce that there was dissatisfaction with the modern and bare graphic expression of the initial covers, and a desire for an aesthetic culturally rooted in the visual heritage of the Arab and Islamic world. The shift adheres to the anti-colonial Arab nationalist discourse of cultural authentication despite its awkward aesthetic materialization.

Once again, the cover design changes in the 3rd year of *Al-Adab* [Fig. 3]. This time it moves back to a modern expression and rids itself of the nostalgic Islamic art motifs. The name is visually and materially articulated in the thickness and informality of a painter's brush rather than the measured and variegated strokes of a calligrapher's reed pen. It floats unbounded in the upper third of the cover. The reproduction of an artwork by contemporary Arab artists, alternating with every issue, lies just beneath the elongated last letter 'b' of *Al-Adab*, carefully studied to fit the same space in width. The shift demarcates the aesthetic direction of the journal towards an affirmation of contemporary visual arts in the Arab world, where the painter's brush has displaced the calligraphic reed.

The covers for the three foundational years of the journal reveal the trepidations, hesitations and negotiations over the visual materialization of a discourse of Arab modernity commensurate with the literary aesthetic that *Al-Adab* foregrounds. Typographically, the journal was closer to a mainstream periodical in formatting of the inside pages. The pages of *al-Adab* are densely laid out: text is tightly set on a two-column grid in the standard *naskh* style typeface, leaving very narrow margins around the edges and hardly any white surface free of black printed ink on the paper [Figs 4–5]. Like popular modern periodicals, *al-Adab* was designed to accommodate as much content whilst economizing on the number of pages. In material production terms, *al-Adab* economized on labour, printing plates, ink and paper. The economical standardized design approach lends it a particularly lowbrow aesthetic that was pervasive by the mid-twentieth century in the Arab world, as in the US and

Europe. In 1920s European modernist design discourse, white unprinted surfaces materialised graphically the radical 'less is more' statement ascribing aesthetic value to an economy of material and production. However, these modernist aesthetic conventions were incorporated as market styles in a global visual economy of capitalism from mid-twentieth century onwards. "Less is more" was subverted to serve a surplus value in the stylization of products as commodities. White surfaces in printed matter, unlike other visual arts, have thus come to hold the status of an authoritative value-laden aesthetic code (Robertson 1995). The presence and absence of white surface thus act as signifiers that structure the aesthetic referential of publications respectively along hierarchies of taste: highbrow and lowbrow, elitist and populist, good taste and bad taste.

The lowbrow aesthetics of *al-Adab* are thus not outside the global circulation of print visual economies and associated class-laden values. The Arab nationalist journal, which endorsed an anticolonial ethos through literature, was graphically carried through a transnational populist aesthetic. The populist qualification analysed here adheres to Boullata's description, and to what he and the 'vanguard cultural scene' of Beirut — *Shiʿr* at the helm of these—wished to distinguish themselves from.

Conversely, *Shiʿr* adopted a small size format, akin to literary and academic journals [Fig. 6–9]. It flirted with books in its materiality as an object through size, paper and binding, and in the visual effect it imparts as printed matter. Its cover is quite bare: name, issue number and a composition of abstract graphical elements, all set in a dark colour on a lightly toned background. White contours are drawn around the elements adding a chromatic contrast and depth that energize the composition. The Arabic name is drawn in strictly straight lines; two long parallel horizontals intercepted by a series of diagonal lines forming sharp angular shapes pointing downwards and echoing one another. Like the radically modern Arabic poetry it featured, *Shiʿr*'s masthead carried a visual manifesto of rebellion against a tradition of Arabic calligraphy. A modern poetic interplay of simple geometry, thin lines and abstract whimsical shapes is pursued across the space of the cover. The overall

aesthetic imparts an affinity with international currents of abstract painting at the time. The artist Helen al-Khal, wife of the journal editor Yusuf al-Khal was, after all, the designer of *Shiʿr*'s covers. Aside from setting up Gallery One and curating with her husband exhibitions for the leading artists of Lebanon and the region, she acted as a link between the visual arts and literary spheres in the articulation of an aesthetic discourse of Arab modernity on the pages of *Shiʿr,* visible through the cover design.[11] Like *Shiʿr*'s modernist discourse on poetry, Helen al-Khal believes that the Arabo-Islamic artistic tradition was a weight Lebanese modern artists had to rid themselves of (Naef 1996: 163).

The cover design remained in use, alternating in colour with each of the 28 issues, until 1963, just before *Shiʿr* came to a temporary halt in 1964. In stark opposition to *al-Adab*, the white surface of the paper ruled supreme in the typographic layout of *Shiʿr*'s inside pages. Abundant margins and narrow lines of text, arranged with a generous lead between them, exude a material yet discrete opulence through the white rhythm of unprinted surfaces paced across the pages. *Shiʿr* embodied the aesthetic codes of highbrow serial publications in its design.

Despite their ideological and aesthetic differences, *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr* (up until 1964) shared a common characteristic of not carrying visuals, photographs or drawings in their pages. Like other literary periodicals, they were primarily text-based. In the image-arid landscape of Arab periodicals in this genre, it was another Beirut-based journal that broke this aesthetic norm. Launched in 1962, *Hiwar* was the paradoxical iconoclast both aesthetically and politically.

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[11] Al-Khal was educated in Beirut (ALBA 1946–1948) and New York (1949). Her work was recognized in Lebanon and abroad, through solo exhibitions as well as in group shows including the Biennials of Sao Paulo and Alexandria, winning an award at the latter in 1968. She was an art critic for the Beirut-based English newspapers *Daily Star* and *Monday Morning* between 1966 and 1974, as well as an art instructor at the American University of Beirut's new Fine Arts Department from 1967 to 1976 (Khal: 172). AUB established a Fine Arts department in 1954, the latter encouraged modern abstraction in its artistic pedagogy (Naef 1996: 119).

Hiwar: the Politico-Aesthetic Crisis

In November 1962 the Palestinian poet Tawfiq Sayigh[12] launched the literary and cultural Arabic monthly *Hiwar*. Despite some criticism and distrust of its foreign funding (Holt 2013), the journal went on to earn critical acclaim amongst the Arab intellectual and cultural élite, attracting a significant number to take part in its avant-garde cultural project. Five years later, *Hiwar*'s adventure abruptly ended when its funding source, the Congress of Cultural Freedom, was compromised in a scandal of international magnitude. The CCF, a Paris-based institution that funded many journals like *Hiwar* globally including *Encounter* (London), *Der Monat* (Berlin), *Preuves* (Paris), *Cuadernos* (Mexico), and *Quest* (Mumbai), as well as scholars, artists, writers, literary prizes, exhibitions, festivals, musical performances and orchestras was exposed in 1966 as a covert operation of the CIA.

Sayigh began working on *Hiwar* in the early sixties, after completing a decade-long academic journey in literature, winning fellowships that brought him to the US and the UK, and moved him from Harvard to Oxford and Cambridge.[13] As a poet, he adhered to the aesthetic modernism of *Shiʿr*. His free verse was considered even more radical than his predecessors' in the 1950s and his affirmation of the autonomy of artistic practice even more pronounced. Following his sudden death in 1971, Issa Boullata wrote of him:

> He was committed to nothing but his own personal vision, and he adhered to no principle but that of individual freedom in aesthetic expression. In this respect, he may be considered one of the uttermost rebels in modern Arabic poetry and, as such, he may

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[12] Like many other Palestinians, Sayigh's family had fled to Beirut in 1948.

[13] In 1951, he won a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to study comparative literature at Harvard University. In 1952, he was granted a British Council scholarship to study literature at Oxford University. In the academic year 1953-1954, he undertook further graduate studies in literature at Cambridge University, thus ending what he called "three years of literary pilgrimage". After that, he accepted an offer to join the Oriental Studies Institute of Cambridge University as a lector in Arabic and in 1959 he moved to the University of London as Lecturer in Arabic Literature (I. Bullata 1973: 73).

> have been one of the few Arabs who have understood what it is to be *modern*, not merely contemporary, in the field of artistic creativity among men of the twentieth century (I. Boullata 1973: 75).

The journal he founded, *Hiwar*, was premised on the same aesthetic discourse that valorised freedom in the quest for an Arab modernity through all spheres of cultural production. In his only editorial, written with the launch of the first issue, Sayigh asserted the liberal framework of the journal:

> […] *Hiwar* will be specially concerned with problems of the liberties, beginning with the freedom of culture, the freedom of thought, expression, speech and reading, in the whole world. We will call for it, draw attention to it, and defend it; and we will evaluate systems and solidarities on the basis of whether they endorse those liberties or deny them (Sayigh 1962: 5).

Hiwar went on to publish the poetry, prose, short stories, literary criticism and scholarly texts of a host of established and emerging Arab authors of the period. *Hiwar's* table of contents, over the life of its six volumes from 1962 to 1967, was relentlessly versatile and far-reaching in the Arab world, comprising the names of later luminaries such as Albert Hourani, Walid Khalidi, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Ghada al-Samman, Ounsi el-Hajj, Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Zakariyya Tamir, Mohammad al-Maghout, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Sabri Hafiz, Luwis ʿAwad, Rifʿat al-Chadergi, and al-Tayyib Salih, whose canonical novel *Season of Migration to the North* was published in its entirety in the issue of September-October 1966. Some of these, especially poets, were regular contributors to *Shiʿr* and wrote in *al-Adab*. In that sense, contributors did not share a common ideological framework; rather they represent a diverse spectrum in contemporary Arab politics.

In its short-lived public life, *Hiwar* constituted a rupture in the visual barrenness of the literary field. Two points concerning the visual and the literary must be clarified here before moving to an analysis of the journal. The first concerns the rich imagery in Arabic literature — prose and poetry —

evoked through text by way of the imagination. While I adhere to this characterisation of texts, what I am particularly concerned with are the images that have material sensuous presence: ink on paper, visible in a journal. These kinds of images propose a visual experience of reading literary journals that prompts a different analytic frame. This visuality is different from that normalized in the simultaneous seeing and reading of text in the typographic form of the alphabet as a visual system of linguistic signs. The second point is that popular Arabic periodicals, especially Egyptian ones of the mid-twentieth century (chapter 5), were rife with imagery; *Hiwar* in that sense is not entirely new. However, it proposed a new role for visuality in the editorial conception and graphic design of literary journals. *Hiwar* conceived of visuals, not as illustrative companions to texts, but as meaningful and aesthetically autonomous contributions to the journal. Starting with the first issue, *Hiwar* reserved an important space for contemporary visual arts. Every issue featured a different artist from the Arab world. As with authors, the artists featured included leading figures in the field, including Juliana Seraphim, Aref al-Rayyes, Halim Jurdaq, Jawad Slim, Fuad Kamel, Ibrahim el-Salhi, Kathim Haydar, Tahiyya Halim, Fayeq Hassan and Adam Hnein [Figs 13–20]. The artist/graphic designer Waddah Faris, who later in the early seventies was running one of Beirut's prominent art galleries, Contact Gallery (1971–1973), regularly contributed drawings [Figs 13–16]. On the second anniversary of the journal, in November 1964, Faris took charge of *Hiwar*'s graphic design and stayed in place until the last issue [Fig. 11–12]. The changes he introduced were most prominent on the cover, which changed from a visually bare, text-heavy composition listing contributors' names to being a showcase for contemporary art featured inside.

This consisted primarily of drawings spread across 6-8 pages, punctuating the journal and interrupting its reading flow. The set of drawings formed a complete titled artwork, recognized as an independent contribution and entered on the contents page. This practice deviated radically from the use of drawings common in periodicals, literary or otherwise, which would be collated next to texts, used as illustrative devices and more often than not

scattered randomly across the pages. *Hiwar*'s artwork was preceded by a short text introducing the artist and the work featured. Introductions varied from short interviews with, or statements by artists, to reviews by other critics. In this sense, *Hiwar* ensured that it rendered visible contemporary artistic expressions and lent voice to the aesthetic discourse of artists that underpinned their practice. It thus endeavoured to initiate its Arabic reading public into the vanguard of visual cultural production in the Arab world.

Leafing through the second issue, for instance, one encounters six pages of drawings by the Lebanese artist Aref al-Rayess, titled 'Ode to Algiers'. Flip a few pages back, and one reads al-Rayess's response to questions concerning his new non-figurative method and whether art should expand its purview from the particular to the universal:

> […] Where the idea goes my brush goes. The subject of non-figurative drawing is a mode responding to the freedom of creation, following an idea imagined by the artist in connection with time, place and social problems which concerns him and occupies his consciousness and moral values in the present. […] The societal and difficult conditions of man, as in the case of Algiers, have occupied a large part of my time. This collection [Ode to Algiers] is an expression of an overwhelming desire I have had to take part in the realization of the freedom of the Algerian people (al-Rayess 1963: 98).

With al-Rayess, *Hiwar* extended the discourse of freedom to the form it takes in artistic creation. His words elaborate the artist's dialectic between a quest for individual aesthetic autonomy and a political one, called for in the name of a social group, to which he is morally obligated as a social subject.

The dialectic between aesthetic modernism's universal claim and quests for cultural authenticity that preoccupied post-independence Arab artists from Egypt to Iraq was discussed on the pages of *Hiwar*. In 'Ornamentation and Abstraction', Naim Ismail, a modern Syrian artist, discusses his double quest for modernity and authenticity. His approach, as he described it, draws an

aesthetic connection between contemporary abstract visual expression and a local visual cultural heritage. His drawings reference the perpetual lines of arabesque and abstract ornamentation in Islamic arts, reinterpreted in the context of contemporary scenes from everyday life (Ismail 1962: 94–100). Conversely, Ismail Fattah radically departs from the quest for cultural authenticity that preoccupied other Arab artists, including his predecessors in Iraq. His paintings, Waddah Faris tells us in his review, pursue abstraction through 'new modes we have grown accustomed to call, out of failure to meet its challenges, Western and foreign' (Faris 1966: 140). Fattah's abstraction is shared by other artists also featured in *Hiwar,* such as Fuad Kamel (Egypt) and Chafic Abboud (Lebanon).

Moreover, *Hiwar* opened its pages to women artists and their quests for freedom. This was in line with the space dedicated to feminist, poetry and prose, writers. Of particular note is the artwork of Juliana Seraphim,[14] which made repeated appearances. Seraphim's sensuous line drawings and uncensored dream-like mythical evocations of the female body exude a distinctive eroticism. In 'Juliana Seraphim's inferno' she substitutes Dante's with her own imagining of purgatory and bliss (*Hiwar* 3 (6) 1965: 65) [Figs 17–18]. By way of preface to her drawings, 'Gods, monsters and women', Seraphim was asked about her attitude towards public responses to her artwork that regard it as deviant. She replied: 'my [art] world is surreal. These questions do not apply; it does not accept the "why?" If I were rational I would not have painted.' She understands her art as an internalized subjective process that relates a world she dreams rather than a reality external to her. 'I dislike reality', she goes on to say, 'I cannot exploit it in my art. I dream these drawings. If I had a chance to recreate the world anew, I would create it according to my drawings' (Seraphim 1963: 88-90).

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[14] Trained in Florence, Madrid, and Paris, Seraphim was a prominent artist in 1960s Beirut; she represented Lebanon in international exhibits, including the biennials of Alexandria (1962), Paris (1963) and Sao Paolo (1965). According Boullata she is among the Palestinian-born artists, such as Paul Guiragossian, who were publicly recognized as Lebanese and generally kept their Palestinian identity in the shadows (Boullata 2009: 173–175).

In one instance Seraphim's drawings accompanies an audacious short story by the emerging author Leyla Baalbaki. The story, *Safinat Hanan ila al-Qamar* (A Spaceship of Tenderness to the Moon) was a prelude to Baalbaki's 1963 novel, which caused uproar in Arab literary circles and in public life in Beirut. A few months following its circulation on the Arab market, Baalbaki's book was banned. She was arrested, interrogated by the police, and brought to trial in Lebanon on charge of indecent sexual provocation and offence to public morality. Of note is that the morality police (*shurta al-akhlaq*) department in Lebanon — which normally handled prostitution and sexual promiscuity — interrogated Baalbaki, in a calculated disciplinary process meant to scandalize and intimidate her. She was eventually acquitted, following a campaign of solidarity in the Lebanese press, including *Hiwar*. Acclaimed authors and intellectuals condemned the censorship of her book as an attack on the freedom of expression and the integrity of the literary oeuvre. A renowned intellectual figure, who had acted as jury member on the Friends of the Book Award in Lebanon, disclosed in a local newspaper that the jury had unanimously selected Baalbaki's book for the 1964 prize. The jury eventually opted not to award the book the prize because it 'holds an aspect of literary freedom that is not yet familiar enough in Arabic literature to the extent permitting the jury to bequeath the Lebanese state with the responsibility of the prize' (cited in *Hiwar* 1964: 176). Describing her interrogation by the morality police, Baalbaki says in *Hiwar*:

> I could not hide being baffled when he asked: why do you write in this manner? I asked myself, does anyone have the right to ask an artist why she writes like this? I replied in a raised voice: because I consider myself to enjoy the same freedom of opinion, thought, and action granted to everyone in Lebanon (ibid: 177).

Baalbaki's statement tells of the authority accorded to the liberal conception of freedom in its different modalities in the discursive space of Lebanon's literary and intellectual circles. It is enunciated in the authoritative position of the author/artist, denying anyone else's authority (even, and perhaps particularly,

that of the police) to question her art. It is implicitly, yet assertively, maintained through the equal rights that, as a woman, she considers she enjoys just the 'same' as 'everyone in Lebanon'. It is an authority she embodies in the sound of her raised voice in response to the police*man* working to intimidate her. Baalbaki's articulated subject position as a woman author lends her an authority otherwise more difficult to claim. Her position is shared by Juliana Seraphim in her equally insistent, account of her practice as an artist discussed earlier. The recurrence of Seraphim's drawings, especially in conjunction with Baalbaki's text, functions as an editorial statement on behalf of Tawfic Sayigh to uphold the sexual liberation of women in the journal's quest for an Arab modernity while foregrounding freedom as its key thematic.

The carefully curated, visual and literary aesthetic practices in the pages of *Hiwar* represented a vanguard movement embodying the emancipatory discourse of modern art in the Arab world. *Hiwar* accorded Arab artists with a new surface and technology for the public mediation of their art. The printed page thus opened up the possibility of a new interface between artists and their transnational Arab publics.[15] In this context, *Hiwar* authoritatively endorsed a disciplinary rapprochement between the visual arts and the literary world of printed publications. While the etymology of iconoclasm refers historically to the abolition of images of religious worship, *Hiwar* was reversely iconoclast in the rebellious sense of the term. It enacted a new model for Arabic periodicals, which aligned visual with literary practices. This aesthetic approach stimulated Arabic literary journals that succeeded *Hiwar* and paved the way for a new category of artists' books, published in Beirut (Chapter 4). The replication of *Hiwar*'s visually rife model was not only possible through its circulation in print and by way of its portability as a cultural artefact, but was also facilitated by the mobility of its graphic designer, Waddah Faris, across a number of Beirut's publishing institutions in the following years.

Hiwar's pioneering aesthetic model, however, did not earn public recognition. The scandal of its funding ties to the CIA, by way of the Congress

[15] This is particularly the case for artists who have remained aloof with the popular arts.

for Cultural Freedom (CCF), silenced any discussion about the journal's merit for a very long time. In the cultural context of a global Cold War, *Hiwar* was the elephant in a room-full of advocates of artistic autonomy. In an interconnected political context of a mounting Arab-Israeli conflict exacerbated by, on the one hand, increasingly overt US financial and military backing of Israel, and on the other, by increasingly repressive Arab post-colonial states, *Hiwar* became the scapegoat for treason in the midst of a waning pan-Arab nationalist project.

Following the charges levelled against *Hiwar* in the Cairene press, the journal was banned in Egypt in an atmosphere of shock and indignation that also preoccupied the Beiruti press (Holt 2013). In the heat of the scandal, the Lebanese poet Ounsi al-Hajj, former co-editor of *Shiʿr* and now contributor to *Hiwar*, wrote sarcastically in the Sunday supplement of *an-Nahar* newspaper on 12 June 1966:

> The journal *Hiwar*, was, then, a traitorous journal. And we, all of those whose names appeared in it, are traitors as well. Out of ignorance or knowledge of the matter, there is no difference. This is what came to my mind when I read the news of the journal being banned from entering Egypt . . . And I felt that I, myself and those who like me wrote in *Hiwar*, we were that entire time victims of our innocence. The American intelligence service! Could we, all those who wrote in *Hiwar*, be writing for the CIA? (as translated and cited in Holt 2003a: 98).

El-Hajj raises difficult questions that many of *Hiwar*'s contributors had to reckon with. Are they accountable for having collaborated with the Central Intelligence Agency? Can they be morally responsible for an act they know to have committed only in retrospect but were unaware of in the process? Does not complicity in wrongdoing require the agent's knowledge during the process? Is knowledge a prerequisite of moral agency? But then, shouldn't they have known better as public intellectuals? Two aspects need to be distinguished. The first concerns the burden of treason for having collaborated

indirectly with the CIA in the context of a tense Arab-Israeli conflict. The second concerns political responsibility for upholding a discourse of freedom in arts and culture in the context of the global Cold War. This was structured by the antagonism between autonomous and politically committed arts and culture. On account of the first, the contributors are innocent by the logic of having been conned into an act they were not cognizant of. On account of the second, however, the intellectuals, artists and poets who contributed to *Hiwar* were active agents in the disarticulation of art from politics in the quest for an Arab modernity. The apolitical discourse of artistic freedom that Sayigh summoned through his journal, paradoxically turned against the journal's premise of liberty and promise of political autonomy. A depoliticised discourse of freedom, as I shall discuss below, served the political interest of a liberal hegemonic project, globally orchestrated by the USA in the context of the Cold War. It is here that *Hiwar,* among other journals globally linked to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, was undoubtedly complicit.

In this context al-Hajj's statement that 'we were that entire time victims of our innocence' is of interest. His plea of victimhood does not transfer responsibility to an external agent; he could have said 'we' were victims of a CIA plot. Yet al-Hajj is rather saying that 'we were victims' in the causality of our own doing: 'our innocence'. The ambivalence between being victims of an innocent/apolitical discourse of artistic autonomy, yet agents in the wider scheme of power relations, which structured the politics of that discourse globally, characterises the difficult position much of the 'innocent' participants in the Congress for Cultural Freedom around the world found themselves in. An account of the Congress and its politics of 'cultural freedom' is well overdue. *Hiwar* needs to be examined within the global framework of the CCF's role in the Cold War before returning once more to the particularity of the Arabic journal in an unstable Middle East context.

'Cultural Freedom' in a Global Cold War Order

Several accounts of the CCF have been written. The most influential of these, Saunders's *The Cultural Cold War: the CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*

(2013 [1999]), laid the grounds for succeeding discussions of a Cold War systematically fought on cultural grounds. Her account unravels a sophisticated and substantially endowed cultural propaganda apparatus set up to win over left-leaning intellectuals in Europe in a battle against Communism:

> The centerpiece of this covert campaign was the Congress for Cultural Freedom, run by CIA agent Michael Josselson from 1950 until 1967. Its achievements — not least its duration — were considerable. At its peak, the Congress for Cultural Freedom had offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over twenty prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned a news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances. Its mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of Western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of "the American way". (Saunders 2013: 1)

Saunders conceptualizes the workings of the CIA through the CCF as a campaign of persuasive propaganda. Through this framework she stresses the success of such campaigns when the propagandist dupes subjects into a direction they believe to be of their own. This characterisation is central to her argument. She contends that the CIA's campaign undermined its own premise of 'freedom' by the mere fact of its cunning manipulations. Saunders asks: 'Did this not risk producing, instead of freedom, a kind of ur-freedom, where people think they are acting freely when in fact they are bound to forces over which they have no control?' (Saunders 2013: 4). I appreciate the grounds for exposing the contradiction inherent in the CIA's campaign on their own terms. However, Saunder's CIA-focused perspective on the matter sidelines the important role of contributors to the CCF and to its affiliated journals. Her interpretation, through the lens of propaganda renders all participants to the affiliated journals, passive dupes manipulated by outside forces and with no agency of their own. Holt seems to agree, in reading *Hiwar* as an 'Arabic

outpost' in a global propaganda war (Holt 2013a: 87-88). This reading does not explain the ambivalence between being simultaneously victim and agent, as in al-Hajj's characterisation of the issue in relation to *Hiwar*. Propaganda as an optic fails to describe the more complex ways in which discourses and cultural practices are caught up in relations of power, which are not necessarily expressed in direct political control of the repressive and coercive type.[16] Moreover, we need to account for local actors as active participants in this complex structure of relations that makes the cultural Cold War global. Their role cannot be reduced to a passive background onto which the CIA's devious machination is projected.

Conversely, through the lens of Gramsci's hegemony, Giles Scott-Smiths (2002) develops an alternative thesis in her *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and post-war American Hegemony*. She emphasises the intellectual-cultural climate of post-war Europe between 1945 and 1955 and situates the Congress for Cultural Freedom in this particular historical context to better understand its hegemonic political impetus during the Cold War. The cultural hegemony of the Congress acted, according to Scott-Smith, as the equivalent of the political economy of the Marshall Plan: 'its goals in the sphere of culture and ideas being complementary with the Economic Recovery Program's socio-economic and political aims' (ibid: 2). Contrary to Saunder's observations regarding the success of the CIA's propaganda apparatus, Scott-Smith argues compellingly that the CIA's actions 'were only successful because the conditions for their success were there already' (2002: 31). The Congress undeniably instrumentalized culture and intellectuals for political purposes. Yet the process was more complex and historically contingent; it relied on a

[16] I have argued elsewhere against the propaganda framework in favor of an understanding of culture as a site of hegemonic struggle and articulation (Maasri 2009). Hegemonic articulation, as elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) building on from Gramsci, is a discursive social and political process, which permeates cultural meanings and practices.

convergence between post-war European intellectual-cultural concerns and Cold War political demands (ibid: 3).

In the wake of Europe's fascist nightmare and the perceived onslaught of Soviet totalitarianism, 'freedom' — a founding tenet of liberal democracy — had to be publically reasserted and defended. The hegemonic intervention of the Congress in the cultural-intellectual life of post-war Europe was intended to bolster a conception of the intellectual as the guardian of freedom in the liberal, apolitical, sense of the term. It was to proclaim in and through the numerous and globally disperse activities of the CCF that independence from political interference is a condition of cultural and intellectual quality (Scott-Smiths 2002: 5). In a symbolic interplay of politics, memory and the geographic imagination, the Congress for Cultural Freedom was launched in 1950 from West German Berlin — from a city at the precarious rim of a world being divided, apparently irrevocably, between East and West, in the space and time that separated 'the free world' from the spectre of totalitarianism. The three-day event publically proclaimed its aims through its programme with sessions pertinent to the post-war European concerns: 'The Challenge to Cultural Freedom', 'Science and Totalitarianism', 'Art, Artists and Freedom', 'The Citizen in a Free Society' and 'The Defence of Peace and Freedom'.[17] By 1951 the Congress was established as a permanent institution, with headquarters in Paris. In the mid-1950s, the discourse of a resolutely autonomous intellectual-cultural practice separated from politics started off on a journey beyond the transatlantic. It travelled along itineraries of an increasingly global cultural Cold War, as the US became more concerned with Leftist insurrections in the Third World.

While most studies centre on the US-European connection, Andrew Rubin's *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* elaborates a more

[17] The Congress gathered at its inaugural event an impressive list of 118 invited participants from Europe and the American diaspora, including disillusioned ex-communists, intellectuals exiled by political repression and those imprisoned under totalitarian regimes (see Giles Scott 2002: 103–105).

expansive geography of the confluence of culture and power in the temporal conjuncture of the Cold War and processes of decolonization. Through the lens of Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, he examines the entanglements of global networks between literary cultures of translation, the circulation of new modes of articulation and covert US funding. He contends that literary journals, such as those forming part of the CCF network, reshaped a transnational literary landscape and reconstituted the conditions of a world literature largely orchestrated by American post-war ascendency as a new imperial authority (Rubin 2012: 11). New and efficient modes of 'literary replication' accompanied these changes, whereby 'faster, more efficient, increasingly instantaneous and synchronic practice of translation' overcame geographic distances (21). Transnational synchronic replication, as Rubin describes, meant that, for instance, an essay by Thomas Mann might appear next to work by Juan Rulfo, 'not only in one language in one monthly but in several languages in several publications at the same time' (58):

> The nearly instantaneous translation of texts by Georges Orwell, Thomas Mann, W. H. Auden, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Czesław Miłosz, Stephen Spender, Richard Wright, Mary McCarthy, and Isaiah Berlin, among others, into interrelated journals — *Encounter* (London), *Der Monat* (Berlin), *Preuves* (Paris), *Tempo Presente* (Rome), *Quadrant* (Sydney), *Transition* (Kampala), *Black Orpheus* (Lagos), *Jiyu* (Tokyo), and *Hiwar* (Beirut) — effectively transformed writers, critics and intellectuals into easily recognizable, transnational figures while excluding alternative figures of particularity and dissent'.

From its first issue, Sayigh affirmed in his editorial, as Holt has already noted, 'a sense of global simultaneity of literary experience, but from an Arab perspective' (Holt 2013: 94–95). T.S. Eliot, translated by Sayigh, appeared alongside texts by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Ghada al-Samman, among others. This may not have been an entirely new reading experience for Arab readers, in view of the seminal role of *al-Adab* and

specially *Shiʿr* in translations. However, what was definitely new was the reciprocity and synchronicity of the translations that Rubin describes: in that same issue, *Hiwar* ran an article by Albert Hourani on the modern Egyptian author Taha Hussein, which was simultaneously published in Spanish in *Cuadernos* and in French in *Preuves* (Rubin 2012: 59). In another issue, a 'letter from America' appeared next to a 'letter from the United Arab Republic' and other 'letters from' the Soviet Union, Iraq, England, India and France regularly featured in every issue, so did conversations with Eugene Ionesco, James Baldwin, Ben Bella, Jean Cocteau, Aldous Huxley, Picasso, Jean Paul Sartre and Georg Lukács among others systematically appear next to pioneering Arab authors. The impetus of the Congress of Cultural Freedom linked *Hiwar* with a literary transnational modernity. It gave its contributors and readers a sense of global aesthetic subjectivity that connected them synchronically with the world.

It is in the transnational cultures of circulation and through the mobility of associated discourses, which conceal their act of political institution, that freedom as a hegemonic nodal point gains its global cultural and aesthetic valence. Laclau and Mouffe have already indicated how the democratic theme of liberty was rearticulated as an individual quest for autonomy in the 'new antagonisms' of emerging youth culture movements (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 163-64). Their analysis is helpful here in describing the articulation of freedom as a nodal concept in the formation of a politico-aesthetic discourse, particularly heightened in the context of a Cold War antagonism. Freedom, as a signifier in this particular context, linked notions of individual liberty, intellectual freedom and artistic autonomy with democratic values, in a chain of equivalence against communism, political art and totalitarianism. This hegemonic articulation simplified the political space of artistic and cultural practices into two mutually exclusive poles: autonomy or dependence, art or propaganda for the party/ state.

In this space Beirut acted as a nodal site in the geography of the Cold War and the temporality of decolonisation in the Arab world. Following the 1958 military intervention, the city's intellectual-cultural context presented a

suitable site from which the US could turn, in the early 1960s, to a softer counter-insurgency tactic in the Arab world. As aesthetic practices were increasingly co-opted by Arab post-colonial states, Beirut, acted as the liberal site of aesthetic and intellectual production in and for the Arab world. As I shall discuss in the following chapters, this configuration would particularly mark the sphere of Arabic publishing.

As I have mentioned, the struggle over the question of aesthetic autonomy was waged in the dichotomy between *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*. The advent of *Hiwar* constitutes a hegemonic intervention in the discursive formation of the Arabic literary field, subverting its concepts and themes to the demands of the Cold War.[18] Situating the journal within the historical context of competing discourses between *Shiʿr*'s aesthetic autonomy and *al-Adab*'s political commitment debunks narratives of propaganda in which local actors are rendered passive dupes to the external machinations of the CIA. The achievements of the CCF would not have been so efficacious had the historical conditions not been favourable. *Hiwar* was caught in a Cold War antagonism with culture as an important site of hegemonic struggle. The freedom foregrounded in *Hiwar* was thus no exception in a fierce battle waged by the US over the discourse of cultural freedom. It constituted a nodal site on a global map of cultural hegemony in which culture was disarticulated from politics and subsumed to a liberal framework of understanding and aesthetic practice. Aesthetic autonomy, as such, was subverted in a Cold War antagonism to an apolitical framework of cultural practice.

Furthermore, in examining the connection of *Hiwar* with the CCF, the interface of the local with the global is complicated by the temporalities of the two geopolitical scales of power relations in which the Beirut-based journal is caught. On one level, it is caught up in a global Cold War where freedom is a site of struggle in geographies of power that divide the world between East and West. On another level, the journal is implicated in a decolonising Arab world

[18] In his recently published memoirs, Tawiq Sayigh mentions that before reaching an agreement with him, the CCF have unsuccessfully approached Yusuf al-Khal, editor of *Shiʿr* (Holt 2013).

where questions of cultural modernity are being fought and struggled over. In either of the geopolitical scales of the political struggle outlined above, discourse about freedom was an important site of contestation. *Hiwar*, with its CCF connection, discursively and aesthetically embodied the political conjugation of these two scales and the antagonisms inherent in each. The freedom it foregrounded formed the burning edge in a waning pan-Arab post-independence project coming to grips with a world order where 'cultural freedom' served the new imperial enemy. Upholding a liberal discourse of aesthetic autonomy in this political conjuncture was burdened with the weight of complicity, tarring its editor and contributors, at worst with treachery, and at best with naivety.

Conclusion

> Tawfiq made a public appeal in May, 1967, to Arab benefactors to finance *Hiwar* and continue it independently of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. There was no response to his appeal. In June 1967, the Six-Day War engulfed the Middle East and *Hiwar* never appeared again. (I. Boullata 1973: 71)

The journal *Shiʿr,* which had closed down because of political and financial constraints in 1964, resumed publication in 1967, with a distinctly new visual approach. The artist Kamal Boullata designed the cover and contributed pages of drawings to *Shiʿr* for almost a year, before leaving it in the hands of Waddah Faris, the former art director of *Hiwar*. *Shiʿr*'s editor, Yusuf al-Khal, transposed the new visuality of literary journals to the publication of art books, which I shall discuss in the next chapter. Not too long after resurfacing, however, *Shiʿr* closed permanently in 1970. The avant-garde literary journal could not survive while maintaining its claim of art dissociated from politics. It remained on the margin of the intense political changes of the late-1960s, which swept through the Middle East and the world alike.

As 'self-criticism' occupied Arab nationalist intellectuals and artists after the defeat, *Al-Adab* became an important public platform where much of

this reflexive critique was voiced. *Iltizam*, in its Arab nationalist interpretation of a *litérature engagée*, lost credence. As Klemm has observed 'due to the political and ideological fragmentation, which followed the war of 1967, many of the proponents of commitment lost their belief in the political role of the writer and the effectiveness of the literary word' (Klemm 2000: 58). Building on such observations of the post-1967 literary field, Holt concludes — about the *Hiwar* episode — that 'This suspicious, angry, introspective literary political moment in Arabic would last well beyond the end of the decade, as writers no doubt wondered what scandal had yet to be uncovered, and who would be compromised next' (Holt 2013: 101). But what Holt misses here are two interrelated global and local historical events that followed the 1967 defeat, which rearticulated the relation of politics with arts and culture. In 1968, the world witnessed the global rise of a new radical Left expressed in the simultaneity of uprisings in the streets of Paris, Prague, San Francisco, Tokyo, Berlin, Derry and Mexico City among others, and to which Beirut was not impermeable. In fact, an emerging new Left in Beirut articulated the politics of global youth protests, contestations of state authority, and Third Worldist movements with local demands and actions linked to a rising popular resistance to Israel. By 1969, a Palestinian revolutionary movement was in full sway, mobilizing from Beirut a vanguard movement of Arab arts and culture. Klemm notes that connotations of *iltizam* 'became increasingly militant and anti-Israeli in tone' yet she curiously maintains that it had lost its 'persuasive power' (Klemm 2000: 57). What rather needs to be accounted for here is the displacement of *iltizam* from its Arab-nationalist moorings to radical new-leftist Arab political frameworks, which saw Beirut as their site of emergence. This disjuncture and re-articulation of politics and aesthetics will be the object of my analysis in chapter 6.

The poet Adonis, who formerly had co-founded *Shiʿr*, launched *Mawaqif* in 1968. Much like *Hiwar*, *Mawakif* developed visually as a platform that saw the meeting of aesthetic practices across the literary and visual arts [Figs 21–22]. Unlike *Hiwar*, however, the new cultural journal, subtitled 'Freedom, Creation,

Change', proposed a different conception of freedom and culture that distinguished it from its predecessors. In his first editorial, Adonis declared:

> 'Freedom, then, is not simply the right of movement within the knowledgeable and regulated. It is the right of enquiry, creation, refusal and surpassing; it is the practise of what we have not yet practised: This is *Mawaqif*.'
>
> […]
>
> And culture here is struggle, a union of thought and action. It is the culture that is concerned with understanding the world, life and man for one important aim: changing the world, life and man. It is culture as revolution (Adonis 1968: 3–4).[19]

Mawaqif thus promised a more radical discourse of freedom that is not simply confined to questions of rights, but rather concerned with critical enquiry as a mode of resistance to an existing order of knowledge. Furthermore, culture is understood as a radically political form of revolutionary practice. *Mawaqif* thus responded to the 1967 defeat with new Arab Leftist demands for the 'refusal' and 'surpassing' of failed post-colonial regimes.

Hiwar provoked a politico-aesthetic crisis, which, in the confluence of local and global political crises, contributed to a disjuncture in that same field. *Mawaqif* embodies that disjuncture after the Arab defeat, whereby individual and aesthetic autonomy were re-articulated with a radical political framework of freedom.

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[19] Adonis's editorial revisits some of the key points addressed in his *Bayan khamse huzayran* (Manifesto of 5 June), which he published following the 1967 defeat, on 10 June.

Chapter 4

The Visual Economy of 'Precious Books': Publishers, Modern Art, and the Making of Aesthete Arab Readers

The pillar of the Lebanese press since 1933 was riding the wave of a thriving publishing industry in 1960s Beirut. In 1967 Yusuf al-Khal, founding editor of the journal *Shiʿr*, embarked on a new publishing adventure. He was hired by the *an-Nahar* newspaper,[1] as editor-in-chief of its newly launched publishing house Dar an-Nahar. The arrangement also involved re-launching *Shiʿr* as a publication of Dar an-Nahar. Al-Khal's joining *an-Nahar* to lead its new publishing venture seemed a perfect fit, given the intellectual relations and aesthetic affinities he shared with members of this establishment: *An-Nahar's* weekly cultural supplement, *Mulhaq an-Nahar,* launched in 1964, had already

[1] *An-Nahar* newspaper held, at the time, a nuanced liberal political framework (Kassir 2003: 561). While generally critical of Nasserite pan-Arab and socialist project, it represented a politically more complex convergence of journalists and intellectuals with diverging ideological views, from Syrian Nationalists to leftists (598). Ghassan Tueini, owner and director of the newspaper at the time, was himself initially a partisan of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in the 1950s, before taking issue with the party's politics. Tueini, Harvard alumni, played important roles in Lebanon's public life and politics besides leading *an-Nahar*. In the 1970s, he was elected Member of Parliament and held ministerial government positions. He was president of the Michel Chiha Foundation, the Sursock Museum, and vice president of the Balamand (Greek Orthodox) University (Mermier 2005: 78).

grouped together friends of al-Khal and his former editorial colleagues at *Shiʿr*, namely Ounsi al-Hajj and Riad al-Rayyes (Khoury 2015).

Over his four-year tenure as Dar an-Nahar's editor-in-chief,[2] al-Khal oversaw a new series of books, conceived and marketed as *silsilat al-nafaʾis,* a series of 'precious books'. *Nafis* (singular of *nafaʾis*), refers as a linguistic signifier, to the preciousness of a valuable object as well as to invaluable knowledge. *Silsilat al-nafaʾis,* in that sense, semantically links up the materiality and immateriality of preciousness as embodied in books:

> Dar an-Nahar
> the publishing house that gave you the precious book (*nafis*)
> *Malahim wa assatir min al-adab al-sami* (Epics and legends in Sumerian literature)
> releases on 28 August 1967
> *Nashid al-Anashid* (Song of Songs)
> the oldest and most famed book of love
> edited with an introduction by Ounsi al-Hajj
> adorned with 16 coloured illustrations by Paul Guiragossian

This excerpt is taken from a full-page advertisement that appeared in the weekly cultural supplement of the daily newspaper *An-Nahar* on Sunday 20 August 1967 [fig. 1]. The ad promoted the second book in the series and was complemented by an image giving a glimpse of the artwork featured in the book. The dual authoring of this book by two leading figures of 1960s Beirut's vanguard art and poetry scene, Paul Guiragossian and Ounsi al-Hajj, foregrounds the aesthetic dimension of the 'precious books' series as art objects. The aesthetic rapprochement of literary and visual fields successfully explored in *Hiwar* (Chapter 3) had set a new model for printed publications in Arabic pursued in Dar an-Nahar's books. As already mentioned, *Shiʿr* re-emerged in 1967 with a distinctly new design and visually prolific editorial

[2] The period corresponds to when *Shiʿr* was operational. As the latter ceased publication, al-Khal lost interest in the publishing house and was eventually dismissed from an-Nahar in 1971 (Amatheis 2004).

approach that brought into its team contemporary artists such as Kamal Boullata and Waddah Faris. The 'precious books' series thus carried on the vision of *Shiʿr* and translated its materialization in print from the serial edition of the journal to the form of the book. Moreover, the ad announced a multi-tiered pricing including a limited edition of Dar an-Nahar's *Song of Songs*, silk-bound, numbered and signed. The aesthetic dimension of 'precious books' thus also embodied in its materiality the market logic of art objects subverted by the economy of publishing. With the backing of Ghassan Tueini and the marketing management of Charles Raad, Yusuf al-Khal transposed the aesthetic model of contemporary Arabic literary journals to Dar an-Nahar's publishing venture.

This chapter thus examines the nexus of modern art with book publishing in a post-independence Arab conjuncture through the pioneering example of Dar an-Nahar. It explores the aesthetic materiality of Arabic books in the context of a network of changes in the visual arts, printing technologies, and the political economy of publishing in 1960s Beirut. Relations between these three fields are analysed through a multifaceted lens, focusing on the book as at once a product of intellectual and artistic practice, an artefact of visual and print culture, and a commodity in a capitalist economy of publishing.

Scholars have generally privileged the literary content of Arabic books in the postcolonial conjuncture at the expense of other visual and material dimensions.[3] Recent scholarship has only just begun to fill the gap by shedding some light on the development of publishing as an industry in Lebanon and the Arab world (eg. Atiyeh 1995, Mermier 2005, Stephan-Hachem 1993). Missing from these accounts, however, is the design and visual culture of Arabic books. What role does this technical and aesthetic moment of production in the social life of books take in a capitalist economy of publishing and in an everyday visuality of reading?

In her recent *Printing Arab Modernity: Book Culture and The American Press in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (2016), Hala Auji comments on

[3] This is particularly the case in the field of literature and the attention attributed to Arabic literature as a cultural form in postcolonial studies.

the gap in the literature concerning the visual and aesthetic realm of this cultural form. New approaches in bibliographic studies, while attending to the materiality of the printed book and its social life, have neglected its visual aspects. Similarly, Islamic art historians have been too preoccupied with the hand-scripted and illuminated manuscript at the expense of the modern printed counterpart (10). The same problem can be extended to the study of Arabic books published in the post-independence period: historians of modern art have limited their attention, and then only tangentially, to artists' books (Guesdon and Vernay-Nouri 2001, Mejcher-Atassi 2012, Shabout 2007). In these approaches book-making as an aesthetic practice is removed from the economy of publishing and the politics of the reproducible printed artefact.[4]

But we need to understand how engagements with the book as a modern artistic medium were productive of new conceptions of Arabic books. I explore how in the making and marketization of the Arabic book as an aesthetic object, new Arab readers were anticipated and constituted as a public. Moving on from Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation by state apparatuses, print capitalism of the publishing industry, Benedict Anderson has argued, is no less constitutive of subjects who could be summoned in the name of a national people (Anderson 2006). A public, argues Michael Warner (2002), is constituted in the circulation of discourse; publics exist by virtue of being addressed, they act historically according to the temporality and spatiality of their circulation. His conceptualization of the public sphere as inherently discursive, self-organized social space, informs my understanding of the constitutive network of relations between publishers, the circulation of books and their publics.

I situate this modern aesthetic practice within genealogies of the Arabic book in Islamic art history and the shift from scribal to print culture. I ask what political, discursive and aesthetic relations to the past were these modern,

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[4] Among these Sonja Mejcher Atassi's article 'Contemporary Book Art in the Middle East: The Book as Document in Iraq' (2012) might posit an exception. However her study is specific to contemporary Iraqi artist's books and not to a history of the book art as a form in the Arab world.

postcolonial, artistic engagements with the book form seeking to conjure, establish or subvert. In a cultural history that has privileged the word as an artistic form, whether in secular Arabic literary practices or in religious spheres and calligraphic materialisation, what aesthetics of reading and seeing, text and image, characterise the visuality of Arabic books in this historical juncture?

These questions guide my analysis of books and their aesthetic undertaking in this and the following chapter. Here, I focus on Dar an-Nahar's *Silsilat al-Nafa'is* as paradigmatic of new forms of visuality of the Arabic book, enabled by the intersection of cosmopolitan art markets, offset printing technologies and a thriving economy of publishing. Through this case study, I attend to the emergence of Beirut in the late 1960s as a nodal site in a transnational economy of Arabic publishing. The significance of Dar an-Nahar's books as a case study in my thesis lies also in probing discursive and aesthetic sensibilities of the book as sites of political struggle. Its import will derive from the comparison I draw in the following chapter with another case, no less paradigmatic, but of a different genre of book, The Arab Institute of Research and Publishing. This staunchly Arab nationalist publishing house characterises the more overtly political turn that Beirut's transnational publishing industry took in the early 1970s. The Arab Institute's enlisting of the visual arts in its publishing project will, by comparison, reveal the overlaps in the visual economy of book publishing. Nonetheless, the comparison also elucidates how political and aesthetic relations in competing quests for postcolonial Arab modernity are played out in and through the designed surface of the printed book and the transnational circuits of visuality it engages.

Arabic Typography and the Legacy of the *Nahda*

Arabic typography, the Arabic adaptation of movable type printing, was a latecomer in the Middle East. Calligraphy and scribal techniques of manuscript copying remained dominant well into the mid-19th century. A number of interrelated political, religious, aesthetic and technical factors have been advanced to explain this delay in the shift to print technologies of the Arabic book (Vernay-Nouri 2001: 123; Atiyeh 1995: 233–253, Ropper 1995: 209–

231). To start with, printing in Arabic and Turkish (both in the Arabic script) was banned in the Ottoman Empire.[5] This prohibition was welcomed, if not sought after, by Muslim *ʿulamaʾ* and copyists alike. For the former, printing posed a threat to the scribal traditions of knowledge transmission and to their authority in Muslim society. The latter, a powerful corporation in the Ottoman Empire, were concerned with the economic threat printing posed to their lucrative scribal practice of book-making and trade. Moreover, the Arabic script, linked religiously to the sacred text of the Koran and historically to the spread of Islam, held an important spiritual, aesthetic and material dimension which lent it far more authority than as a mere communicative device. The arts of the book in Islamic traditions, including calligraphic styles and methods, elaborate illumination, paper and binding techniques bear material evidence of the aesthetic authority accorded to the Arabic word, which in turn has consolidated the sacrosanctity of manuscripts. Technically, the formal complexity of Arabic calligraphy — the connectivity of letters, ligatures, variations in form of the same letter depending on its position in a word, among other formal attributes — has added to the difficulties of transposing the fluidity of the calligrapher's tools with the detached lead-letters of the printer's type-cases.

These local obstacles did not hold sway in Europe, where Arabic letterpress printing was developed by French and Italian printers in the 16th century. This resulted, on the one hand, from Christian religious establishments' interests to reach into the East, and, on the other, from the intellectual interests of Renaissance humanists in reproducing Arabic scholarship, such as al-Idrissi's *Geography* and the *Canon* of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). It was not until the 18th century, following the Ottoman Porte's relaxation of its ban on printing non-Islamic texts, that the Arabic letterpress commenced its journey in the

[5] Printing in non-Arabic scripts was sanctioned under the Ottoman Empire, thus permitting non-Muslim communities to print in their languages. Presses in Armenian, Greek and Hebrew developed in 16th and 17th century Istanbul. The Maronite monastery of Qazhaya, north of Mount Lebanon, set up in the early 17th century a printing press in *Karshuni*, Arabic printed in Syriac letters, to bypass the Porte's prohibition.

Middle East. Christian monastic establishments, first in Aleppo, Syria, and then in Mount Lebanon, printed the first local productions of Arabic books, though this was limited to prayer books. These monasteries, through close ties with their respective ecclesia in Europe, brought the letterpress technology home and, arguably, Arabic typefaces cast in Europe with it (Shaykho 1995, Glass 1997). The late 19th century saw the consolidation of the Arabic press with two geographic poles of printing and publishing: Cairo and Beirut.

The former saw the establishment of Cairo's Bulaq Press in 1820, an impressive state-instituted press constituted under the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha.[6] Initially conceived for the purpose of printing military, legal and official administrative publications, it also printed translations of European scientific texts, as well as to classical Arabic literature (Vernay-Nouri 2001: 169–70). The consolidation of Arabic presses in Beirut, on the other hand, is largely credited to rivalry between different church and missionary orders, which set up presses, in conjunction with educational institutions, to print religious texts as well as secular content, encyclopaedic reference tools and educational textbooks. Most prominent of these are the American Press,[7] founded in 1830 in connection with the Syrian Protestant College, now the American University of Beirut (AUB), and the Catholic Press, established by the Jesuit order in 1834 and associated with another institution of higher learning, the Université Saint Joseph (USJ). By the end of the 19th century, a host of other private presses had followed suit, publishing periodicals and books on a wide variety of subjects catering to a growing secular Arab reading public.

Literary connections and intellectual flows between the two poles of Arabic printing are foundational of the Arab *nahda* — the political, cultural and intellectual 'awakening', also referred to as the Arab Renaissance, spanning from late 19th century to the First World War. When dire

[6] A press brought in from France with Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798, printed texts in both French and Arabic. It ceased operation with the evacuation of the French troops.

[7] The official name is the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions's (ABCFM) press in Beirut, founded by Presbyterian American Syria mission (Auji 2016).

circumstances — conflicts, economic hardship, famine and censorship — gripped the Levantine Ottoman provinces, a number of its pioneering scholars and literary élite fled to Cairo and Alexandria, where a margin of freedom could be enjoyed under the modernising rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha.[8] The influx greatly advantaged Egypt's rise as a centre of Arabic publishing at the turn of the 20th century, where modern Arabic literature developed and political projects were elaborated and debated.

Printing in Arabic, writes Geoffrey Roper, 'contributed to a demystification of language and literature, a revival of the classical heritage and a new self-awareness. These led in turn both to a cultural revival (*nahda*) and to political movements of a nationalist character' (Roper 1995: 210). Indeed, scholars of the Arab *nahda* have attributed great significance to nascent print culture in effecting cultural and political change in the Arab world. Politically, the *nahda*'s significance lies in the formation of pan-Arab nationalist and radical subjectivities, which emanate from contestations around both Ottoman and European imperial rule. Istphan Sheehi argues that the wide circulation of literary-scientific Arabic journals,[9] mostly published in Cairo, 'defined new conceptions of Arab subjectivities' and 'produced the intellectual, political, and social conditions for modernity in the Arab world. These journals not only formed the origin of critical Arab journalism but also provided a public arena for political debate — bold debate that often took place despite Ottoman, Egyptian, and British censors' (Sheehi 2005: 440). Examining how socialist and anarchist ideas were discussed in prominent *nahda* journals, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi argues, against the grain of Arab nationalist readings, that 'these periodicals can be best understood if we read the *nahda* as a global intellectual production and grasp how ingeniously intellectuals of the period engaged with socialism and radical ideas, domesticated and hybridized them,

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[8] Intellectual figures such as Jurji Zaydan, Ya'qub Sarruf, Faris Nimr, Salim and Bishara Takla partook in setting up some of its pioneering publishing establishments.

[9] Sheehi cites journals such as *al-Jinan*, *al- Muqtataf*, *Misr* (Egypt), *al-Liwa'*, *Misbah al-Sharq* (Lantern of the East), *al-Manar* (The Lighthouse), *al-Hilal*, and *al-Jami'yah* (The Federation).

and in the process created a local intellectual worldview and set of references that were simultaneously and self-consciously global' (Khuri-Makdisi 2013: 40).

Scholars, nonetheless, have recently become wary of an underlying technological determinism in overrating the press as an agent of Arab modernity. They urge instead a more nuanced understanding of the overlaps, continuities, tensions and disruptions that print cultures shared with scribal traditions. Hala Auji's book (2016) is an important contribution to this critical framework. Her study shifts the historic focus of the *nahda* to an earlier moment, when Arabic printing 'interfaced' with more dominant scribal practices of bookmaking. Her analysis is particularly useful here, as already mentioned, she foregrounds the visual and material dimensions of printed books 'as important markers of visual literacy' in an era of changing intellectual and reading realms (10). Auji closely examines the involvement of local scribes and scholars (later prominent *nahda* figures)[10] in the writing and printing of books by the American Press in Beirut in its nascent years from 1830 to the 1860s. She demonstrates how its early books, as in those of others in the region, letterpress technology was adapted to replicate the aesthetic conventions of the manuscript. This is indicative, she argues, of the complexities in which multi-confessional local communities were sought by the Protestant mission in Ottoman Syria. As political and intellectual changes taking hold of the region created new paradigms of knowledge production and transmission, the modernization impulse, in turn, materialized in an alternative visual form of the Arabic book. By the 1860s, the American Press had slowly turned to a streamlined and standardized design, which stripped its books of the ornamental characteristics of illuminated manuscripts and traditional scribal techniques. The American Press's design programme, including a specially designed Arabic typeface, was embraced by an emergent print intelligentsia and was widely adopted by regional presses. The popularity of the American

[10] Her analysis focuses on the early works of Nasif al-Yaziji and Butrus al-Bustani at the American Press.

Press aesthetic, Auji argues, was disconnected from the Protestant mission's evangelical message. Rather, the new stark design of letter-pressed Arabic books appealed to emerging *nahda* scholars, in Beirut and beyond, because it embodied a secular vision of modernity, which they advanced in their own literary works, as well as in new conceptions of the printed book.

The modernist aesthetic turn in Arabic typography of the *nahda* needs to be situated within global circuits of shifting aesthetics of the printed page. Books printed in 18th century Italy and France had shifted towards modern letterforms (eg. the typography of the Didot family and of Giambattista Bodoni) and page compositions were hardly ornamented but rather incorporated 'an impulse towards rationality and system' (Kinross 2004: 29–33). Moreover, the politics of an aesthetics of objects and printed surfaces stripped of any decorative excess — a streamlined standardized design scheme — was at the centre of an emerging modernist design discourse in Europe. Among its early radical progenitors is Adolph Loos's infamous argument of the first decade of the 20th century, that ornament is not only wasted labour and material, but, more seriously, it is 'a crime' inflicted in the progressive course of European modernity. Ornament, for Loos, is symptomatic of primitive cultures and degenerates, whereas 'the evolution of [European] culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use' (Loos 2013: 98). His argument for an aesthetic purism (notwithstanding the European supremacy in which it is entrenched) was carried through ensuing discursive formations of modern design, the typography of books notwithstanding.

In a post-independence context of Arabic publishing what is the legacy of the *nahda*'s modernist aesthetic? Primarily, I am concerned here, and in the following chapter, with continuities and disruptions to the ideals of a modernist aesthetic in the design of Arabic books. I am interested in understanding how these visual manifestations at the order of the surface of the printed page are linked to a political economy of publishing, as well as to political, artistic, and technological changes in the current historic conjuncture. By extension, I probe the interface between local aesthetic motivations and global paradigms of

design and associated circuits of visuality in print culture. In this vein, I return to discuss the global circulation of the normative ideal of aesthetic purism and minimalist typography in the framework of my analysis of Dar an-Nahar's books. Now I turn to an account of the publishing industry as it unfolded in post-independence Lebanon.

Beirut: the Arab Capital of Transnational Publishing

In a 1962 report entitled *Qadiyyat al-Kitab al-Lubnani* (The case of the Lebanese book) issued by Jamʿiyyat Asdiqaʾ al-Kitab (Friends of the Book Society), Abdellatif Sharara concluded that:

> The book in Lebanon, besides being a message and token of enlightenment and civilization, could also become a national wealth and a glory of the nation at present. For we have observed that Arab authors come from their disparate homes to this country to publish the product of their intellectual endeavours in different areas of cultural production. We also observed that the majority of the oeuvres published in Lebanon find their main markets in the Arab Levant and Maghreb alike. Furthermore, we observed again and again that publishing in foreign languages, which distinguishes Lebanon from its Arab sister nations, made of this nation a bridge between two worlds and a means for universal humanist understanding (Sharara 1962: 102).

The Society, chaired by Costantin Zurayk, an influential Arab nationalist public intellectual,[11] was formed in 1960 to promote and support publishing

[11] Born in Damascus in 1909, Zurayk was a distinguished professor of history at the American University of Beirut and its acting president in the 1950s and 1960s. He was the founding member of the Institute of Palestinian Studies in Beirut and the author of prominent books on Arab nationalism and the Palestinian struggle (see Kassab 2010: 65–74).

and the production of knowledge locally.[12] Sharara's report, as summarized above, indicates that by the early sixties Lebanon was hosting a thriving publishing industry, cosmopolitan and pan-Arab in scope. While the title of the Report is concerned with the 'Lebanese Book', the Society understood the qualification 'Lebanese' in a cosmopolitan, rather than a nationally circumscribed framework. In the Society's discourse, a book is referred to as Lebanese when its author or translator is Lebanese, or when it is published in Lebanon, regardless of its language and the nationality of its author or translator (Sharara 1962: 11). The broadly framed definition thus accommodated the cosmopolitan economy of publishing in post-independence Lebanon including in its remit non-Arabic books, such as those written by Francophone and, to a lesser extent, Anglophone Lebanese authors, in addition to an increasing number of Arabic books translated from other languages, or written by authors belonging to the wider geography of the Arabic-speaking world — not to mention Lebanese émigrés.

Post-World War II Lebanon saw the consolidation of the publishing house, *dar al-nashr*, as a privately run enterprise distinct from the preceding model of printing presses-cum-publishers in Lebanon (Sharara 1962: 15, Mermier 2005: 33–35). Beirut's new publishers catered less to the demands of a Lebanese market.[13] Rather they acted as production and distribution agents in transnational networks of commercial exchange between authors, educational institutions, governments, bookshops and readers. The export of school and educational reference books, developing from what missionary presses had begun, constituted a dominant sector that supplied the increasing demand for Arabic books in the region (Mermier 2003: 33). Moreover, the 1950s and 1960s saw a rise in translated books at the expense of original Arabic texts,

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[12] Jamʿiyyat Asdiqaʾ al-Kitab (Friends of the book society) gathered public and private funds and awarded yearly monetary prizes to authors, encouraging areas of knowledge in need of development.

[13] According to the Report, Lebanese readers accounted for no more than 20% of the total books published between 1958 and 1962.

with a number of new publishers specialized in Arabic translations of French or English publications (ibid: 41).[14]

By the early 1960s, book publishing had turned into a full-fledged national industry with transnational scope of business. Sharara notes that books produced in Lebanon shared the advantages of domestically grown citrus fruits and apples (Sharara 1962: 79). His comparison of the book industry with speciality Lebanese agricultural produce is not simply metaphoric. As national products, books, like fruit, acquire the status of commodities in an open market exchange that privileges export to an Arab market of consumers. In Lebanon's post-independence liberal economic era, domestic manufacturers developed new export markets in a newly oil-rich region. This corresponded to the mercantile capitalist economic plan of Michel Chiha and his New Phoenician colleagues (chapter 2). In the *Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy*, Carolyn Gates writes:

> Consequently, Lebanon was able to forge a new regional role by which it exchanged its higher value-added manufactures (and agriproducts) for raw materials and semi-finished goods; and at the same time it was expanding its function as an intermediary of goods and provider of services. In 1951, while Lebanon purchased about 32 per cent of its imports from the Middle East, a large share of which was oil and primary goods, it sold half of its exports to the region, including most of its manufactured exports, as well as processed foods, fresh fruits and vegetables (Gates 1998: 129).

The comparison between agriculture and publishing validates the latter by way of its subscription to the Lebanese economic model and its potential to become the 'wealth and glory of the nation', as Sharara aptly concludes. Nonetheless,

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[14] For instance Oweidat publishers founded in 1957 translated the French series 'Que said-je?' and Folio. This publisher was the first supplier of Arabic books to Morocco, which was then undergoing a decolonisation project of Arabization (Mermier 2005: 41). Franklin Foundation opened office in 1957 in Beirut. It held a major role in the promotion of American literature and culture through funding translations to Arabic (ibid: 49).

in the foreword of the 1962 Report, Constanin Zurayk tells us something more about the changing discursive context and imperatives of the book:

> As Lebanon today aims to develop its national resources and products, it needs to equally care and nurture the produce of its countrymen in knowledge and literature which is embodied in the book. The latter is detrimental in guiding the present and in forming the future. National wealth does not build on material production alone; it does require intellectual undertaking and creative endeavours in the various spheres of knowledge. (Zurayk 1962: 5)

Following the 1958 civil strife and under the new presidency of Fuad Shihab (1958–63), Lebanon was undergoing policy reforms of a developmental kind (Schayegh 2013, Traboulsi 2007: 138). In the context of 1960s economic and social plans, the Report functioned as an advocacy document for the Friends of the Book Society. Zurayk's words thus pressed for similar attention in the realm of knowledge production, embodied in the materiality of the Lebanese book industry.

The Lebanese state, however, was far from responsive to the Committee's plea. Unlike neighbouring post-colonial Arab states, Lebanon's publishing industry depended on a capitalist market of transnational exchange with very little state intervention or regulation (Mermier 2003: 51; Stephan-Hashem 1993: 75–77). The opening of new Arabic reading markets, following independence from colonial rule, and coupled with increased literacy and schooling, was a main factor in the growth of the Arabic book industry in the 1960s. Lebanese laissez-faire (Gates 1998), by contrast with the nationalization, bureaucratisation and strict regimentation of the book industry in 1960s Egypt, rendered Beirut 'the Mecca of publishing in and for the Arab world' (Atiyeh 1995: 242).

Publishing in Lebanon, Maud Stephan-Hashem argues, became an endeavour of transfer, an industry in the service of the Arab world, mediating cultural production by Arab authors to Arab readers. Knowledge production

had in her view moved from a domain of foreign missionaries and clergy to that of the Arab world's political fluctuations and market demands (Stephan-Hashem 1993). Frank Mermier, on the other hand, argues that the dynamism of Lebanon's publishing industry, in conjunction with its relative autonomy from the state, has contributed to the formation of a pan-Arab public sphere with Beirut acting as its intellectual and literary nodal site (see Chapter 2). He notes:

> The double-figure of the publisher, at once intermediary and actor in an intellectual field, renders him a protagonist in a public sphere, which Beirut's publishing milieu, in its diversity, its forces of attraction and capacities of distribution, has made it coincide with that of the Arab world. (Mermier 2003: 86)

Publishers, in Mermier's analysis, are 'the point of convergence of an intellectual production where different public spheres in the Arab world have formed and were manifested, in their plurality, through Beirut' (87). Entanglements of the publishing industry with regional politics became particularly pronounced in the 1970s. As I shall discuss in subsequent chapters, the number of ideologically driven publishers with political funding increased in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat and with the rise of the Palestinian resistance. Working with Mermier's conceptualization of Beirut as a space of convergence in the formation of an Arab public sphere, the comparison I draw between Dar an-Nahar and more politically engaged publishers aims to probe the discursive and aesthetic modalities of books as sites of political struggle in that space. I want to explore, however, the limits of a pluralist public sphere in the unfolding of antagonistic divides that marked the city, its pan-Arab intellectual field and the transnational circuits of visuality that shaped its book artefacts.

The rise of Beirut in the 1960s as a nodal site of transnational publishing in the Arab world precipitated competition, material investment and technical expertise in printing technologies. Building on a legacy of printing know-how from the *nahda* period, the current conjuncture, in turn, contributed to the advancement of Lebanon in the domain of printing technology, earning

its products a reputation for fine quality publications well into the 21st century (Mermier: 49). It is in this context — of convergence between intellectual and aesthetic practices, printing technologies, the publishing industry and modern art market in Beirut — that Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' project materialized.

Dar an-Nahar's 'Precious Books': 'a New Book for a New Public'

> A new book for a new public:
>
> Lately, under the effect of various factors, including: continuous encounters with world libraries; the development of aesthetic taste thanks to art activities such as international festivals, collective and solo exhibitions and screening of the latest wonders of cinema; the ease of transportation which has shrunk the world, bringing Paris, or Moscow, or New York to Beirut, or Cairo or Casablanca; the opening of humanity's horizons in the explosion of geographic, territorial, linguistic, and religious borders, which has imparted Arabs with the ability to follow different facets of the single truth.
>
> Lately, after the 2nd World War, an Arab character with deep roots has emerged, authentic in knowledge, open to modernity, and sensible to our needs. This character created a need for an Arabic book made by it and for it, a book with unmasked thoughts, totally liberated from the backward pull of a bygone Arab golden era, a book in the spirit of the age, from an Arab lived experience, from our day and our techniques with prospects of keeping it for our future. (Khater 1968)

Thus wrote Nazih Khater, a prominent Lebanese art critic and journalist in *an-Nahar,* by way of his review of *Silsilat al-Nafa'is*, the 'precious books series', a year following Dar an-Nahar's launching of the project. Khater's article begins with a brief prelude about the history of book arts in the Arab world, stopping at the intellectual legacy of the nahda, yet lamenting the primacy of

textual content and the disregard for the book as art form for modern Arab readers. Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books series' thus presents, in Khater's view, 'a new book for a new public', addressed to a modern, cosmopolitan and aesthetically attuned Arab subjectivity.

Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' were based on canonical texts, geographically attributed to the Levantine Arab East, dating as far back as ancient Sumerian literature and encompassing a variety of genres from translations of the Bible, to *muwashahat* (Arabic poetic and secular musical traditions), to texts from the Islamic golden age and all the way to classics from the modern Arab *nahda*.

The series sought to establish new aesthetic relations between such carefully selected texts and the visuality and materiality of the printed book. It connected the visual arts in the Arab world with the commercialized mechanically reproducible world of publishing. The printed Arabic book was accorded special aesthetic value, with care extended beyond the textual content. Dar an-Nahar's books strove to advance the visual and material form of the book as an object of aesthetic enjoyment and aimed to ensure high quality reproduction through new technologies of printing becoming available in Beirut. Books were mostly printed in *An-Nahar*'s own printing establishment, *Matabiʿ al-Taʿawniyya*. The latter expanded its technical expertise from the production of a daily Arabic newspaper to that of coloured weekly supplements and now finely printed books, using the latest offset printing technology.

In a capitalist economy of publishing the aesthetics of books undeniably added to their material value as commodities on the market, which rendered them exclusive, if not luxury, objects. Publishing thus constituted a capitalist endeavour that Dar an-Nahar, as a privately run establishment, was not impervious to. The publishing house carefully marketed these publications as art objects. The books were labelled as 'precious books' in the various accompanying press texts and advertisements that appeared in *an-Nahar* newspaper. The illustrated books spanned across from large format, hard cover, and stich-bound *beaux livres* — finely produced and printed books — to more experimental artists' books.

Most titles had two editions: a numbered *édition-de-luxe* of 300 books cloth-bound in local silk from Mount Lebanon, sometimes printed on special art paper; and another edition of 3000, cloth-bound printed on fine quality archival paper. Books illustrated by prominent artists were dealt with more 'preciously'. For example, *Nashid al-Anashid*, illustrated by Paul Guiragaussian, was produced in fewer copies and in three editions. In addition, another edition of 15 copies was sold with the original artwork. The paper notwithstanding, all editions were exactly similar in printing and binding. Yet the numbered edition was sold at more than three times the regular price.[15] With these distinctions, Dar an-Nahar tapped simultaneously into the convention of numbered art prints and the market logic of collectibles. The high price of the limited edition cut the costs of the standard one. The multi-tiered edition thus rendered 'precious books' within the reach of middle class readers/consumers. Moreover, Dar an-Nahar devised a credit facility system by which its books could be purchased in monthly instalments. Or more precisely, the payment by instalment plan, through a system of debt euphemized as modern 'credit facilities', made luxury books appear to be within the reach of an aesthete Arab middle class.

Visual form in this context, while surmounting a subordinate relation to text, becomes contingent on the economy of art publishing. The industry subverts the visuality advanced in Arabic literary avant-garde journals to put it in the service of capital. Johanna Drucker notes with regard to the confluence of art markets and the business of publishing in 19th century France: 'The *livre d'artiste* took advantage of the expanded market of visual art which had grown in the 19th century, along with other luxury markets expanded by industrial growth, the accumulation of capital, and an educated upper middle class with an appetite for fine consumer goods' (Drucker 1995: 3). Her observation can well be extended to the context of Beirut's long 1960s, in which a consumer-oriented cosmopolitanism was staged through the city's manifold spectacles of

[15] The price of the regular book was LBP 15 while the numbered and signed edition was sold at LBP 50. The average monthly wage was LBP 377 in 1966 and LBP 517 in 1974 (Gaspard 2004: 164).

art and leisure (chapter 2). This particular modality of Beirut as "the Paris of the East" is corroborated in Khater's characterisation of the social context in which a new Arab public of art enthusiasts has emerged. Art historians and critics have also foregrounded Beirut's important regional role, through its bourgeoning private galleries, as a market for Arab art in the 1960s and 1970s (eg. Naef 1996: 119–21, Boullata 2009: 124–25).

Nonetheless, characterising these books simply as luxury commodities and reducing their production to a principally market-driven endeavour does not do justice to the aesthetic care characterising the content, form and production of these books. In this regard, the recognition of Dar an-Nahar's publishing venture in Beirut is especially noteworthy, and most markedly evidenced in the consecutive prizes awarded to its books at the Beirut Arabic Book Fair between 1967 and 1970 for best design. Furthermore, Nazih Khater notes in the same article that in the last decade some attempts had been made to make Arabic books aesthetically appealing to new Arab readers. He organizes these attempts into three typologies of the printed Arabic book. The first is 'the standard book with elegant design', simply ornate and occasionally illustrated. The second, 'the superior book with traditional design', relies on Islamic manuscript traditions; its purchase, he states, is confined to a conservative Arab bourgeoisie and royalty. The third is 'the superior book with superior design' and:

> This is new to the mutating form of the Arabic vanguard library. It is directly connected to the modern modes of living, which has changed the architecture and interior decoration of Arab homes. In part this change is expressed in the new place of the home library, which now sits prominently in the living room, especially in modern small apartments. It is also tied to relinquishing the Oriental spirit and replacing it with the architecture of international movements, which characterise the foundation of this era's civilization. The superior book with superior design does not follow aesthetically predefined parameters. In other words, the book, as an aesthetic form, is designed by the artist – director (*al-*

> *mukhrij – al-fannan*), it is entirely his prerogative. The advent of the art director figure on the Arabic library is an important event, which undoubtedly will impact positively the course of Arabic books and the future of the Arabic library.

Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' series thus presents, in Khater's view, a pioneering model of 'the superior book with superior design' typology of Arabic books. His account is important on many levels. It situates Dar an-Nahar's books historically within prevalent aesthetic practices of book production and within a context of changing cultural and aesthetic sensibilities in Beirut and the Arab world. It historicizes a moment in which libraries formed part of the living room in modern apartments of the urban Arab middle class and, indeed, constituted an aesthetic component of interior spaces. Books as such assumed a double aesthetic function: held by the reader and sat on a living room shelf. It is also revealing of the cosmopolitan modern aesthetic affinities, in which the new publishing project and Khater's discourse are both embedded. Lastly, he foregrounds the typically invisible figure of the 'artist – director' as an important protagonist in the modern appreciation of books as aesthetic objects. This last point indicates a local public recognition of the professional practice that is graphic design. In this vein, characterising these books as simply market-driven luxury commodities undermines their significance historically in changing the aesthetic dimension of the Arabic book. The binary opposition between an either or situation of dependence on or independence from the market is not helpful in understanding the more nuanced aesthetic practice of making books. This putative binary has structured hierarchical relations between a modern art practice, perceived as autonomous, and graphic design often too quickly dismissed under the 'commercial' or 'applied' art labels. It is more helpful to consider from the outset the relative autonomy of designing books, and graphic design more generally, as an aesthetic endeavour, like art, constrained by the market, as much as by other contingent social relations and technical possibilities. On this, Jacques Rancière has recently argued against the dominant paradigms of the modernist autonomy of art in the distinction drawn 'between art forms and life forms'

(2009: 103). In a chapter titled 'The Surface of Design' in *The Future of the Image*, he exemplifies his argument by looking at how modernist graphic design of the early 20th century blurs the distinction between sign and form, and between the form of art and the form of the everyday object (103). He writes in conclusion:

> Accordingly, the surface of graphic design is three things: firstly the equal footing on which everything lends itself to art; secondly, the surface of conversion where words, forms and things exchange roles; and thirdly, the surface of equivalence where the symbolic writing of forms equally lends itself to expressions of pure art and the schematization of instrumental art. (Rancière 2009: 106)

Following on from Khater and Rancière, the question to be asked is how Dar an-Nahar's 'preciousness' was manifested in 'the surface of design'. What aesthetics of modernism did it graphically articulate and how did it negotiate between global paradigms of book design and post-colonial quests for Arab modernity? To answer this question, I analyse key books from Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' series' published between 1967 and 1971. My aim is to probe the different modalities of their aesthetic expression and map the transnational circuits of social relations and visuality that are interwoven through their undertaking.

The first to be produced in the series was the 1967 book titled *Malahim wa Asatir fi al-Adab al-Sami* (Epics and Legends in Sumerian Literature), edited and translated into Arabic from original Sumerian texts by Anis Frayha [Figs 3–6]. Frayha was a renowned Lebanese author[16] and professor of ancient Sumerian languages and cultures at the American University of Beirut. The book comprises the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh; the Sumerian myth of creation, claimed to have a very close resemblance with the Book of Genesis in the Torah and the Christian Old Testament; theatrical epics, including that of

[16] Frayha is the author of now classic texts on traditional Lebanese mountain village life such as *Isma' ya Rida*.

Baal, the original form of the Phoenician epic of Adonis and Ashtarut (Ishtar); and the legend of the descent of Ishtar into the lower world. Ancient myths and historical archetypes, particularly from pre-Islamic Sumerian, Greek and Phoenician symbols such as Tammuz, Adonis, and Baal were central to Arabic poetry of the 1950s and '60s, especially foregrounded by *Shiʿr's* leading poets (Jayyusi 1993: 155). The modern reference to these myths was not impermeable to competing nationalist discourses in the postcolonial period. Sumerian literature, in particular, references ancient Mesopotamia, historically the land between the Tigris and Euphrates, corresponding roughly to modern-day Iraq and Syria. It is central to the Syrian Nationalists' myth of origin, which delimits the '[Greater] Syrian homeland' geographically to the Levantine Fertile Crescent, with Mesopotamia as its civilizational cradle (see Pipes 1988).

For a Mesopotamian theme to constitute the subject of the first in the series of Dar an-Nahar's illustrated books are not innocent of politics: national discourses conjuring up myths of origin cannot be. Yet it is not entirely subservient to forms of political propaganda either, and especially not under the editorial direction of Yusuf al-Khal, who had fought a relentless battle in *Shiʿr* for an autonomous art. It points, however, to the sedimentations of politics in cultural practices and aesthetic affinities (Adorno 2013 [1970]). Indeed, the choice of texts in the complete series, starting with the Sumerian theme up to the modern Arab *nahda*, builds a civilizational genealogy comprised of the canonical textual artefacts of Greater Syria. If intellectuals in Europe could claim ancient Greece in the formation of a 'Western' civilizational ancestry and intellectual heritage, so could intellectuals of the post-colonial Levantine Arab East lay claim over ancient Mesopotamia and construct a narrative of civilizational continuity. While the European discourse of modernity disavows the Muslim Arab East in its intellectual genealogy, the latter, particularly Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' series, expresses an overarching secular project that rather wants to dissociate culture from exclusive ties to a specific religion and — even more — to celebrate diverse religious traditions and their interconnections in the cultural formations of the Levant and Greater Syria.

Adjacent to the text, the book included seven plates of drawings by Iraqi artist Dia al-Azzawi (b. 1939). Al-Azzawi belonged to the second generation of postcolonial modern Iraqi artists who strove to claim an Arab and Iraqi national identity through the arts. The search for a culturally grounded aesthetic form had been advanced in the 1950s through the Baghdad Modern Art Group, which was founded by the pioneering artist Jawad Salim (1919–1961). The group included Jabra I. Jabra and Shaker Hassan al-Said, among other modern Iraqi artists. They sought to work within contemporary conceptions and methods of modern art while recuperating an indigenous aesthetic, inspired by a local heritage of visual and material culture that dates historically as far back as Mesopotamian art. The aesthetic quests of the Baghdad Modern Art Group intersected with contemporaneous endeavours in poetic and literary fields, most relevant here is the recuperation of ancient themes and symbols by the Tammuzi poets. Jawad Salim's artistic explorations were foundational to the following generations of Iraqi artists as much as to a wider geography of modern art under formation and transformation in other parts of the decolonizing Arab world (Shabout 2007: 28–29).

Discursive formations of a decolonizing Arab modernity cut across aesthetic fields. This materialized through the mobility of its enunciating subjects across disciplinary boundaries as well as national borders. Jabra I. Jabra, for instance, was active in the Baghdad Modern Art Group while his literature and critical texts were published in Beirut-based journals such as *Shiʿr*, *Hiwar* and later *Mawaqif.* The trans-disciplinary contributions to these journals, specially pioneered by *Hiwar* (see chapter 4), in conjunction with their pan-Arab distribution networks enabled the circulation of pertinent concepts and competing themes of Arab post-colonial modernity. Al-Azzawi is an important figure in a transnational network of social relations across aesthetic fields in the Arab world, notably in the connections he weaved across the visual and literary arts, print cultures and politics. I introduce his early work in the context of his collaboration with Dar an-Nahar here and, I return to his art once again in chapter six to attend to his more politically orientated

post-1967 projects, which he developed between Beirut and Baghdad centred on the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Al-Azzawi's early work was shaped by the artistic approach of his predecessors in Iraq, most notably the Baghdad Modern Art Group. His artwork, while modern in formal expression, referenced historic themes and Shiite religious symbols such as the martyrdom of al-Hussein,[17] ancient Sumerian and Babylonian myths, and Arab folk tales (Shabout 2007: 121–25). Furthermore, his artistic formation was informed by his initial studies in archaeology (ibid: 121).[18] 'Antiquity was an incentive. Instead of following a European example, [I] seek inspiration from tradition […] I began to depend on my heritage and to make use of historical forms — especially Sumerian art — as a consequence of my study of archaeology' (cited in Shabout 2007: 122). Al-Azzawi's discussion of his own artistic début is indicative of the centrality of a quest for cultural identity, which he, among other Arab artists, sought to achieve in and through their practice. It is also commensurate with decolonizing national formations, and corresponding myths of origin, whereby ancient glory is culturally reclaimed within modern nationalist discourses (Chatterjee 1993). Yusuf al-Khal's choice of Dia al-Azzawi for Dar an-Nahar's book *Epics and Legends in Sumerian Literature* could not have been more appropriate. It is also illustrative of the transnational and trans-disciplinary networks of aesthetic relations between Baghdad and Beirut. Al-Khal was familiar with the young and emerging Iraqi artist through an exhibition organised in Beirut's Gallery One, run together with his wife Helen al-Khal, in 1965. Between 1966 and 1967 al-Azzawi was busy working on a series of black ink drawings thematically inspired by the epic of Gilgamish and aesthetically referencing the ancient Sumerian material culture displayed in the Iraqi National Museum (Shabout 2007: 124–25). A selection of these drawings occupied the pages of the book issued by the new Beirut-based publishing

[17] Series of drawings titled *Tragedy of Karbala* (1965).

[18] Al-Azzawi obtained a degree in art from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad while studying archaeology at the University of Baghdad in the early 1960s.

house, an event that would render al-Azzawi's artwork available in multiples to interested Arab publics through Dar an-Nahar's distribution network.

Simple black lines give form to enchanted figures with big round eyes, floating, as ancient myth has it, betwixt the world of earthly creatures and the world of Gods, and between the animate and the inanimate, the animal and the human. Al-Azzawi's figurative compositions are quite delicately bare, discretely intercepted by the charm of Sumerian-inspired ornamental and symbolic motifs. The general layout of the book maintains an elegant sobriety in its generous 21x24 cm format. Text and image are brought together in a classical book composition, whereby illustrations occupy a single full-page facing a page of text. Ajjaj Irrawi, long-time graphic designer in *an-Nahar*'s newspaper, is credited with the book design. His know-how in modern Arabic typography ensures a systematic, albeit conventional, graceful layout of text with comfortable reading rhythm across the pages. Like *Shiʿr*, the uncluttered white space across the pages of the book — generous margins and leading (spaces between the lines) — imparts an affinity with modern global minimalist aesthetics, while materializing the symbolic distinctions that render it a highbrow publication. *Epics and Legends in Sumerian Literature* thus aesthetically conjugates two circuits of modernist discourses in the visual arts: the quest for an Arab modernity in al-Azzawi's Sumerian-inspired drawings and the graphic purity of International Modernism articulated in Irrawi's design. As an artefact articulating these two circuits of visuality, the printed publication received aesthetic praise. It was awarded first prize for best design in the 1967 Arabic Book Fair held in Beirut.

Irrawi was responsible for the layout and production of other Dar an-Nahar illustrated publications, two of which won him and the emerging publishing house prizes at the Arabic Book Fair in 1968. The first is the 224-page book *Yassuʿ al-massih* (Jesus Christ), co-published with the Catholic Press (Imprimerie Catholique), originally a Jesuit missionary printing-cum-publishing establishment dating back to 1834 [Figs 7–9]. The book presents a unified and abridged Arabic version of the [Bible's] New Testament

accompanied by coloured reproductions of Christian icons. Ghassan Tueini and Yusuf al-Khal edited and developed the Biblical text in Arabic relying, as Tueini assures in the introduction, on agreed upon scholarship in this domain. They based themselves on a modern Arabic translation of the Bible meticulously produced by the Jesuit establishment at the turn of the 19th century.[19] Unlike its religiously inscribed predecessor, this project aimed, Tueini notes, to place the Arabic Bible within a secular library of art books. Icons featured in the book not simply to adorn text, but rather were carefully curated as artworks within a stated conceptual and pedagogic aim. The selection historically covered various aesthetic methods of Christian icons across expanse geography, from ancient Egypt to modern Syria, through Byzantium, Russia, Eastern Europe and Greece. The book thus presented its Arabic reader with disenchanted icons, displaced from the Church, their religious aura disrupted by the secular visuality of the mechanically reproduced art book.

Technically, this book, produced in Beirut, is a showcase of mastery in new printing technologies. The large format (19x27 closed) full-page coloured reproductions, sharpness of detail and richness of the very vividly printed icons rely on the availability of advanced reprographic and offset printing techniques. It was produced at the Catholic Press, which historically held a leading regional role as a missionary press, printing among other publications fine quality Arabic editions of the Bible. Dar an-Nahar's collaboration with the Catholic Press relied on the latter's two-fold provision of expertise in that domain. The 1968 co-edition attests to the continued mastery of the Jesuit printing establishment since the 19th century *nahda*, contributing to Beirut's re-emergence in the late 1960s as a service hub in new printing technologies for the Arab region.

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[19] The Catholic press competed with the American Protestant press in publishing Arabic translations of the Bible in 19th century Beirut. Both cared to produce exact translations from Hebrew and Greek while ensuring a literary eloquence in Arabic and good printing quality (Atiyeh 1995).

The second book designed by Ajjaj Irrawi and published in the same year is the Arabic edition of *The Prophet,* a 1923 world classic text written in English by the Lebanese émigré author Gibran Khalil Gibran [Figs 10–12]. Yusuf al-Khal translated the original text into Arabic, producing what has been recognised until today as the most eloquent Arabic edition of *The Prophet*, which Dar an-Nahar continues to publish in paperback editions. The text is complemented with finely printed 16-coloured reproductions of Gibran's paintings. Text and image are laid out on facing pages in a modern composition that breaks away from the conventional symmetry between graphical elements across the two pages. Technically, the grid used for positioning images on the page does not correspond with that used for setting text. The images, larger in width, hang from the top margin, leaving a greater empty surface at the bottom. The narrow block of type, conversely, sits on the bottom margin leaving ample white surface at the top and on the sides. The typography is set on a slightly shaded box giving depth to the textual surface and accentuating the compositional tension created between facing pages.

Irrawi's graphic design imparts Dar an-Nahar's *Beaux Livre*s with a luxury stripped of decorative excess. His aesthetic approach presents continuity with the *nahda*'s aesthetic modernism of the printed page and Adolphe Loos's 'Ornament and Crime' dictum. It is nonetheless contemporaneous with post-war internationalisation of the 'less is more' idiom of modernism in design (see Aynsley 1993), where beauty is ascribed to an economy of form that serves a utilitarian purpose, especially consolidated in the teachings of the Bauhaus. The statement incurs a repeatable materiality across different disciplines of design, and beyond the German context, in the formation of a modern design discourse. In the typography of books, its principles were expounded by the authoritative writings of, for instance, Jan Tschihold (1927) and Beatrice Warde (1955). The latter's 1932 paper, 'Printing Should Be Invisible',[20] later published in *The Crystal Goblet* (1955) — a collection of her essays on typography — is particularly illustrative of aesthetic purism applied to

[20] Warde presented this paper in a public address to the British Typographers' Guild at the St Bride Institute in London, 1932.

modernist typography. Warde argues for a 'transparent' typography as the modern formal expression of content. She refers to a crystal goblet to elaborate a metaphor of modernism that rests on a symbiotic relationship between form, as the container, and text, as the content:

> Imagine that you have before you a flagon of wine. You may choose your own favourite vintage for this imaginary demonstration, so that it be a deep shimmering crimson in colour. You have two goblets before you. One is of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns. The other is of crystal-clear glass, thin as a bubble, and as transparent. Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine. For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain. […]
>
> Now the man who first chose glass instead of clay or metal to hold his wine was a 'modernist' in the sense in which I am going to use that term. That is, the first thing he asked of his particular object was not 'How should it look?' but 'What must it do?' and to that extent all good typography is modernist. […]
>
> Printing demands a humility of mind, for the lack of which many of the fine arts are even now floundering in self-conscious and maudlin experiments. There is nothing simple or dull in achieving the transparent page.

Warde's modernist metaphor of printing transparency is operational in Irrawi's book design approach. It operates within a historical continuum with the *nahda*'s modernist aesthetic; and, his affinity with post-war modernist

typography and graphic design is indicative of the international purchase of these aesthetic ideals and their normativity in the visual economy of printed books beyond Europe and America. Irrawi ensures a triad of correspondence between the content of the book as purveyor of knowledge, its form as aesthetic object, and in planning for printing as a reproduction technique. His artistry rests on the humility, as Warde puts it, which displaces artistic self-expression with the economy of form and proficiency in technique. The displacement rests on a modernist equivalence in design drawn between art and industry.

Johanna Drucker notes, however, that books of 'fine printing' — *beaux livres* such as those of Dar an-Nahar — 'are produced with close attention to all aspects of printing art, but are not generally innovative in form or concerned with explorations of books as artistic concept' (Drucker 1995: 5–6). Drucker's distinction is pertinent in the context of her description of the 'artist's book' as a medium in 20th century art practice. While she aptly refrains from defining what an artist's book is, she does nonetheless sketch out the contours of possibility by outlining the criteria for defining what an artist's book is not. In brief, her outline excludes books that do not interrogate the communicative and aesthetic conventions of the book as a form and as an idea. This exclusion may very well apply to the books of Dar an-Nahar discussed thus far. However, one last book in the series poses the exception.

Chafic Abboud's *Maqamat al-Hariri* (al-Hariri's scenes) published in 1970 explores the printed book as an aesthetic and expressive form in a distinctly alternative approach. Abboud is a Lebanese artist who was based in Paris, where he pursued his artistic training and career shortly following Lebanon's independence. He represents the artist of the diaspora whose hyphenated identity, caught between a Lebanese artist in Paris and a Parisian artist in Beirut, has preoccupied art critics and historians in both cities (Fani 1998: 9). Abboud's paintings are resolutely abstract. Despite critics attributing 'oriental' character to his painting, he was not concerned with questions of cultural authenticity that preoccupied Arab artists of later generations (Naef 1996: 150-

153). The book he conceived for Dar an-Nahar, however, presents from the outset a peculiar counterpoint. *Maqamat al-Hariri*, Abboud's title, is a celebrated literary Arabic text of the Abbassid era. Originally written in the 11th century, it narrates in 50 scenes (*maqamat*) the adventures of Abu Zayd, the eloquent and cunning traveller, across the Arab East and unravels his encounters with different aspects of Arab society at the time. Besides its literary sophistication, the narrative is esteemed for having been richly illustrated. A subsequent 1237-dated version, executed by the Baghdad-based calligrapher and painter Yehya al-Wassiti, is highly regarded as a fine example of illustrated Arabic books in medieval Islamic art history (see Clévenot: 114–115; Contadini 2007; Grabar 2009). This period is generally regarded as the Golden Age of the Arabic Book, in terms of aesthetic exploration and elaboration of methods of transcription, bookbinding, and book selling. Figurative paintings in *Maqamat al-Hariri*, among other illustrated Arabic books of the medieval period, challenged allegations of art in the Islamic world as strictly abstract, ornamental and calligraphic due to religious prohibition of figural painting [Fig. 13] (see Grabar 2009). The manuscript was thus canonized by art historians and referenced by Arab artists seeking to reconcile their modern figurative approaches with a local aesthetic heritage. The *Maqamat* text was among the Arabic literary classics printed in the *nahda* period by the Bulaq Press in Cairo (see Auji 2016: 107–109). Al-Wassiti was particularly foregrounded by the Baghdad Modern Art Group in the 1950s, especially in the work of Jawad Salim (Shabout: 28–29), and picked up later by graphic designers and illustrators in Egypt. I will discuss the pictorial style of al-Wassiti's paintings and the way it has been actualized in modern illustrations in the context of the Cairo-Beirut connection in the following chapter. But the introduction is sufficient here to probe Chafic Abboud's peculiar choice of subject matter for his artist's book with Dar an-Nahar. The Lebanese émigré in Paris, abstract painter and supposedly uninterested in questions of cultural locality for his art, decides to reinterpret *the* canon of illustrated books from the Arabo-Islamic golden age. He was undoubtedly up for a challenge of the kind that makes an artistic statement.

Abboud selected seven from the original *Maqamat* (scenes) to interpret in his visual and material exploration of the book as an artistic form. His completed project is composed of unbound folios, stacked and held in a hard cover portfolio.[21] Graphically, Abboud's book appears as a deconstruction of a prototypical manuscript page. In a history of Arabic and Islamic hermeneutics, manuscripts quite commonly bore the marks of an interpretive practice of annotation, filling up the large margins surrounding the central text. These marginal glosses were written on a diagonal grid of lines, often in more than one grid in alternating directions differentiating one set of annotation from another. This popular scribal practice was reproduced in early 19th Arabic printed books; early printed editions of the *Maqamat* bear witness to the translation of this scribal practice into early printing technologies [Figs 14–15] (Auji 2016: 107).

Abboud seems to have subverted this particular visual culture of Arabic manuscript annotation to explore it as an aesthetic device throughout his book [Figs 16–19]. Fragments of text are entirely hand-written, but without adhering stylistically to a particular tradition of calligraphy. Pages are composed of dense lines of text following underlying baseline grids set in different directions. Fragmented text, rendered difficult to read linearly, becomes abstract visual form rather than decipherable linguistic code; lines, textures and rhythmically assembled planes impart an illusory depth to the surface of the paper. Moreover, Chafic Abboud's *Maqamat al-Hariri*, unlike al-Wassiti's version, contained no figurative representation. Amorphous brush strokes and abstract shapes resonate with the composition of written fragments. Abboud was making a double statement of artistic modernism here. The first is a decisively abstract formal interpretation of *Maqamat al-Hariri*, *contra* al-Wassiti's figurative canon. It is directed at a contemporary artistic practice in the Arab world preoccupied with the resuscitation of aesthetic heritage in quests for cultural authenticity. The second chooses the book as a form to subvert the traditionally hierarchical order of word and image, reading and

[21] The whole volume slides into a protective carton box. It is 35 cm in height and 17.5 cm in width when closed.

seeing. The artist here takes over as the new author of the book and submits its original text to the sensory realm of the visual. The book–cum–artistic act performs a rebellious reversal of aesthetic priority in an Arab cultural tradition that has historically favoured text.

This critical exploration of the book as a concept and aesthetic form locates Abboud's endeavour within the purview of artists' books, as defined by Drucker, and distinguishes it from other art books in Dar an-Nahar's series. Furthermore, at least two additional features of this book materialize the abstract category 'artist's book' and its symbolic attribution. First, whilst the book is monochrome (black on white paper), printed on offset machines at the publisher's press, the opening folio consists of a coloured lithographic print. Abboud drew on and printed from lithographic stone at a specialized arts printer in Paris. Second, Abboud's *Maqamat al-Hariri* was printed in a numbered and limited edition of 300, 25 of which were hand-numbered and signed by the artist. Evidently, the price of Abboud's 'artist's book' sold at 10 times the price of other books in the series.[22] Unsurprisingly, the book was awarded at the Arabic Book Fair.

Conclusion

Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' mobilized different modern aesthetic modalities of the book, from carefully produced art books to the more experimental artist's book. Moreover, different circuits of visuality crisscrossed through and intersected in its publishing endeavour: from decolonizing Arab artist's quests for nationalist place-bound artistic modernism, as in al-Azzawi's Sumerian inspired art, to its counter claim by Chafic Abboud, the subversion of aesthetic heritage and tradition, and passing through the global visual economy of 'transparent' design, as operational in Ajjaj Irrawi's typographic modernism.

While these books thematically excavated a genealogy of texts from the Levantine Arab East, their various explorations as modern aesthetic objects, in

[22] The signed copies were sold at LBP150 while the rest at LBP75.

conjunction with transcultural circuits of visuality and transnational social relations (from Baghdad to Paris), mark Dar an-Nahar's publishing as a determinedly cosmopolitan cultural endeavour. This cosmopolitan visuality linked Beirut's thriving art scene and related economy with an emerging industry of publishing and associated printing competencies that operated in a transnational Arab scope. The nexus of aesthetic, technological and economic relations forged a highbrow art publishing market and in turn constituted a cosmopolitan and aesthetically attuned public of the Arabic book. Returning to the enthusiastic words of the art critic Nazih Khater best describes the public conjured in Dar an-Nahar's modernist endeavour of Arabic book-making:

> In point of fact, there is a new spirit that has entered the realm of the contemporary Arabic book. Its secret lies in the legacy of the Arab *nahda*, which has surpassed the anxiety of searching and reached contemporary vanguard achievements. Its framework is the new Arab society, whose vanguard has liberated itself from the dictatorship of tradition and attachment to the past, working to accomplish itself on the basis of a global humanity. And where there is a society in motion, there is a book to be written. The Arabic book has entered the actuality of life (Khater 1968).

This discourse — carried in the printed surface of Dar an-Nahar and *Shiʿr's* publications and through their cosmopolitan enunciating subjects, authors, artists and readers — marks genealogically a second moment in the history of Arabic publishing and intellectual life since the *Nahda*. It is both an affirmation of its legacy, a continuation of its themes, but also a desire to surpass the anxieties of cultural tradition and 'Oriental' subjectivity arising from a binary relation with the 'Western' colonial encounter. This reassessment of the *nahda* was inscribed in the critical debates emerging in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, referred to as the 'second *nahda'* (Kassab 2010: 20). To be sure, in the history of the printed Arabic book, this moment characterised a second *nahda* in reclaiming the visuality of the book as an aesthetic form, tied to the emancipatory pursuit for knowledge.

However, Dar an-Nahar's cosmopolitanism was met with counter claims of aesthetic modernism in the design of Arabic books. These claims summoned a politically engaged artist/designer in a process of decolonization whose condition of modernity rested on Arab nationalist quests of aesthetic authenticity. Its articulation in the printed surface of Arabic books and movement across transnational circuits of book design and distribution will be pursued in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5

Ornament is No Crime: The Double Claim of Aesthetic Authenticity from Cairo to Beirut

In 1973, Helmi el-Touni, the art-director of the leading publishing establishment Dar al-Hilal was banned from practice by the Egyptian state, on account of his political commitment as an artist, *fannan multazim* (el-Touni 2008). Like others, el-Touni was the unwanted socialist in Egypt's new era of *infitah*, 'the Open Door Policy', of Anwar al-Sadat, the new president of Egypt. Invitations from publishers in Beirut offered not just a way out of his hardship in Cairo, but, more importantly, a chance to pursue his political engagements through the visual arts and in printed matter. However, he was not the only Egyptian graphic designer and illustrator whose expertise had been solicited by Beirut publishers. In the 1960s and 1970s a confluence of politics and publishing revitalized the Cairo–Beirut link, itself emblematic of the turn of the century Arab *nahda*. This connection saw a reverse flow, which advantaged Beirut by way of Cairo's amassed expertise in this industry. But was this influx of graphic design expertise merely the portability of technique by mobile agents? What else might be on the move in and through this transnational flow? And in the particular context of the political conjuncture in which the Cairo–Beirut connection was situated?

The transnational connection between Cairo and Beirut in the context of Arabic literature and publishing has received considerable attention.

Scholarship in this area is generally centred on the important role these two cities held in the formation of the Arab *nahda* of the 19th century and early 20th century Arab East. The political, cultural and literary connections of this period have been examined from a variety of disciplinary perspectives by historians and scholars of Arabic literature, print culture and publishing, thus enriching our understanding of how cultural forms and flows have shaped social and political relations in the wake of Arab nationalism. Many concede that, in the first half of the 20th century, Cairo developed as an important centre of publishing, animated by an influx of intellectuals from Lebanon and Syria (chapter 4). But very little work, however, is available on the cultural flows between Cairo and Beirut in this post-colonial moment. Nasserite pan-Arabism has been amply studied, as a key political force of transformation in the region; yet very little is known of the role of visual and material culture in the transnational circulation of decolonisation discourses and associated aesthetic sensibilities. As Walter Armburst has already pleaded: 'in an academic world in which power is understood to be systematic but dispersed through institutions, one would not expect the study of politics to be reduced to political statements' (2013: 55). His plea highlights the fact that media studies in the Arab Middle East has privileged political discourse in news mediation, especially on television — a critique that identifies a wider problem in the literature which, as he rightly claims, has focused almost entirely on two distinct historical moments in technologies of public mediation: the introduction of printing in the late 19th century and the advent of contemporary transnational satellite and digital media. This century-long gap in media history of the modern Arab world,[1] requires attention. This chapter seeks to help fill part of that wide gap: It sheds light on neglected aesthetic practices and visual cultures attached to publishing and print technologies of the post-independence period. And in doing so, it also engages with another similarly ignored facet of cultural history — the transnational movement of artists-graphic designers and

[1] With a few exceptions, particularly in the study of Arab cinema and television (see Armbrust 2013: 63-64) and in the study of Arabic comics (see Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994).

the fluidity of aesthetics and media cultures across the borders of post-colonial Arab states.

In the few historical accounts that there are of the press and publishing in a post-independence Arab context, scholars point to a migration from Cairo to Beirut (Atiyeh 1995, Mermier 2005). Frank Mermier points to a transfer of publishing expertise and intellectual production, as well as to the relocation from Egypt to Beirut of some establishments to escape nationalization (Mermier 2005: 47–49). This influx, culminating in the late 1960s, was epitomized by the emergence of the popular idiom recited by Lebanese publishers: 'Egypt writes, Lebanon prints and Iraq reads' — a statement indicating Beirut's role as a transnational hub in the commercial exchange of literary and knowledge production in the Arab market (Mermier 2005: 49). New competencies in printing technologies and distribution techniques accompanied Beirut's new role in the transnational field of publishing and outgrew those of Cairo (Mermier 2005: 50–51). In this transnational flow of capital, texts, publishers and authors, the movement of graphic designers connected to the publishing industry is yet to be unravelled. There is hardly any mention in the literature on the flow of expertise in the production of illustrated books and magazines from Cairo to Beirut. Emerging Beirut-based publishers, especially the politically engaged examples I discuss here, relied on expertise developed in Cairo.

This chapter thus examines the Cairo-Beirut circuit of visuality, while probing the politico-aesthetic relations and cultures of the visual carried through the influx of this expertise. Helmi el-Touni's move to Beirut in 1974 and his settling there for a decade is paradigmatic of the Cairo-Beirut connection and will constitute my focus. I trace the aesthetic and political relations articulated in and through el-Touni's professional practice as a graphic designer, while analysing in particular two sustained consultancies he undertook with major Beirut-based institutions: Beirut's Arabic Book Fair and the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing. My analysis will bring to light a historical conjuncture where a transnational nexus of industry, politics, visual economy and aesthetics was in full play. Before moving into a discussion of

the specifically Lebanese context, it is necessary to give an account of the radical discourses of cultural and aesthetic decolonization which emerged in 1950s and ‘60s Cairo, not least in order to understand their articulation in the visual culture of illustrated printed publications.

Egypt’s Cultural and Aesthetic Decolonization

In the wake of the 1952 revolution, the Suez crisis and Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir’s rise to power, Egypt experienced a euphoric moment of decolonization on a mass scale. Ensuing public discourse wrote these events, the Egyptian leader and people as signifiers of radical political and cultural transformation in the region — the vanguard of a renewed Arab national awakening articulated along socialist political lines.

Literature and the visual arts were particularly important sites of struggle in processes of decolonization and specifically in the articulation of Egyptian and pan-Arab nationalism. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon foregrounds the importance of aesthetic and cultural practices in the popular struggle of national liberation:

> A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom, which these countries are carrying on. (Fanon 1965: 233)

Fanon’s theorization of Third Worldist national liberation struggles was written in the crucible of the Algerian anti-colonial moment and in the wake of Egypt’s wrested national autonomy. His description of cultural radicalization among the colonized illuminates our understanding of the entanglement of aesthetic

and political fields in the Egyptian case. Fanon remarks that at first the native intellectual, in reaction against local traditions, assimilates the modern culture of the occupying power. Cultural resistance and political subjectivities arise later in anti-colonial struggle and through the emergence of a national culture. The politicization of culture constitutes a revolutionary moment in the creative expression of the colonized intellectual:

> This may be properly called a literature of combat, in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space. (Fanon 1965: 240)

Fanon's 'literature of combat' is not far from the literary discourse of *iltizam*, the Arab nationalist formulation of Sartre's *literature engagée* foregrounded in journals such as *al-Adab* in the late 1950s (chapter 3), which gave rise to a politically motivated transnational Arabic literary culture. Egypt saw the development of the modern realist novel with pioneering Egyptian authors such as Naguib Mhafouz. Arabic novels of the 1950s and '60s expressed both the desire and the necessity for structural change, deploying themes of social injustice and articulating everyday realities of urban class struggle and rural deprivation with a politics of national liberation (Badawi 2006: 21, Allen 1982). Within the purview of building the new socialist order, the publishing industry was nationalized and new public authorities were formed to plan and oversee the political transformation of Egypt's various cultural industries. Major privately owned publishing establishments — such as Dar al-Hilal, Dar al-Ahram and Dar al-Maʿarif, dating back to the *nahda* and responsible for the publication of leading periodicals and books — became publically owned enterprises, their governing editorial body granted semi-autonomy (Atiyeh 1995). The state, in short, became the main patron of the arts. It planned, commissioned, supported, but also censored, artistic activities through the

Supreme Council for the Development of Arts and Literature set up in 1956 (Winegar 2006: 143–48).

Post-revolutionary discourse resonated materially in other aesthetic fields. Egyptian cinema in the 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of realism as a new genre. Mobilized by the political conjuncture, aesthetic realism formed inter-textual relations between the written novel and film. Directors often adapted fictions of contemporary novelists to the cinematic visuality of the big screen, while prominent authors also wrote scenarios for films.[2] Protagonists of realism in Egyptian cinema, both filmmakers and critics, strove to advance progressive, socially committed films, in contradistinction to what was judged to be the formulaic commercialism of pre-revolutionary Egypt's popular entertainment industry.[3] Initially dubbed the "Hollywood on the Nile", Egyptian cinema — a thriving industry since the 1930s with a pan-Arab scope of distribution — was nationalized in 1963 (see Shafik 2007).

The urge to decolonize art from decades of European hegemony was now avidly expressed by contemporary Egyptian artists. Historically, Egypt was the first country in the Arab world to embrace modern art in its European institutional framework. A professional academic art training, based on the French Beaux Arts system, was established at the turn of the 20th century, forming the aesthetic discourse and practice of the modern pioneers (see Naef 1996: 89–90; Shabout 2007: 21–22). This first generation of academically trained Egyptian artists endeavoured to instil a modern art practice divorced from Islamic arts traditions (Karnouk 2005: 12–14). Like other Arab artists, their colonial encounter with European modern art and associated discourses of

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[2] Director Salah Abu Seif adapted novels written by Ihsan Abd-el-quddous (eg. La anam [1957]) and by Naguib Mahfuz (eg. Bayn alsama wal-ard [1959]; Bidaya wa nihaya [1960]); Director Henry Barakat adapted Fi baytuna rajul (1963) from a novel by Abd-el-quddous and Al-haram (1965) from a novel by Yusuf Idriss.

[3] Both Walter Armbrust (2000b) and Viola Shafik (2007: 246–249) have argued against these aesthetic distinctions and periodization of Egyptian film genres, which have served to wrongly dismiss pre-revolutionary popular films and undermine the coded complexity of social modernization at play in such films.

artistic originality and autonomy constituted a rupture with Islamic art traditions, which were recast as decorative craft (Shabout 2007).

In the midst of the 1950s political turmoil, a decolonizing movement emerged in artistic practices, foregrounding discourses of cultural authenticity (Winegar 2006: 96–99). Its general politics of national and cultural affirmation were not different from those articulated by contemporaneous art movements in Iraq (see chapter 4). New art collectives questioned their 'Western' artistic formations, which they believed alienated them from Egyptian social reality and severed any ties to an Islamo-Arab cultural context. In turn, the visual arts were not impermeable to the literary debates concerning political commitment, *iltizam*, and responsibilities incumbent upon the artist in the new Egyptian socialist order. Contemporary artists were motivated by populist socialist political ideals, to reach out to 'the people' and authenticate their artwork, both in content and aesthetic form, to chime with the everyday reality of Egyptians. The state, in turn, initiated programs to bring art to 'the masses' (see Winegar 2006: chapter 4).

In the Egyptian socialist conjuncture, however, artists did not systematically adopt the aesthetic methods of socialist realism. Moreover, direct political engagements through art were limited to specific moments of upheaval. Political posters, for instance, thrived in public spaces mainly during the 1956 Suez conflict, mobilizing national affect in support of the resistance (Naef 1996: 91; al-Kawakib 1956). Nevertheless, a shared political discourse constituted an alternative aesthetic approach amongst a post-independence generation of Egyptian artists. Sylvia Naef outlines two characteristics that distinguish this generation from their predecessors. The first is a concern with social themes, representing claims to an 'authentic' Egypt. This was characterized in inter-textual constructions of 'authentic Egyptian' subjects, namely representations of peasants in the countryside and in the everyday life of people in Cairo's popular neighbourhoods. The second consists of formal explorations referencing vernacular visual cultures, derived from a plethora of folk drawings and Islamic art traditions (87–88). Jessica Winegar notes that the concepts of authenticity and heritage, *asala* and *turath*, go hand in hand in this

artistic quest: 'Heritage is a key element of the "roots" associated with *asala* [authenticity]. Thus *asala* is a consciously historical perspective. It is also primarily insular and significantly nostalgic' (2006: 98). Nonetheless, the conceptual articulation of authenticity with heritage produced a tension that was often expressed in anxieties over artistic modernity. These tensions structured the decolonising discourse of artistic practice in 1960s socialist Egypt and beyond.

Among the academically trained artists of the period, some enacted more radically engaged populist aesthetic endeavours. They abandoned the institutionalized hierarchies of the Beaux Arts structure altogether, striving radically to transform the aesthetic sensibilities in the everyday life of people, in a manner akin to Fanon's 'literature of combat'. They chose printed media, Egypt's modern public culture, as their canvas for political action. They thus carried the aesthetic underpinnings of a *literature engagée* beyond the textual imprint, extending its remit to the visual surface of the printed page. A number of politically engaged artists came to constitute Egypt's vanguard caricaturists, illustrators and graphic designers for the now state-owned publishing establishments. This group of artists shaped the aesthetic influx into Beirut's publishing printscape of the 1970s.

According to the main protagonist of a graphically expressed art practice, Mohieddine Ellabbad (1940–2010), an 'Egyptian school of modern Arabic caricature' began to take shape in the late 1950s (Ellabbad 1987: 71-72).[4] This vanguard movement was formed in the magazine *Rose el-Yousef* and associated weekly *Sabah el-Khayr.* Both periodicals are regarded as pioneering establishments of critical illustration in Egyptian public culture, where founding figures such as George Bahgori (b. 1932) and Salah Jahin (1930–1986) forged new methods and a new generation of visual artists apprenticed and earned acclaim. Their names include Bahgat Othman (1931–2001), Ahmad Hijazi (1936-2011) and Ellabbad. This 'school', according to Ellabbad,

[4] Ellabbad reiterates this point across different articles he regularly wrote in *Sabah el-Khayr* in 1985 and later compiled in his serialized publication *Nazar!* (Vision), see especially the first issue of *Nazar!* (1987).

reconfigured the neat separation between two conventions of illustration that dominated the Egyptian press: political cartoons and burlesque social satire. The former, a staple of the daily press, was directly concerned with the state of political affairs. And the latter, characteristic of illustrated magazines, notes Ellabbad, consisted of largely non-political, stereotypical representations that lampooned generic themes in Egyptian society and the lifestyle of its élite. Conversely, the new press illustration of the 'Egyptian school' blurred the lines between political and social satire: it engaged critically in everyday aspects of Egyptian society and politics. The aesthetic endeavours and shared discourse of its protagonists, including Ellabbad — his historical narrative notwithstanding — is well inscribed in the socialist political framework and decolonising quest for national affirmation.

As Roberta Dougherty has observed, illustrated popular magazines of the pre-revolution era, such as Dar al-Hilal's *al-Ithnayn* launched in the 1930s, staged an Egyptian national identity amidst a burlesque mishmash of elements whereby 'the boundaries between high and low, modern and traditional, even Egyptian and Western is not firmly drawn' (Dougherty 2000: 244–46). Dar al-Hilal's magazines, *al-Musawwar* and *al-Ithnayn,* relied on mainly European illustrators and art directors, reflecting the cosmopolitan composition of Egypt's work force in the media industries (see Ellabbad 1987, Dougherty 2000, Shafik 2007). Amidst the fervour of the 1956 war, European press illustrators, like Levantine journalists, left Egypt overnight, as did their colleagues in the cinema industry.[5] While for some this moment characterized the demise of Egypt's leading regional role as a cosmopolitan cultural centre, it was written more positively into the Egyptian discourse of post-revolutionary processes of national affirmations. The departure of 'foreigners' was heralded as a first step in the decolonization of visual culture from decades of 'Western hegemony' and associated 'bourgeois' styles and rhetoric (Ellabbad 1987). The moment was narrated as a chance to realize the national aesthetic sensibilities and articulate critical artistic practices in the service of socialist post-colonial

[5] Illustrators such as Berni, Bernard, Kiraz, and Vidrof left to France; Zaki left to Israel, as did a large number of the Egyptian Jewish community (Ellabbad 1987).

futurity. The aesthetic field of post-colonial time was hegemonically structured in 1960s socialist Egypt along a past vs. future axis of antagonism that was articulated with class and anti-colonial struggles.[6] It was thus incumbent on the avant-garde graphic artist to radically define a progressive future.

Discourse concerning the popular graphic arts in Egypt intersected with that of cinema, as a technology of public mediation, and with that of fine arts in aesthetic form. Consequently, on a mediatic level, it set the practice against a preceding commercial entertainment industry and conceived of art politically in the service of building society. On a formal level, it strove culturally to authenticate aesthetic form in contradistinction to a Western academic art formation. These intersections, I suggest, lend the graphic arts a particular visuality in the decolonizing Arab conjuncture. What is important to note is that it is a visual culture that embodies a *double claim* of aesthetic authenticity, articulating radical socialist politics with processes of artistic decolonization, claiming place-bound political subjectivity in and through popular media. This radically populist *double claim* would constitute the aesthetic underpinning of a number of Egyptian visual artists working through printed mass media during the Nasserite era.

Art historians have largely neglected the visual culture associated with Egypt's publishing industries. Although this significant material merits study, I will focus, for the purpose of my argument here, on the work of two paradigmatic figures: Mohieddine Ellabbad and Helmi el-Touni. Both leading figures had professional relations with a number of publishers in Beirut, and both worked and identified themselves professionally as illustrators and graphic artists following academic training as visual artists in Cairo's Fine Arts Academy. El-Touni completed his diploma in 1958 and Ellabbad four years later. I discuss more closely the work of el-Touni in this chapter as he settled in

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[6] Recent scholarship, specially on the history of Egyptian cinema, has helped complicate these binary separations (commercial vs. committed; foreign vs. national) and critically appraise the post-revolutionary discourse (Armbrust 2000b and Shafik 2007). This is not my aim here; I am mapping the emergence of this discourse and its productive relation to artistic practice.

Beirut and engaged quite extensively with its world of books and publishing. Likewise, Ellabbad, and his colleagues in *Sabah el-Khayr,* transported the politico-aesthetic underpinnings of the Egyptian school of caricature beyond the Egyptian publishing context. I turn to the latter group more closely in chapter 7, where I discuss Ellabbad's important role as art director of the PLO-affiliated Dar al-Fata al-Arabi — a pioneering Arabic publishing house for children.

El-Touni began his career as an illustrator in the late 1950s with Dar al-Hilal's periodicals, when its European illustrators vacated the premises. Following a series of successes in this domain, he was appointed art director of al-Hilal's overall publications, book series and periodicals, in 1963. 'I consider myself a graphic artist and I like it even though I am nostalgic for painting' stated el-Touni (cited in Sabra 1983: 58), who maintained a side practice as a painter, which he only picked up more assiduously much later in his career. He explains that the rift between modern art and society made him abandon painting in his early career. Artistic practice through mass media, in his view, promised to form a bridge for this necessary social relation: 'We are a generation of mediators, our role is to present an artistic culture through print' (cited in Sabra 1983: 60). He maintains that the reproducible artwork, available through multiple copies in public culture just like music and literature, needs to substitute for painting's bourgeois value as a privately owned original piece that decorates a single house (ibid). Public awareness, according to el-Touni, requires rendering art accessible beyond exhibitions. Rather it necessitates forming people's aesthetic sensibilities in all aspects of their everyday lives (ibid).[7] His utopian political vision of art is not distinct from the turn of the century European historic avant-garde in the pursuit of 'merging art into life praxis' (Bürger 1984). On this front, his views are closest to the Russian Constructivists who abandoned bourgeois art and engaged as 'artists-

[7] El-Touni graphically changed the face of Dar al-Hilal's publications, including popular culture magazines such as *al-Kawakib*. Taking his organic role as artist-intellectual quite arduously, he regularly wrote in the latter periodical introducing in short articles modern artwork of canonical international artists and reviewed local exhibitions.

constructors' with industrial media, such as Alexander Rodchenko's design of posters and books published in the early years of the Soviet state (see Margolin 1997: chapter 3). Radical populist authenticity, in el-Touni's art, is however articulated with a place-bound politics of authenticity linked to struggles of decolonization.

The 1967 Arab defeat in the Six Day War against Israel shattered much of the utopianism of 1960s Nasserite politics. The military post-colonial Egyptian state was deemed a failure where it was supposed to be most effective. Rather, state bureaucracy, corruption, censorship and increased authoritarianism limited the formation of an autonomous creative field. A moment of collective dystopia and depression took hold of intellectuals and artists. Added to that, they were faced with Egypt's abrupt neoliberal turn under Sadat's reign in the 1970s, and its new regional role in spearheading 'peace negotiations' with Israel. Socialist cultural policy was radically changed, dissenters in the public sector dismissed and much of the old vanguard substituted (Winegar 2006: 148–49). Helmi el-Touni, like many of his contemporaries, was not spared Sadat's crackdown. In this political conjuncture Beirut offered a welcome to his Arab nationalist aesthetics.

Helmi el-Touni: the Beirut Years

Two invitation calls from publishers in Beirut promised el-Touni a way out. The first was from Suheil Idriss, founding editor of Dar al-Adab; the second from Talal Salman, the founding editor of a newly forming Lebanese daily newspaper, *as-Safir* (el-Touni 2008). Both publishing establishments represented beacons of Nasserite pan-Arabism and commitment to the Palestinian liberation struggle. El-Touni thus moved to Beirut in 1974 and ended up settling for close on 10 years. He brought with him an expertise in designing for the Arabic press amassed in Cairo. But beyond that, el-Touni carried through in his graphic design practice a new modernist aesthetic that articulated Arab nationalism with socialism. He thus connected Beirut with a flow of aesthetic modernism distinct from the Euro-American modernism. The double claim of aesthetic authenticity through printed media was sought after

by like-minded cultural establishments and political organizations in Beirut. In what follows, I discuss some of the key professional collaborations el-Touni engaged with during his Beirut years and analyse the resultant visual culture.

Suheil Idriss, the founding editor of *al-Adab* — the pan-Arabist periodical summoning a politically committed Arabic literature — expanded his literary engagements in 1956 to found Dar al-Adab publishing house. When he called on Helmi el-Touni, Iddriss was not only building from his familiarity with his work in Dar al-Hilal, but acted also within a continuum of such collaborations with other artists from Cairo. The monthly, which was struggling to visually materialize in print its politico-aesthetic project in modern Arabic literature (chapter 4), regularly commissioned graphic designers trained in Cairo to design Dar al-Adab's illustrated book covers.[8] This was not uncommon for a house that regularly published iconic Egyptian authors among other Arab writers and that enjoyed, like the journal, a largely pan-Arab circuit of distribution. El-Touni's collaboration with Dar al-Adab was not new. His aesthetic approach, however, was.

El-Touni's next contribution to the visual culture of Beirut's printed matter was his design of the Arabic newspaper *as-Safir*. With the Arab nationalist slogan, 'the newspaper of Lebanon in the Arab nation and the newspaper of the Arab nation in Lebanon', Talal Salman launched the new daily in the Spring of 1974 with finances from Gaddafi's post-colonial Libya (Kassir 2003: 597). The emergence of this public outlet in the current regional political conjuncture and on the already saturated Lebanese political media landscape, a year before the start of the civil war in Lebanon, was not coincidence. In a regional context, popular anxieties over the 'treacherous' and

[8] Dar al-Adab first relied on Ismail Shammout, the Palestinian-born artist, to design its illustrated book-covers in the late 1950s and early '60s. Shammout trained in Cairo's Fine Arts Academy in the 1950s and worked, to sustain his living, as a commercial illustrator. He moved to Beirut in 1958 and set up with his brothers a graphic design/advertising agency (Shammout 1989: 50–55). He abandoned the commercial art practice as he became involved and eventually led the PLO's art department in the mid 1960s (see chapter 6). Following on from Shammout, Dar al-Adab maintained in the 1960s a steady stream of collaboration with Egyptian graphic designers, these include: Hussein Bikar, Gamal Kotob, and Ahmad Morsi.

‘defeatist’ peace negotiations Sadat was holding with Israel stirred the ‘Arab street’. Domestically, political antagonism was becoming more pronounced in Beirut’s everyday social life and materialized in sporadic violent confrontations. As Samir Kassir eloquently put it, this moment indeed marked ‘the end of innocence’ (2003: 563). Left-wing and Arab nationalist political parties in Lebanon contested the hegemony of the Christian-Maronite political élite over the Lebanese state since its formation. They denounced ensuing structural socio-economic disparity, which articulated both class and sect, privileging Christians over Muslims in Lebanese society and polity. Furthermore, on a regional and international scale of politics, both Left-wing and Arab nationalist parties were committed to a common liberation struggle with the Palestinian Resistance, amidst global Cold War tensions. The counter-hegemonic struggle articulated several nodal points in a relation of equivalence that linked Arab nationalism, social justice, the liberation of Palestine and global anti-imperialism. In this conjuncture *As-Safir* proclaimed itself as the ‘voice of the voiceless’[9] on a transnational scale of power relations and political struggle. It thus staged its newsprint as the counter-hegemonic media channel ‘of Lebanon in the Arab nation’ and ‘of the Arab nation in Lebanon’. In this context, the choice of Helmi el-Touni as the graphic designer, who would create the newsprint’s visual interface with its public, was not merely technical. His expertise in the Cairene press was undoubtedly sought after. More decisively, however, *As-Safir*’s calling upon el-Touni is symptomatic of the meeting of politics and aesthetic affinities.

Helmi el-Touni had no sooner arrived than he was asked to design the printed communications of a number of institutions in Beirut besides Dar al-Adab and *as-Safir*. I will be focusing in this chapter on his professional collaborations with key institutions connected to the world of books and publishing; namely, the Arabic Book Fair and the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing. His equally important graphic contributions in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle will be covered in chapters 6 and 7.

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[9] Another official slogan *As-Safir* adopted.

Beirut's Arabic Book Fair

In early May 1974, Helmi el-Touni was approached by Beirut's Arabic Book Fair to design a promotional poster for its upcoming annual event. Little did he know that his graphic interpretation and promotion of this event would turn into the Fair's main emblem for decades thereafter. The poster design features the illustration of a seated couple, man and woman, in affectionate embrace, with an open book shared on their lap [Fig. 1]. Contrary to a pervasive iconography of embraces — in which the male figure enfolds that of the female,[10] evoking patriarchal tropes of protection, vulnerability and passivity of the female subject — the drawing here places the figures in a relation of equality facing the viewer. They are equal in their embodied relation to one another and to the book they hold. The triangulated relation — man, woman, book — rendered in an enclosed circular composition connotes an organic bond of equality in access to knowledge. The iconography links together concepts of equality and knowledge, both tenets of a secular discourse of modernity. Yet the aesthetics in which these concepts are rendered also connote a traditional Arabo-Islamic cultural heritage. The couple, in their general depiction, manner in which they are sat, dressed and drawn, resemble figures blown up from a miniature painting. From the outset, the relation between the iconography and aesthetic codes seems to present a paradox. How can symbols of a supposedly European project of enlightenment and modernity be so comfortably enunciated in aesthetic forms borrowed from a traditional Islamo-Arabic cultural repertoire? The popularity and subsequent public life of this illustration indicates that perhaps the signifying relation linking these codes was not at all paradoxical however it may seem to a detached observer. The image was used over again for several decades in consecutive posters promoting the Arabic Book Fair and became the institution's logo in continuous use up until today.

[10] See for instance Gustav Klimt's (1908) *The Kiss*.

El-Touni's illustration stylistically references the aesthetics of miniature painting in medieval Arabic manuscripts. Visual representation in the latter does not adhere to the optical principles of perspective. It is not concerned with a realistic depiction of the physical world on a two-dimensional surface. Rather, figurative elements are compositionally arranged in a relationship based on conceptual rules and temporal structure, which gives coherence to the narrative unfolding in the image (Clévenot 2001: 115). This aesthetic convention specially pioneered in the Abbasid era, exemplified in the canonical drawings of *Maqamat al-Hariri* by Yehya al-Wassiti discussed in chapter 4, continued under the Mamluk rule in Egypt and in Syria. In the latter period, representational codes ceded to ornamental motifs in the aesthetic expression of the image (Clévenot 2001: 115).

The illustration in the Arabic Book Fair poster presents an adaptation of this historical visual culture in modern graphic forms and colours. To start with, el-Touni substitutes the perspectival illusion of depth by drawing on a single flat plane. Lines and flat colours define the stylised shapes of the embracing couple. Varying arabesque motifs form graphical patterns that distinguish between the elements in the drawing. Furthermore, the ensemble is rendered in black, red and green on white paper — the four symbolic colours of Arab nationalism.[11] A golden background frame encloses partially on the central figure and echoes the golden book at the centre. The use of gold further consolidates the aesthetic reference to the tradition of illumination in Arabic manuscripts.

El-Touni's design is thus aesthetically embedded in a decolonising Arab nationalist quest for cultural authenticity in the arts. The aesthetic modality of the image performs a two-fold enunciation in that regard. The first is a purely aesthetic reference to the Islamic arts generally. The second acts as a symbolic code that is specific to the poster's reference: Arabic books. It recalls the art of the Arabic book historically since the golden age of Islam,

[11] A flag with these four colours first appeared during the Arab Revolt of 1915–1918, where revolutionary Arab nationalist politics first emerged against the ruling Ottoman Empire in connection with the Arab *nahda*.

significant since that is, the Abbasid period, which saw great developments in methods of publication, transcription, bookbinding, and book selling (Atiyeh 1995, Pedersen 1984). These Arabic books had no little effect on the European Enlightenment, not least, in translating ancient scientific and philosophical works and transmitting the Greek tradition, central to so-called 'Western' philosophy, which otherwise would have been lost (see Abattouy et al. 2001).

The seemingly paradoxical unfettered signifying relations between aesthetic and iconographic codes questioned earlier is now clear. Modern concepts of gender equality and enlightenment through knowledge are linked by way of aesthetics to a glorious past of Arabic book production. Art history is mobilized to authenticate the present, to advance the modern role of the Fair. The poster thus displaces European discourses of modernity from 'Western' mooring and appropriates its codes in Arab nationalist narratives and processes of artistic decolonisation. Underlying my analysis here is Timothy Mitchell's argument that the modern is staged as representation, in open-ended differential relations (2000a). This lends it immense capacity for replication and expansion, and at the same time makes modernity vulnerable to disruption, open to displacement and re-articulation (Mitchell 2000a: 27–29).

Helmi el-Touni's design gave an identifiable visual form to the Arabic Book Fair's discourse and activities. The Fair, now a reputable transnational annual fixture in Beirut's calendar of cultural events, had been initiated in a moment of crisis by a politically active group of Arab Nationalist students at the American University of Beirut (AUB). The university campus acted at the time as a space of intellectual and political interaction between Arab students from the region (Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi among others). Pan-Arab nationalism was an important ideological current that mobilized students in the late 1940s, specifically in connection with the annexation of Palestine in 1948 and subsequent anti-colonial struggles in other parts of the Arab world. George Habash, a Palestinian-born politically active AUB student, formed the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) upon his graduation in 1952. The ANM developed as a major Nasserite political organization in 1950s and '60s Lebanon. In the early 1950s, AUB saw a period of confrontation between the

demands of a politically active student body and the prohibition of political activity by the administration. Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa (the tight link), the leading Arab nationalist student society, was suspended in 1952 and dissolved two years later. Students reacted to the silencing of politics from campus life and claimed their rights to democratically organize and elect a student body. They demanded that 'freedom of inquiry' needs to be accompanied by political action (Anderson 2011: 144–45). As Betty Anderson has demonstrated, with these claims students exposed the internal contradictions of an American liberal education model, which professed freedom of speech and inquiry, yet denied students liberty to act (Anderson 2011: 150).

Shortly after disbanding, al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa was permitted to function on campus as a specifically cultural society.[12] The first cultural activity initiated by its former student members was to organize an exhibition of Arabic books on campus. The event formed part of the activities of the Arab Cultural Club (al-Nadi al-Thaqafi al-Arabi), an organization founded in 1944 by ʿUrwa members in close proximity to the AUB campus. Joined by a new generation of politically active ANM members and angry students, the club was revitalized in 1956 with the first staging of the Arabic Book Fair[13] [Fig. 2] (Nadi al-Thakafi 1980: 13–14). The date's significance in relation to the Suez Crisis was no less defining in the resurgence of the Club's membership: students at AUB were demanding the suspension of courses in order to join the war alongside Egypt. The Club's subsequent activities, including a prominent journal and lecture series, came to fill the gap in the intellectual life of engaged youth in Beirut. The latter had realized that an education disconnected from the

[12] Anderson mentions this and students' refusal of these terms but stops short at the important emergence of the Arabic Book Fair from this crisis.

[13] On the history of the Arabic Book Fair, see anniversary books published by the Arab Cultural Club: Nadi al-thakafi 1980; 1994; 2006.

aspirations of an Arab political subjectivity in this crucial moment of decolonization was mere technical training. [14]

Beirut's Arabic Book Fair politically symbolic beginning, however humble, was the first event of its sort in the Arab world. Cairo began organizing its own book fair 13 years later, in 1969, followed slowly by other Arab cities from the 1970s onwards (Mermier 2005: 135–136). Conceived as an exhibition (*maʿrad* [15]) of Arabic books, the organisers had clear pedagogical aims tied to an Arab national project of community building and knowledge formation. As stated in a booklet published in Arabic on the occasion of the second exhibition, taking place in AUB's West Hall:

> The Arabic book exhibition is an attempt at placing the Arab intellectual in front of his compatriot reader… in a way rarely available. That is in addition to placing the writer in front of the writer and the publisher next to the publisher so as to create a productive friction and creative competition.
>
> The exhibit introduces the value of books to the Arab citizen, encourages intellectuals to make more effort in such a way as to enrich the Arabic library and enhance Arab thought. Publishers will also be encouraged to produce such books and perfect their design.
>
> We hope this will encourage a productive competition amongst writers and publishers. (Nadi al-Thakafi 1957: 3–4)

The exhibition, organized annually, grew to become an important transnational event through the 1960s. The encounter between readers, authors and publishers from the Arab world also effected diplomatic exchange between participating nation states; Lebanese government officials opened the Fair in a

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[14] The linking of education, culture and politics, as such, was boldly stated in recruitment announcements on the pages of the Club's journal *al-Thaqafa al-Arabiyya* (Arab Culture) in its first volume (see *al-Thaqafa* 1957 no 2: 59).

[15] The Arabic word *maʿrad*, denoting display, is used to refer to exhibitions and fairs more broadly.

ceremony attended by consular officials of participating states. In addition to the initial intellectual pedagogical imperative, the exhibition performed its modern role as visual spectacle of national industry. Books were displayed as material artefacts of 'Arab knowledge' production. As the organizers put it, in this exhibition 'we see the embodiment of our intellectual production' (Nadi al-Thakafi 1957: 4). From 1960 onwards, awards were annually bestowed for 'best book production' and 'best exhibition display'. The exhibition thus developed as a visual index and material embodiment of 'Arab' intellectual modernity.[16] Ten years after its 1956 début, the Arabic Book Fair moved its exhibition site beyond the University's gates to other public venues in the city.

The 1974 Fair [Fig. 3], for which Helmi el-Touni designed a poster, took place for the first time in the iconic 'Glass Hall' of the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism building. Housed in one of Beirut's major projects of modern architectural design, the exhibition space opens to the street through a large glass window structure. It is located at the entrance of Hamra Street — the modern artery of 1970s Beirut par excellence. The commercial hub of Hamra (chapter 2) was by then also home to an increasing number of bookshops and offices of the newly emerging publishing houses. That, in addition to Hamra's cafés, which constituted a space of encounter for Beirut's new intelligentsia, made the 'Glass Hall' a perfect new location for the Arabic Book Fair. The overlap, at least spatially, between the Arabic Book Fair and the Ministry of Tourism is symptomatic of the intersection of interests between the two institutions in 1974. The initially radical Arab nationalist project is now

[16] Based on the archives I have studied, there is a lot more to be said about the history of the Arabic Book Fair in the way it acted as a visual index of Arab intellectual and cultural modernity. The fair conceived in the late 1950s and organized by radical students at the AUB, originally a 19th century protestant missionary institution, complicates our understanding of the cultural forms of dissent to colonial legacies of 'civilizing missions' and the limits of such dissent in the framework of a liberal educational institutions and the global context of America's new imperial role. Except from internal institutional monographs published by the Arab Cultural Club in its various anniversaries, no scholarly text has tackled the history of the Fair. Such a study remains to be done. I can only address it tangentially in the context of the arguments I'm making here. However, I hope to publish an article on this in due course.

prominently at the crux of Beirut's transnational Arabic publishing industry, visibly exhibiting its role as an Arab intellectual and cultural node to Hamra Street's *flaneurs*. The Lebanese state, by way of its Ministry of Tourism, reckoned by now that Beirut was not just a Euro-Mediterranean site of leisure tied to a Phoenicio-Roman past. Business as usual ironed out the political antagonism underlying the two discourses — but not for long.

Meanwhile, Helmi el-Touni's graphic design was a perfect match, both aesthetically and politically. It gave the Arabic Book Fair an identifiable image, which it had struggled to materialize in its printed communication for many years. From then on, he designed most of the Arab Cultural Club's promotional printed matter and acted on its administrative committee between 1979 and 1982 [Figs 4–6]. Touni's design not only carried through aesthetic articulations of Arab subjectivity, excavated by way of art history, but also conveyed a promise of modernity in its iconographic codes and overall graphic composition. The contrasting colours, flat figures and graphic symbols are clearly in dialogue with contemporary international pop aesthetics. Helmi el-Touni had a clear position on this: 'Islamic abstraction has preceded European abstraction by 13 centuries' (cited in Sabra 1983: 60). His statement was part of a wider discourse shared by Arab modern artists and critics who by the early 1980s could reiterate, alongside postcolonial art history, that the 'originality' of the European historic avant-garde hinged on disavowed cultural encounters with, and artistic appropriations of the 'non-West'. Paul Klee and Henri Matisse in particular are cited, in the context of such discussion, for their 'borrowing' from Islamic visual cultures.[17]

This discourse legitimated Arab artists' modernist claim to 'originality' as they interpreted and actualized the aesthetic and philosophical underpinnings of Islamic art traditions in their contemporary practice. The statement underlies a nationalist artistic subjectivity, which seeks to debunk charges of 'foreign influence' and 'Western imitation'. It struggles to subvert

[17] These terms are structured along hierarchical relations of power by which the West 'borrows' and is 'inspired' from the arts of the East, while the East is 'influenced' by the West and 'imitates' its art.

these concerns and the geography of power in which they are embedded. El-Touni's riposte points to anxieties inherent to processes of artistic decolonization as artists attempt to negotiate between 'authenticity and modernity' — two nodal concepts which articulated the terms of artistic debate for many Arab artists in the 1970s.

Responding to a question about his position vis-à-vis 'authenticity and modernity', Helmi el-Touni saw a problem in the correlation between these concepts. 'We have to find an alternative to "authenticity and modernity"'. 'Authenticity is not bound to time', he explained, while modernity is. He pursues this point further in the following:

> Some approach modernity with an extremist outlook that dictates compliance with, and imitation of, the West. Extremism (*tatarruf*) on the opposing side of this debate, conceives of authenticity as an imitation of predecessors (*salaf*) and a repetition of what has already been said. […] It [authenticity] is to be yourself, in your place, environment and culture, it is not history but rather what we have reached. (Cited in Sabra 1983: 60–61)

El-Touni clearly wanted to distinguish his position from either ends of the political debate on art in the post-colonial Arab conjuncture.[18] Modernity is desirable, yet its attainment does not require subservience to the 'West' nor is authenticity the antithesis of being modern. Furthermore, he equates positions either ends of the debate with extremism. His rhetoric, when he was interviewed in 1983, is commensurate with anxieties over a waning secular Arab nationalist left, further threatened by the spectre of a political Islam on the rise in the region, empowered on one side by the example of the newly instituted Islamic Republic of Iran and on the other by al-Sadat's flirting with

[18] Some of the ideas on modernity and authenticity el-Touni expresses here are close to those stated by Adonis in his influential "Bayan al-Hadatha" (Modernity Manifesto) published in 1979. Identity is historically constituted and dynamic rather than locked in an already given form, authenticity as such is not 'a state of being in the past to which the Arab needs to return, but a free and creative movement forward' (Kassab 2010: 132–133).

Islamists in Egypt to combat his Nasserite opponents. With an Islamist political discourse of authenticity gaining credence — and tightly linked to religious scripture and tradition despite major divergences across movements — heritage and authenticity did not go uncritically hand in hand for Arab artists on the Left in the early 1980s. We have to replace these terms, el-Touni says to his interlocutor in Beirut, by referring to our artistic practice as 'an authentic contribution to world culture' (cited in Sabra 1983: 61).

Helmi El-Touni's understanding of 'authenticity' subscribes to the modernist framework of individuated artistic practice that critically interprets, experiments and appropriates, rather than reproducing traditionally passed on cultural forms (Bürger 1984). Yet for him, rather than constituting a universal endeavour, artistic authenticity is understood as a place-bound cultural practice that is synchronic with world culture. His visual explorations of an Arabo-Islamic cultural heritage embody place-specific claims of aesthetic authenticity, articulated with modernist conceptual frameworks and interpreted through contemporary graphic abstractions. This approach is clearly manifest in the Arab Book Fair poster discussed above and in other prints for the Arab Cultural Club. It is all the more pronounced in Helmi el-Touni's graphic design for the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing — his major contribution to the visual culture of transnational Arabic publishing from Beirut to which I now turn.

'Egypt writes, Lebanon prints and Iraq reads': the Case of the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing

Al-Muʾassasa al-Arabiya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashir (The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing) epitomises the new role Beirut acquired in the 1970s as a radical node in transnational Arabic publishing. The city became 'the publishing capital of dissident groups' writes Atiyeh (1995: 243): publishing houses with political motivations proliferated representing the ideological variants of Arab nationalism and the new Left in the post-1967 conjuncture. These publishers carried through their transnational spaces of circulation new discourses that articulated the demands of an international New Left with local

problems of underdevelopment, inequality, political power, nation-building, secularization and the Palestinian cause (Mermier 2005: 63–64). The rise of the Palestinian Resistance and the relocation of the PLO to Beirut in 1970 played no little role in configuring Beirut as a radical intellectual and literary node (chapters 6 and 7). Publishing houses, while not necessarily operating simply as propaganda outlets, were indirectly subsidized by allied Arab and non-Arab states (Iraq, Libya, Algeria, South Yemen, North Korea …etc.) and various factions of the PLO (ibid).[19] Al-Muʾassasa al-Arabiya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashir was no exception. It was indeed symptomatic of the changed role of Arabic publishing in 1970s Beirut. What differentiates it from other contemporary politically-oriented publishers is the sustained attention attributed to the aesthetic form of the Arabic book. Other publishers involved contemporary Arab artists occasionally, depending on the significance of the author and the issues foregrounded in the book.[20] I return to such examples in chapter 6, when I discuss the political engagement of Arab artists with the revolutionary politics of the Palestinian resistance. Here, I want to discuss the pioneering case of the Arab Institute in connection with Helmi el-Touni's foundational role as its in-house graphic designer.

It is in this context that the popular statement 'Egypt writes, Lebanon prints and Iraq reads' emerged as a preferred statement, even proudly recited by Lebanese publishers from the late 1960s onwards (Mermier 2005: 49; Stephan-Hashem 1993). It refers to the transnational context of production and consumption of the Arabic book industry but also attaches specific functions to national sites in this circuit. Beirut acts as the intermediary site, whereby an influx of creative labour by Egyptian writers takes material form in printing technologies. Books, in turn, were disseminated through distribution networks for an Iraqi readership — state-subsidized by the revenues of nationalized oil economy — to consume. In this network of transnational social relations,

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[19] Financial support consisted largely in advance purchases in significant quantities of new books (Mermier 2005: 64–65).

[20] For example Ismail Shammout, Waddah Fares and Burhan Karkutli designed covers for the Leftist publisher Dar al-Taliʾa in the 1960s.

graphic designers and their artefacts are, to borrow from Bruno Latour (2000), important actors. Design is here another site of creative labour involving the manipulation of print technologies to give form to the artefact, which is the book. Building on from the materiality advanced by Latour, we could add, by way of W.J.T. Mitchell (2005), that the visuality of these books is no less active in the formation of aesthetic sensibilities and affective horizons than the published texts they carry in and through their circulation. As such, the circuit of visuality arising in the materiality of 'Egypt writes, Lebanon prints and Iraq reads' demands apposite enquiry.

Al-Muʾassasa can be compared, on the visual dimension of publishing, to Dar an-Nahar in the particular attention given to the visual economy of the printed Arabic book. However, as I shall discuss, the former differed from the latter on at least two accounts. First, Al-Muʾassasa was decidedly pan-Arab in politics and in distribution, while Dar an-Nahar was not. Second, al-Muʾassasa did not claim to publish 'precious books', as Dar an-Nahar did. Rather, it aimed to instruct and delight Arab subjects in their every day routines of reading and modern sensibilities. It thus engaged the visual arts in a hegemonic project of knowledge-production tightly entangled with the constitution of modern Arab subjectivities. Once more, the meeting of politics and aesthetic affinities is materialized in this project through the professional relation Helmi el-Touni held with this publishing house during his Beirut years.

In 1969, Abdul-wahhab Kayyali, the Arab nationalist intellectual, founded the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing. Kayyali, like other Palestinian-born intellectuals of his generation, embodies the transnational hyphenations that formed his intellectual and political identity in the diaspora. He is a Palestinian born, Iraqi national, who studied in Beirut before pursuing a doctoral degree in the UK on the modern history of Palestine. He was a member of the Iraqi Baath party in the 1960s and especially active in the Arab Liberation Front (ALF), an affiliate organization of the PLO, formed in 1969 with Baath pan-Arab ideological leaning and backed by the Iraqi state. His founding of the publishing house resonated with his political and intellectual Arab nationalist ideals. In praxis, it materialized Kayyali's transnational

networks of intellectual and political relations. Furthermore, the launch of such a project in, and from, Beirut was coterminous with the city's transformation as a transnational publishing node in the contemporary political conjuncture.

The Institute went on to publish major works by leading progressive Arab scholars and intellectuals such as Ihsan Abbas (Palestine 1920–Jordan 2000) and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (Palestine 1919–Iraq 1994), novelists such as Hani al-Raheb (Syria 1939–2000) and poets including Mahmoud Darwish (Palestine 1941–USA 2008). It championed controversial texts, otherwise difficult to publish, such as Nawal al-Saadawi's (Egypt b. 1931) feminist critique of Arab societies, which had caused a major stir in Egypt. The Institute also launched critical novelists such as Abdul-Rahman Muneef (1933–2004), whose vociferous ridicule of the Arab ruling élite — particularly his later work on the oligarchy of oil-rich Saudi Arabia — caused his books to be banned in some Arab countries and his Saudi citizenship to be revoked.

The Institute's book distribution matched in its geographic scope the transnational web of commissioned authors. The greater Arab market gave economic viability to the publishing endeavour and invigorated its production. On top of that list was Iraq, followed closely by Algeria and Libya. The first two made advance purchases on every title published: Iraq on account of the ideological and political connections Kayyali held with the Iraqi Baathists; Algeria was going through a major project of cultural decolonization and national affirmation, which involved the Arabization of education and literary culture, following decades of Francophone hegemony. The Arab Institute opened a subsidiary office in the UK in 1977 and published in English under the name of Third World Centre for Research and Publishing. By 1979, despite Lebanon's dark plunge into civil war, Kayyali's project was in full swing. The Arab Institute, according to an internal study, was publishing a yearly average of one book every day and a half. According to a former member of staff in charge of distribution, this was not enough for the founding-editor, who wanted to increase the production to the ambitious target of 'a book a day, 365 books a year' (Bou Jawdeh 2016). Kayyali developed a three-year plan to open bookshops in different Arab cities that would form major distribution outlets:

Baghdad, Algiers and Cairo. The plan was beginning to materialize before coming to a sudden halt, when in 1981, Kayyali was assassinated in his Beirut office.[21] His death dealt a serious blow to the publishing house that, compounded by the 1982 Israeli invasion of Beirut, forced the Arab Institute to relocate to Jordan.

Thematically, the publications of the Arab Institute — from critical studies to fiction and poetry — dealt, on one hand, with the renewal of an Arab intellectual and cultural heritage, and, on the other, with the modernization of Arab society. Both themes rearticulate the turn of the century Arabic publishing imperatives of the *nahda* and its discourses of modern Arab political, social and cultural affirmation in contemporary form. The themes of the Institute's Arab nationalist discourse were not restricted to the textual content of its publications. An Arab nationalist discourse was carried through aesthetically by way of reviving the art of the Arabic book in its modern printed form. Helmi el-Touni impeccably fulfilled this graphic design endeavour.[22] His professional relationship with the publishing house began while he was still in Cairo. He was commissioned by Kayyali to design book covers between 1971 and 1973. Kayyali was making regular trips to Cairo in the early phase of the project to commission Egyptian authors and to publicize the Arab Institute's publications. His friendship with the Nasserite intellectual, Ahmad Bahaʾeddin, former editor in chief of Dar al-Hilal, where Helmi el-Touni was art director, is an index of the transnational intersection of politics and aesthetics in the professional encounter with el-Touni.

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[21] Kayyali's killers are not officially known. It is believed that he was assassinated by *Hizb al-Da'wa* the Islamist-Shiite opposition movement to Iraqi Baath, which suffered a government crackdown in the 1970s and forced exile of its initial leader, M. Baqir al-Sadr. The conviction is further corroborated by the *Da'wa*'s implication in the bombing of the Iraqi embassy in Beirut in the same year.

[22] Before engaging Helmi el-Touni, the Arab Institute had worked with Lebanese political cartoonist Mahmoud Kahil. Upon el-Touni's return to Cairo in 1983, the job went to Syrian artist and calligrapher Mounir al-Shaʾrani.

Soon after his move to Beirut, el-Touni joined the Arab Institute's staff as in-house graphic designer — a job description that was considered rather novel in Beirut's book publishing sector (Bou Jawdeh 2016). El-Touni had an office of his own, referred to among staff as the art department. He also enjoyed some technical assistance, especially as production increased later in the 1970s. The position he held both symbolically as an artist and spatially in the designated department at the Arab Institute is symptomatic of a combination of contingent historical forces. First, the proliferation of images in printed media communications generally in 1960s Beirut precipitated institutions into employing visual artists on a full-time basis. This was the case of Mouna Bassili Sehanoui's heading a similar art department in the state's National Council for Tourism (Chapter 2). The increased professionalization of image-makers locally is inscribed in more global circuits of visuality of print cultures commensurate with post-war capitalist market economies. Second, Arabic books more specifically had developed an increasingly visual economy in the 1960s, with covers becoming more reliant on images than on standard calligraphic rendering of the title. Third, the Arab Institute's politics reflect a keen interest in revitalizing the aesthetic merit of the art of making Arabic books. The publisher's art department and the figure of its in-house graphic designer thus reside at the juncture of global modernity's visual printscapes with Arab politics of aesthetic authenticity.

Moreover, the advent of an in-house art department is in itself productive of material changes in the visual economy of books. The art department ensures a unified visual style to the books by the same publishing house. Books visually unified by the aesthetic approach of the same designer, and strategized as such, impart a recognizable corporate 'house-style'[23] to the publishing house. In Beirut's capitalist economy of publishing, the contingent

[23] The design of house styles is a disciplinary specialization born out of 19th century European industrialization; an early example is Peter Behrens design for the German AEG. Corporate house styles particularly thrived in post-war Euro-American modernist discourses of 'corporate identity' design and associated business practices. Examples include the Design Research Unit and Pentagram in the UK and Total Design in the Netherlands.

event of the in-house designer marks the change in the marketization of books as products on display, graphically differentiated from those of another publisher and competing for the attention of readers as consumers.

During his ten years as the in-house graphic designer, Helmi el-Touni indeed produced a recognizable aesthetic for the Arab institute's publications. To begin with, its visual coherence derives from his particular design approach, concerned with the affirmation of an Arab political subjectivity and with explorations of a place-bound artistic modernity, discussed earlier. Modern translations of an Arabo-Islamic and Egyptian folk visual culture are carried through el-Touni's book design. Book titles, for instance, are given full creative attention in his cover design. He reinterprets calligraphic conventions of Islamic art, especially of Egyptian Fatimid traditions, with great aesthetic agility matching the modern formal expression of his associated illustrations. This visual correlation was quite uncommon in modern Arabic print cultures. While text was set at the press, titling was the job of calligraphers. With the aesthetic rupture initiated by disciplinary formations in modern art in the Arab world, calligraphy, like the Islamic arts more generally, was relegated to a traditional craft, locked in repetition of established old styles and conventions (Shabout 2007). El-Touni here actualizes Arabic calligraphy aesthetically as a modern artistic form and visually as a functional communicative device. The titling schemes vary according to the theme of the book and morph along with it the Fatimid calligraphic aesthetic convention. Bold shapes and sharp angles, for instance, graphically enunciate *Qissat Thawrat 23 Yulio* (the story of the 23rd of July revolution) [Figs 7–9], while equally bold yet soft curvilinear shapes express al-Saadawi's *al-Wajh al-ʿAri li-l-Marʾa al-Arabiya* (The Hidden Face of Eve) [Figs 10–11]. Concrete poetry in Arabic letters, à la Marinetti's *Parole in Libertà,* but actualized with a psychedelic pop tinge next to solarised images, visually recites Darwish's *Habibati Tanhad min Nawmiha* (My Lover Awakes from her Sleep) [Figs 12–13]. Conversely, a relatively more conventional looking Fatimid calligraphy resonates in visual form with the complete works of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani — the 19th century political activist and pioneering figure of Islamic reform.

The development of an aesthetically unified book series is particularly significant in illustrated children's books, which the Arab Institute launched in the mid-1970s. The project followed a similar contemporary initiative by Dar al-Fata al-Arabi. Both publishing initiatives sought to fill a gap in the area of Arabic children's literature. They departed from prevailing Arabic books, which relied predominantly on translating classical European children's literature and more often than not also copying the accompanying illustrations (Ellabbad 2003b). Arabic translations of the notorious English Ladybird books, published and distributed from Beirut by Librairie du Liban, dominated the market at the time (Bou Jawdeh 2016). Dar al-Fata and the Arab Institute thus aimed to decolonize children's literature in knowledge, aesthetics and imagination, while articulating a pan-Arab subjectivity among young readers. The former, more radical in politics and pedagogy, initially focused on very young age groups before expanding its readership remit (chapter 7). The Arab Institute, on the other hand, focused primarily on the themes of Arab and Islamic heritage in the knowledge formations of older readers, from eight years onwards with special attention to 12–16 year olds. It published, in seven different series, classics in Arabic literature and history of the Arab world, adapted for young readers, including the canonical *One Thousand and One Nights, Kalila wa dimna,* Ibn al-Muqaffa's animal fables (750) and *Mughamarat Ibn Battuta,* the adventures across the Muslim world of medieval traveller and scholar, Ibn Battuta. In addition, there was a book series on the great achievements of medieval Arab scientists and the history of Arab peoples and Islam, as well as world classics in children's literature.

Conceived as picture books, the children's series comprised around 8–12 pages of coloured illustrations (black and a second colour) rhythmically inserted between pages of text. Helmi el-Touni devised a plan by which each series of books had a distinct format and aesthetic form. The implementation involved commissioning other illustrators working alongside him to develop a suitable graphic approach to each series, maintaining cohesiveness within and diversity across. He thus collaborated for this purpose with key visual artists working in Cairo's 1960s publishing sector, as discussed earlier. Thus Arab

heritage as a discursive theme in the modern texts of the Arab Institute met its aesthetic equivalent through the visual interpretations of the various illustrators on board the project [Figs 14–40]. Names included pioneering Egyptian illustrators who formed the 'Egyptian school of caricature'; such as Bahgat Othman, Nabil Tag and Mohieddine Ellabbad [Figs 35–40]. These visual artists, mostly trained in Cairo's Fine Art School in the mid-1950s and working for the press in 1960s socialist Egypt, shared the same political commitment, *iltizam*, of artistic decolonization and Arab nationalist quest for cultural authentication through the popular arts. They turned their aesthetic endeavour in printed media from the press to children's books in the 1970s. Illustration for young people, published from Beirut, constituted their new canvas for political action. Their praxis of *iltizam* through the visual arts became centred on the promise of futurity invested in Arab youth; I return to this in chapter 7.

El-Touni's illustrated books for the first series: *Tarikh al-Arab wa-l-Islam li-l-Fityan wa-l-Fatayat* (The History of Arabs and Muslims for Boys and Girls), published in 1977, merits particular attention in terms of the visuality imparted on reading/seeing picture books as time-based media [Figs 19–34]. He adopts two different illustration methods, one figurative and the other abstract. The figurative approach deploys the flatness of the painted miniature, reinterpreted in thick black contour lines defining shapes and in simple ornamental patterns giving the effect of shade, contrasted with an evenly coloured lighter tinted background. Technically, el-Touni is exploring the logic of printmaking techniques for shading, such as in woodcuts and engraving, but exchanging the regularity of hatching with patterns inspired from Islamic art history. Graphically, this illustrated series produces an aesthetic of modernized miniature adapted to the technology of the contemporary printed book. The miniature's time structure, rather than developing within the same spatial arrangement of the painting, unfolds across the scenes on the pages of the book.

The second, abstract, drawing approach in the same series is based on the geometry of form and relationship of elements in Arabesque composition [Figs 27–34]. The variations in composition from one illustrated page to the

other is conceived of in a sequential relation of a metamorphosis of shapes, changing incrementally as you leaf through the book. When carried, and flipped through, the book unfolds a sequential narrative of graphic forms in illusory motion. Here, time-based sequential art is explored as an aesthetic dimension of illustrated books. Arabesque's temporal aesthetic properties are actualized to propose a modern cinematic visuality to reading/seeing books. El-Touni not only modernizes the aesthetics of Islamic arts, which is commensurate with the theme of this particular series, he is also the visual story teller, enchanting young readers with optical tricks of modern magic to accompany and delight their reading of the Arab past.

El-Touni also fully explored the potential of graphic design to create specifically identifiable series across the Arab Institute's books. Having designed serial publications in Cairo's Dar al-Hilal, the planning of variations within an aesthetically cohesive whole was a design strategy with which he was familiar. He developed a visual system for a series of books by the same author. The system did not involve a pre-set standardized layout [Figs 7–13].[24] It rather relied on a flexible design scheme for each series, which visually communicated the author's general literary and thematic preoccupations. This permitted greater interpretive authority on the designer's part and more variation within the same scheme and between the series. He nonetheless also devised a graphic system, a symbolic visual scheme, which identified books according to their subject area and genre. The Arab Institute's book-products could now be visually distinguished from those of other publishers and its knowledge areas systemically organized and labelled, thanks to the ordering ethos of modern graphic design.

Helmi el-Touni was quite aware of his graphic designer's role in terms of the overall planning and drafting of schemes, which was not part of his training as an artist. On this, he notes being brought up in a family of engineers, thus acquiring the rational planning required for design. It is in 'the organizing

[24] This is typical of international publishers at the time, standardizing cover design according to generic bibliographic categorization (eg. fiction, short stories, history, literary criticism …etc.).

rational mind' that he goes on to describe what designing as a process entails (el-Touni 2008). El-Touni clearly articulates here his subject-position as a designer through a modernist epistemological framework. The 'rational designer' was indeed a modernist paradigm distinguishing a supposedly objective design practice — inscribed in the discourse of technological progress and industry — from the idiosyncratic self-expression of the artist. Canonized by the Bauhaus school, this conceptualization was a requisite of the Euro-American professional identity of the modern designer (especially the architect) as an articulated artist-engineer. El-Touni might conceptually adhere to this characterization, yet in visual form his work is a far cry from the minimalist aesthetics prescribed by European modernist design discourse or its later postwar manifestation in 'international modernism'. In el-Touni's work, 'form follows function' by way of art's social purpose. But his functionalism did not adhere to any universalizing claims of aesthetic purism and sobriety. Ornament, *contra* Adolf Loos, was after all no modernist crime for Helmi el-Touni. Rather, the revival of ornament constituted an aesthetic actualization of a place-bound Arab modernism, a meaningful and sensuous articulation of a politics of decolonization in design, carried in and through the discursive and affective labour of its graphic artefacts.

Conclusion

The double claim of aesthetic authenticity, place-bound and radically populist, mobilised by the Cairo-Beirut publishing connection, overlapped with the visual economy of Beirut's radically cosmopolitan modernity discussed in chapter 4. In the interstices, overlaps and disjunctures between these two politico-aesthetic printscapes, yet another circuit of visuality emerged. Tied to the rise of the Palestinian Resistance, this circuit located Beirut as a nodal site within geopolitics of revolutionary Third Worldism that connected the global South from Cuba all the way to China and Vietnam. The discourses, aesthetics and visuality forming, and being formed by, this circuit of transnational relations will be the object of my analysis in the next two chapters.

Chapter 6

Art is in the 'Arab street': The Palestinian Revolution and Aesthetics of Solidarity

> The critical function of art, its contribution to the struggle for liberation, resides in the aesthetic form. A work of art is authentic or true not by virtue of its content (i.e. the "correct" representation of social conditions), nor by its "pure" form, but by the content having become form. (Marcuse 1978: 8)

The effect of the 1967 war was intense for Arab intellectuals generally, and visual artists particularly. Though changes in production did not take place overnight, responses were nonetheless rapid. I do not mean drawing a *fidaʾi* [freedom fighter] instead of a refugee, as Ismail Shammout did, but something more radical: Arab artists, and especially Palestinian artists in exile, had to reconsider their place in society. Modes of expression held a new purpose for them and they changed their vocabulary in response. Some poets substituted their typewriters with machine guns, others abandoned poetry to write novels, and those who used to write love poetry began to write about social and political struggle. Experimental filmmakers now filmed events for documentary purposes. The studio artist became a designer, illustrator, or social worker. Artists who used to look from the

> window of their studio, were no longer seen there because they came down to the street. Posters were everywhere, yet their creators remained anonymous; poetry appeared on some yet the poet's name remained unknown. Paintings which used to hang in Beirut's galleries now shrank to the size of a postcard or poster, to be sold in hundreds in support of victims of war. One artist designed colourful stamps for Fatah, another designed a bold graphic symbol for the Popular Front [for the Liberation of Palestine], which later became a recognizable insignia. Abed Abedi, who lives in Dresden, abandoned studio art to pick up mural painting. Beirut's art galleries began to transform into a body without a soul, for the soul was freed in the streets, camps and barracks (Boullata 1970: 41–42).

In this enthusiastic statement, Kamal Boullata, Palestinian artist and critic, described the radical aesthetic transformations at the centre of a revolutionary moment in the history of Palestine's liberation struggle. This long excerpt is taken from Boullata's influential article, 'Towards a revolutionary Arab art', which he published in the Beirut-based cultural journal *Mawaqif* (Positions) in 1970. The journal had been launched in 1968 by the poet Adonis, who had formerly co-founded *Shiʾr* with Yusuf al-Khal. Boullata quit *Shiʾr* to join the editorial board of *Mawaqif*. The journal, born out of a manifold confluence of global and local crises — notwithstanding the exposure of a global cultural Cold War of which the journal *Hiwar* was its local casualty — re-articulated politico-aesthetic relations beyond the binary of autonomous pure art and political art.

In this article, Boullata outlines the historical development of Palestinian visual arts. His narrative, punctuated by the event of 1967, refers to Frantz Fanon's three stages in the development of Third Worldist national cultures as outlined in the *Wretched of the Earth* (1963). He thus categorizes Palestinian aesthetic practices according to a first stage exemplifying 'total assimilation' of 'borrowed' Western studio art practices; a second stage of anxiety over quests for cultural identity, which characterized artistic

movements in the Arab world from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s; and a third 'stage of combat' that, Boullata observes, began to unfold in Palestinian art post-1967, revealing itself in aesthetic indices he described in the above excerpt.

Boullata's intellectual references, besides Fanon, beg to be mapped here. He opens by quoting from Trotsky's *Revolution and Literature*, in a passage that advances the entanglements of art and life and discredits the aesthetic 'realism' of later Stalinism.[1] He refers to Herbert Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) to state that a 'new sensibility' is about to take shape in the Third World: 'For Palestinian art to reach the new Arab man, who the revolution is working to reconstitute, it cannot call for reform; it has to strive for new forms. Liberationist art today is a staging ground in the long struggle for populist artists to liberate art' (Boullata 1970: 42). He concludes by way of John Berger's optimism — on the promise of a new art articulated in the new humanism of the liberated people of the Third World — and hails artists of Palestine, who — he claims with great certainty — shall contribute to 'the beauty of an emerging Third World' (Boullata 1970: 43). Boullata's cosmopolitan intellectual cartographies articulate New Leftist politics with a Third Worldist geography of anti-imperialist struggle, characteristic of the global late 1960s. His position vis-à-vis art's role in this political conjuncture signals a displacement in the conceptualization of *iltizam*, political engagement through the arts. 'Towards a revolutionary Arab art,' as published in *Mawaqif*,

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[1] 'Our life, cruel, violent and disturbed to its very bottom, says:

'I must have an artist of a single love. Whatever way you take hold of me, whatever tools and Instruments created by the development of art you choose, I leave to you, to your temperament and to your genius. But you must understand me as I am, you must take me as I will become, and there must be no one else besides me.'

This passage is followed by this in the original text: 'This means a realistic monism, in the sense of a philosophy of life, and not a "realism" in the sense of the traditional arsenal of literary schools. On the contrary, the new artist will need all the methods and processes evolved in the past, as well as a few supplementary ones, in order to grasp the new life. And this is not going to be artistic eclecticism, because the unity of art is created by an active world-attitude and active life-attitude' (Trotsky 1925).

points towards a delinking of political art from the nationalist imperatives of the post-independent Arab state and the subversion of *iltizam* by the revolutionary discourse of the Palestinian liberation struggle, which saw Beirut as its nodal site of aesthetic emergence. Accordingly, this chapter investigates the aesthetic emergence of Palestinian revolutionary struggle in and through the printscapes that marked Beirut's public culture and street life. It analyses the circuits of visuality that reclaimed the Arab city as a revolutionary node both in the imagination of its inhabitants and in networks of solidarity — Arab artists and intellectuals who crossed paths in its cosmopolitan labyrinths of revolutionary graphic signs.

In his more recently published *Palestinian Art* (2009), Kamal Boullata distinguishes the work of Palestinian artists residing in Beirut into two categories (123–127). The first includes artists from Lebanon's refugee camps, where the majority of dispossessed Palestinians, especially from rural areas, found shelter. The second are from Palestine's urban centres, whose exiled lives in Lebanon formed part and parcel of Beirut's cosmopolitan intellectual and artistic élite. The aesthetic approach of these two categories, Boullata contends, corresponds to the politico-aesthetic divides that separated the literary field in the post-independence conjuncture, exemplified by *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr* (chapter 3). The aesthetic distinction he is referring to can be extended to the realm of visuality, in the respective projects of, on one hand, the Arab Institute of Research and Publishing — through its Cairo-Beirut-Baghdad connection — and on the other, in the prolongation of *Shiʿr* in Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books'. Boullata claims in the case of Palestinian art that

> Generally speaking, the arts produced by camp artists is figurative and often reflects the explicitly narrative imagery popularized by the nationalist rhetoric of the time. The art produced by the urban refugees, on the other hand, is more experimental and personal, with any reference to the artist's political experience deeply buried. (Boullata 2009: 124)

In this binary schema, Boullata ignores his earlier exegesis of the prospects of a revolutionary Arab art born in the wake of the Palestinian liberation struggle and the early symptoms he saw in the streets of Beirut. He now claims that only Palestinian artists of the camps were politicized along these lines. But what about his own artistic and intellectual work? Where does it fit in this schema? What about *Mawaqif*, where he published his article and on whose editorial board he sat? Did he not forge with his colleagues an interstitial space in the politico-aesthetic field that went beyond the binary divide of *al-Adab* and *Shiʿr*? His new characterisation might hold true of the Palestinian artists and artworks he specifically chose to shed light on as exemplifying the Beirut exile. But there is a twofold problem with his selection.

The first concerns the general conception of art, which leaves out the artwork that 'shrank to the size of a greeting card or poster', that was 'freed in the streets, camps and barracks' and the 'artists who became illustrators and graphic designers' in this revolutionary conjuncture (Boullata 1970). With the exception of his inclusion of the highly esteemed political cartoonist Naji al-Ali and a cursory mention of Ismail Shammout's activities in graphic design for the PLO — both neatly fitting the artists of the camps categorised in his new account — Boullata (2009) leaves out some of his own work and those of many others who indexed the promise 'towards a revolutionary Arab art' in and from Beirut (Boullata 1970). His 1970 map of intellectual references (namely Marcuse and Fanon), and his work among that of other Arab artists, I suggest, show — *contra* his 2009 argument — that the visual culture of this revolutionary moment, though short-lived, emerged in the radical aesthetic interstices between form and political content, art and public culture, camps and the urban everyday of Beirut's long 1960s. To see this at work, one has to look at the printed matter that circulated in between these spaces and navigated across the frontiers that normally separated them.

The second problem concerns both his accounts and centres on the following question: is the category of Palestinian art limited to art produced by Palestinians? Though I recognize the importance of building a national narrative as a mode of resistance to the continued brutality of political and

cultural annexation of Palestinians by the state of Israel and its international allies, I am also wary that such an account leaves out the aesthetics of solidarity, especially in that revolutionary moment, which enunciated from a place of exile. In the spatio-temporality of the long 1960s, Beirut was exactly such a place. In the interstices of overlaps and disjunctures between the politico-aesthetic printscapes of a Mediterranean cosmopolitanism and a pan-Arab public sphere, yet another circuit of visuality emerged. As I go on to demonstrate in this and the following chapter, the cosmopolitanism of the 'Paris of the East' was subverted to the radical cosmopolitanism of an 'Arab Hanoi' claimed through the Third Worldist revolutionary framework of the Palestinian liberation struggle. The politics of a 'new sensibility' in this liberation struggle summoned artists, intellectuals, writers and poets, who hailed from disparate Arab and international locales in solidarity with Palestine. Their omission from what qualifies as Palestinian art undermines precisely that politics of transnational solidarity to which the Palestinian cause gave rise.

A similar argument has been advanced with regard to militant Palestinian cinema of the late 1960s and '70s (see Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 11–30). Helga Tawil-Souri notes:

> Born in exile, the productions of the Palestine Film Unit would become trans-national par excellence. Similar in style to 'third cinema', films were revolutionary tools and radically re-located the practices of viewing and the industrial-economic designation of cinema itself (2014: 178).

Exactly this Third Worldist revolutionary framework needs to be extended to the printed matter of the Palestinian resistance. Extant accounts of the global visual culture of 1960s counter-culture and anti-imperialist politics shy away from any mention of Palestinian posters. In part, this is because of a lack of focused studies in English and the difficulty of accessing primary sources (scattered in exile when the PLO hurriedly left Beirut in 1982 as the city was besieged and later occupied by the Israeli military (see Sleiman 2016)).

Furthermore, Palestinian posters present historians of global art and design a booby-trapped political field in relation to Israel. When little attention is given to the issue, it is carefully "balanced" and posited as an internal Palestinian-Israeli conflict (eg. Bartelt 1998, McQuiston 1993), thereby denying the massive imbalance of power that disadvantages Palestinians in this conflict and disavowing the location of the Palestinian struggle in the global politics of revolutionary anti-imperialism and anti-colonial politics of the 1960s and 1970s. In recent scholarship on the history of the Palestinian struggle there has been an increasing interest in both the global dimension of this struggle and its printed material culture.[2] In such accounts posters and prints are treated as archival sources, either to illustrate the discursive shifts in the history of struggle (Khalili 2007) or as material evidence (Chamberlin 2015) and media history (Tawil-Souri 2015). The visuality of printed graphics, its role in the entanglements of global and local revolutionary politics, the design and circulation of these prints in and through circuits of transnational solidarity has however not been treated. This gap needs to be filled. Before proceeding with the analysis, I need first to locate Beirut in the Palestinian revolutionary conjuncture and attend to the political transformations precipitated by the 1967 defeat.

Beirut: a Cosmopolitan Site of Revolutionary Struggle

On 28 December 1968 Israel bombed Beirut's International Airport, destroying around 13 passenger planes. In response, students in Lebanon staged a general strike for close to two weeks demanding the following:

> 1. Military conscription of all Lebanese between the ages of 18 and 40.
> 2. Fortification of the Southern borders [with Israel].
> 3. Trial for those officials responsible for the betrayal of the

[2] This is specially the case, I believe, with recent private archival collections of Palestinian posters becoming available digitally, most notably is the Palestine Poster Archive Project developed by Dan Walsh.

Lebanese national interests on December 28th.

4. Official Lebanese recognition and support of the Fedayeen.

5. Governmental reform, (i.e. elections and appointments of offices based on expertise rather than on the basis of traditional sectarian divisions and semi-feudal social alignments).[3]

The operation was claimed to be in retaliation for the hijacking of an Israeli commercial airline by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The PFLP had been founded a year earlier and proclaimed itself through a statement published in *al-Hurriyya*, a Beirut-based periodical published by the Arab National Movement (ANM). The latter, founded in 1952 by George Habash, a Palestinian-born graduate of AUB and one of its politically active students in the late 1940s (Chapter 5), disbanded in the aftermath of the devastating military defeat of the Arab states by Israel in 1967. Habash and his comrades, now heading the PFLP, proclaimed the revolutionary turn in the liberation of Palestine in the pages of the newspaper of a waning political project. Two years later they would launch the PFLP's radical new press organ, *al-Hadaf* (the Target), once again from the new Arab capital of publishing.

Though the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had been formed in the mid-1960s, there was no revolutionary momentum until 1967.[4] The rise of the PFLP from the remnants of the ANM is indicative of the political disjuncture precipitated by the 1967 defeat. The struggle for the liberation of Palestine was rearticulated from its pan-Arabist framework — particularly Nasserite and Baathist — in a discourse of revolutionary anti-imperialism espousing armed struggle. Guerrilla warfare rose as popular resistance to

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[3] From a statement, in English, by AUB students issued with the suspension of the strike on 17 January 1969, circulated in Arabic and in English (AUB University Archives, Box AA4.3.8-1960s-3).

[4] The official proclamation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) dates back to the mid 1960s, with the first announced military operation inside Occupied Palestine. However the revolutionary momentum picked up after the 1967 defeat with another major operation in March 1968, known as the 'Battle of Karama', which opened Jordan as a base to guerrilla action.

Israeli aggression in consequence of the failure of Arab states and their armies. It gave material credence to a popular refusal of the 1967 defeat and reignited an Arab population disenchanted by its leaders and traumatized by the devastating losses of the war.

This political disjuncture responded to transformations in Third World anti-imperialist politics. The model of the young revolutionary guerrilla, from Cuba to Algeria and all the way to Vietnam, displaced the first wave, Bandung generation, post-colonial nation-state building and nonaligned foreign policy (Chamberlin 2015: 19). These new examples of revolutionary wars, rendered accessible in various publications — pamphlets, newspapers, magazines and books by different factions of the PLO — provided inspiring models for the emerging Palestinian liberation struggle (Chamberlin 2015: 20–21). 'This conception of a world in the grip of revolutionary ferment', observes Paul Thomas Chamberlin, framed the PLO's vision of its own liberation struggle (Chamberlin 2015: 25). The various factions of the PLO diverged in their theoretical understanding of revolutionary struggle in political orientation, scope and guerrilla tactics. Fatah, the Arabic acronym for the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, for instance, foregrounded a national liberation struggle modelled on the Algerian experience of 1954–62, while more left-leaning radical groups such as the PFLP, and even more so the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP, an offshoot of the PFLP), espoused Marxist-Leninist frameworks and advanced a Maoist 'people's war' modelled on China and Vietnam (Sayigh 1999: 195–216). Deep disputes along these lines, together with rivalries compounded by Arab states' different political interests (namely Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Libya), often gave rise to splinter groups, which complicated still further any possible unified political framework for revolutionary praxis (Sayigh 1999: 195–216). Nonetheless, the post-1967 revolutionary phase produced at least one paradigm shift common across all the factions concerned. The former Arab nationalist discourse prioritizing Arab unity as the path for the liberation of Palestine was reversed: revolutionary struggle for the liberation of Palestine was now 'the road to Arab unity' (Sayigh 1999: 198). This discursive reversal mirrors the

displacement of Arab post-colonial regimes by the revolutionary guerrilla as the new non-state political actor, both regionally on matters of Palestine, and globally in countering the forces of imperialism. As Chamberlin notes, 'Both the PFLP and Fatah's writings reflected this revolutionary cosmopolitan worldview' (2015: 20). He argues that the Palestinians would eventually join Third World theorists of revolutionary warfare with their own variant set of tactics as 'the PLO emerged as the first globalized insurgency and became a seminal influence on other rebellions in the following decades' (Chamberlin 2015: 3).[5]

In Lebanon, though guerrilla operations against Israel had been taking place on its southern borders for some time, organized armed struggle effectively picked up in 1969 and was consolidated when the PLO relocated its guerrilla base to South Lebanon between 1970 and 1971, following its violent expulsion from Jordan. Before 1969, Palestinian political activity in the refugee camps had been under strict surveillance and largely suppressed by the Lebanese state. Following a series of confrontations with the Lebanese army, however, and in response to mounting solidarity from large segments of the Lebanese population, protests organized by student movements and political alliances with Left and Arab Nationalist Lebanese political parties, the Palestinian Resistance was finally officially granted permission to conduct military operations on the southern Lebanese border through an agreement between the Lebanese state and the PLO brokered in Cairo (Sayigh 1999; Traboulsi 2007).

The re-articulation of the Palestinian liberation struggle from its post-colonial Arab state moorings to a revolutionary anti-imperialist discourse corresponded with this political transformation in Lebanon. It saw the emergence of a New Left connected to international radical student movements

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[5] Chamberlin demonstrates how the series of hijackings, which were coordinated within an interlocking international network of revolutionary praxis, 'introduced the concept of "international terrorism" to the modern lexicon' (2015: 6) and sparked debates in the United Nations over the discursive designation of 'terrorist' as opposed to 'freedom fighter' (see Chapter 5).

and espousing the revolutionary framework of the Palestinian liberation movement. Former members of the disbanded Arab Nationalist Movement, for instance, founded the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon in 1971. The latter grouped together a radical leftist multi-confessional youth membership and individual intellectuals, who would rise to future public prominenc,[6] operating independently of the more established Lebanese Communist Party with its Soviet affiliation. The post-1967 political conjuncture linked Lebanese leftist parties to Arab Nationalist groups in a common political front allied with the Palestinian Resistance. The latter, known afterwards as the Lebanese National Movement, contested the Christian Maronite political hegemony in Lebanon, its suppression of the Palestinian Resistance, westward leaning politics and its liberal laisser-faire economics, which articulated structural economic inequalities along sectarian divisions. The Lebanese state politics that suppressed the Palestinian resistance was also responsible of the exclusionary politics and economic disenfranchisement of its citizens, the underclass living in the peripheries of Beirut and Lebanon's underdeveloped rural areas. In large part Shiite Muslim peasant communities of South Lebanon, they were not only economically deprived and neglected by the state, but also suffered from repeated Israeli aggression, forcing their displacement to Beirut's suburbs. The relations of difference between an Arab nationalist and a Lebanese nationalist identity (discussed in previous chapters) was rearticulated along antagonistic lines that constructed a nodal point linking local social and economic struggles with the Palestinian Revolution, in opposition to the exclusionary sectarian politics of the Lebanese political establishment and right-wing Lebanese nationalist parties. Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity materialized in the everyday experience of Beirut as of the late 1960s: in street protests, often turning into violent confrontations with the Lebanese authorities; on the battleground as Lebanese youth joined the ranks of the Resistance; in resentment of the economic deprivation that a

[6] Key intellectual political figures include: Ahmad Beydoun, Nahla al-Chahhal, Waddah Charara, Mohsen Ibrahim, Mohammad Kishli and Fawwaz Traboulsi (see Bardawil 2010).

Lebanese population from South Lebanon or Beirut's peripheries shared with the Palestinian refugee camps; and most markedly, in mounting anger towards increasingly disproportionate Israeli aggression against Lebanon.[7]

The 1969 revolutionary momentum galvanized the Palestinian camps in Lebanon after the Cairo Accord. The repressive measures exercised by the Lebanese Army were now partially lifted, and the various Palestinian political organizations had the freedom to organize, mobilize and engage in guerrilla action. For the younger second generation Palestinians, the Resistance conferred a new revolutionary subjectivity. As one eighteen-year-old expressed it, 'The Revolution gave me the answer to who I am' (Sayigh 1979: 176). The internationalist discourse of the revolution positioned Palestinians at the forefront of an Arab struggle, closely linked with other Third World liberation struggles. This liberating thematic runs across the many accounts of the Palestinian youth in the camps of this period (ibid). The revolutionary momentum discursively transformed people's sense of identity as passive victims, wretched refugees gobbled up by despair, into active agents taking part in the process of making history (see Sayigh 1979, Khalidi 2007).

From 1970, as Lebanon came to constitute a 'bridge for the liberation of Palestine' (Traboulsi 2001: 39), Beirut became a place of pilgrimage for the new revolutionaries of the world looking to lend their support to their comrades in arms and through the arts. This new conjuncture rearticulated the pan-Arab nationalist discourse along cosmopolitan Third Worldist revolutionary lines. The linkage redefined Beirut's imagined political geography as the revolutionary 'Arab Hanoi' (ibid). Aesthetic practices in the everyday life of the camps and Beirut's cosmopolitan cultural and intellectual scene — in the form of literature, poetry, films, songs and printed matter — articulated that revolutionary discourse and gave 'Arab Hanoi' material

[7] Lebanese Army statistics recorded 3000 instances of Israeli military aggressions on Lebanon between 1968 and 1974, on average 1.4/ day, incurring 800 deaths among Lebanese and Palestinians. Between 1974–75 average violations went up to 7 per day and were no longer limited to the southern border (Kassir 2003).

resonance in and outside the city through different networks of transnational solidarity.

The Aesthetics of Arab Hanoi

The PLO established a media unit in Beirut in the mid-1960s, with an arts department headed by the Palestinian artist Ismail Shammout (see below). The department did not operate as a centralized institutional structure, that is to say as a state department issuing and controlling political art. Rather, and especially in the revolutionary phase of the Palestinian struggle, the various organizations grouped within the PLO published their own material. They relied on networks of artistic affiliations, which were organically formed by shared ideological frameworks of revolutionary politics. So, while holding an in-house graphic designer, the revolutionary aesthetics were not corporatized. Indeed, as Boullata (1970) described it, the political fervour radicalized Arab artists and mobilised many to take on printed media as their canvas for political action. This radicalisation was not only at the level of artistic medium, content and form, but no less in the radical conception of the role of the artist in society: from the isolated individual, the detached observer 'who used to look from the window of his studio', to the politically engaged artist who 'came down to the street' (Boullata 1970).

The diversity in aesthetics of the Palestinian revolutionary visual culture is symptomatic of the transnational solidarity it amassed and the various politico-aesthetic underpinnings of the wide-ranging artists who laboured in its cause. Furthermore, a number of solidarity campaigns and publishing projects were carried out independently of the PLO; some maintained relative autonomy while being subsidized, while others developed entirely independently of any political funding support. This is the case, for instance, of the Beirut based group Friends of Jerusalem, who in collaboration with Waddah Faris, formerly art director of *Hiwar* and *Shi'r* and gallery owner (see chapter 3), issued a series of 11 solidarity art posters in 1968, following the annexation of Jerusalem (Faris 2013). Faris solicited artworks from renowned Arab artists whose work concerned Palestine. Thus artists such as

Khalil Zgheib (Lebanon 1911 – 1975), Rafic Charaf (Lebanon 1932 – 2003), Kamal Boullata (Palestine 1942), Jumana Husseini (Palestine 1932), Kadhim Haidar (Iraq 1932), and Dia al-Azzawi (Iraq 1939) each offered an artwork that featured as the central image of a poster designed by Faris [Figs 1–4].

A year later, the PLO commissioned Faris to develop a similar scheme in the form of a series of art stamps to fundraise for Fatah [Fig. 5]. Mail art — postage stamps and postcards — was a medium the stateless Palestinian organization explored politically and materially as a token of international solidarity [Figs 6–10]. As small printed matter, stamps and postcards can be reproduced in large quantities, in colour and at low cost. It is by definition a transnational mobile object, which makes it perfect for the portability of political discourses and their circulation across state borders. Furthermore, the production of unofficial stamps in the name of a stateless entity, annexed by Israel on the international geopolitical map, represents an act of subversion of the official function of postage stamps. The quest for statehood is here politically carried in the materiality of the form of mail art.

While the aesthetics of solidarity with Palestine mobilized various printed media, it was the poster format that reigned supreme. The poster was *the* medium *par excellence* of the late-1960s global protest and revolutionary movements. Writing in 1970, Susan Sontag attested that 'at the present time, poster art is in a period of renaissance' (xx).[8] The poster craze of an emerging youth pop culture was subverted 'to demystify and delegitimise repressive authorities' (xiii). Silkscreen posters were the main medium for public interventions on the streets by, for instance, radical art collectives such as the Atelier Populaire in 1968 Paris and the Black Panther Party in San Francisco. The poster was deployed in Cuba as an internationalist revolutionary political form in the context of global anti-imperialism. Posters mobilizing the

[8] Writing specifically in the context of a book celebrating Cuban posters, Sontag warns against the co-option of these politically subversive posters into a collectable commodity by bourgeois capitalist markets outside Cuba. She could not have been more right about this, and even more so today, with 'Cuban revolution posters' stacking up on auction websites such as e-bay, for the delectation of poster collectors.

Palestinian liberation struggle were no exception. Rather, and crucially, posters advocating the Palestinian cause were part and parcel of a transnational network of solidarity in which a revolutionary anti-imperialist discourse and associated images and aesthetics circulated across the Third World. While I will attend to this circuit of visuality and international solidarity in more depth in the following chapter, I want here to discuss the local nature of the emergence of political posters and the engagement of Arab artists in this medium.

> The poster is a fundamental tool among revolutionary media. Through posters the [Palestinian] 'cause' enters the homes of masses and resides in their eyes. (Ezzeddine Kalak in Malas 1979: 112)

This statement was among the unpublished notes of Ezzeddine Kalak, the intellectual and diplomat, who represented the PLO in France and who was assassinated in 1978 by the Israeli secret service in Paris. Kalak held an impressive collection of Palestinian posters and was preparing a book on the subject before he was killed. His poster collection was later assembled and exhibited in Beirut in 1979 and published, along with his notes, in a bilingual Arabic-French book.[9] Both public forms, exhibition and book, were the first endeavours to give posters their rightful place in the history of the Palestinian struggle and in international solidarity with its cause. The book organizes posters historically, from 1967 to 1978, and thematically into those which commemorate events, land and martyrs; recognize the place of women in struggle; and situate it in Lebanon's war. Two more sections attest to the internationalist dimension of the poster in this struggle: 'the Palestinian poster addresses the world' and 'the world in solidarity with Palestine'.

While said posters first emerged between Damascus and Jordan, where the PLO was initially located, it was in Beirut that they made 'a qualitative leap in form, content and quantity', observes Kalak (Malas 1979: 111). He refers to

[9] The following individuals were involved in editing the book *L'Affiche Palestinienne*: Yusr Kalak, Claude Lazar, Samir Salameh, Lili Farhud, Nicole Vennat, and Fayez Malas.

a ‘war of posters’ that Arab cities experienced in the early-1970s, between the PLO and ‘wall cleaners’, whereby a poster hung after midnight would be taken off the wall by sunrise (ibid). In contradistinction, ‘Palestinian posters transformed Beirut’s walls into a large exhibition’, noted Lebanese novelist and critic Elias Khoury (cited in Radwan 1992: 122). In Lebanon, ‘a great number of artists, Palestinian, Arab and foreigners designed posters. These were printed in colour, relied on modern graphic techniques in their composition and produced in large quantities (on average 2000 copies per poster)’, notes Kalak (Malas 1979: 111). Earlier public notices and posters were reproduced through stencil copying methods and printed on typo presses, which limited the use of colour and images (al-Sharif 1981: 253). Late-1960s printing technologies in Beirut, the accessibility of photographic reproduction, colour separation of artwork and offset printing facilitated the production of political posters and encouraged artists to explore print as a medium of political art. The book showcases posters and credits the names of at least fifty different Arab artists: Palestinian (mostly in exile), Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian and Iraqi, in addition to anonymous unsigned posters and those designed by artists from around the world.[10] Arab art critics and artists of the period conceded that, while the appropriation of the poster as a modern political art emerged in Egypt in the context of the 1956 Suez war (see chapter 5), it was the post-1967 Palestinian revolutionary moment that was paradigmatic in the development of the Arab political poster as an artistic form (see Radwan 1992, Safieh 1983). The confluence of printing technologies, transnational publishing and distribution networks and intellectual and artistic practices and encounters

[10] Names include, among Palestinians: Kamal Boullata, Ismail Shammout, Mustapha al-Hallaj, Abdelrahman al-Muzayen, Ghassan Kanafani, Adnan al-Sharif, Mona al-Saoudi, Almuhandess Shukri, Samir Salemeh, Hosni Radwan, Jamal Afghani, Toufic Abdel’al, Imad Abdelwahab, Youssef Hamou, and Kamal Nicola; Lebanese: Paul Guiragossian, Emil Menhem, Rafic Sharaf, Nabil al-Buqayli, Hussein Yaghi, Ahmad al-Nahal, Seta Manoukian, and Nawal Abboud; Syrian: Nazir Nabaa, Youssef Abdelki, Khuzayma Alwani, Abdelqader Aranaout, and Burhan Karkutli; Egyptians: Helmi el-Touni and Nabil el-Selmi; Iraqi: Dia al-Azzawi, Muayied al-Rawi, Ibrahim Zayd, Mussa al-Khamiss, Salih al-jumay’i, Jawdat al-Hassib, and Hassib al-Jassim.

presented the historical conditions of possibility for the radical displacement of Beirut's cosmopolitanism to the aesthetic emergence of Arab Hanoi: a revolutionary node in global anti-imperialism.

In what follows, I analyse the dominant themes, discourses and aesthetics of printed media, advanced in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle. I also map the politico-aesthetic articulations of various prints as enunciated by different Arab artists–graphic designers, situating them within the various media initiatives of the PLO and affiliate organizations, among other independent solidarity groups operating from Beirut.

Drawing the Palestinian *fidaʾi*

Thematically, the quintessential trope of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle is conjured in the figure of the *fidaʾi.* The Arabic linguistic sign referring to the transnational 'freedom fighter', a heroic revolutionary guerrilla in anti-imperialist armed struggles of the Third World, was embodied in a locally articulated trope. Drawings of the *fidaʾi* figure signalled a rupture in the representation of Palestinian subjectivity from passive refugee to heroic revolutionary, an active agent in the process of radically changing the course of history. While I shall situate this figure within the global framework of revolutionary armed struggle in the next chapter, I want to analyse here the ways in which this iconic image was drawn with genealogical references to an Arab history of revolts.

Fidaʾi, in Arabic, signifies the hero in sacrificial pursuit of the greater good. It gained its political currency as a sign in the 1956 war in Egypt. *Fidaʾiyeen*, plural of *fidaʾi*, characterized those who engaged in the cause of national liberation, from Egypt to Algeria. The Palestinian referent post-1967 is thus genealogically linked to Arab nationalist frameworks of anti-colonial struggle. However, as I shall demonstrate below and in the following chapter, the sign's Arab embeddedness was displaced by cosmopolitan connotations of the 'freedom fighter' in transnational revolutionary anti-imperialism. This discursive shift was made possible in and through the rhetoric of the image and the realm of aesthetics.

The image of the revolutionary fighter accompanied the rise of guerrilla training and engagements with the Israeli army in the late-1960s. Precipitated by the 'Battle of al-Karama' in 1968 (Khalili 2007: 155–56), the heroic guerrilla figure began to appear in earnest on printed periodicals of the PLO, taking its iconic form on posters. Initial visual iterations of the *fidaʾi* figure can be found in drawings of artists Nazir Nabaa (1938–2016), Mustapha al-Hallaj (1938–2002) and Ismail Shammout (see Radwan 1992: 134–142). One of Syria's modern pioneers, Nazir Nabaa's artwork took a radical political turn, like that of many contemporary painters in Syria, in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat. Between 1968 and 1970, he drew for various Palestinian media, including covers for periodicals such as *al-Thawra al-Falastiniya* (The Palestinian Revolution) and *Falastin al-Muhtalla* (Occupied Palestine), in addition to illustrations for posters (Radwan 1992: 139). In drawing the *fidaʾi* figure, Nabaa carries in black china ink the emotional charge of the revolutionary momentum. The assertive energy is visually articulated in the force of the line, the intensity of its rhythmic composition and colour contrast, radiating from the active body of his heroic subject. Nabaa imagines his hero in the likeness of mythical insurrectionaries of the Great Palestinian and Syrian revolts — moustached male, gun-belt strapped to his chest, a rifle in one arm and a *kufiya*, the traditional Levantine peasantry headscarf, adorning his head [Fig. 11]. The heroic masculinity of the *fidaʾi* figure may be culturally interpreted as a performative act of reclaiming dignity and manhood following the dishonouring defeat of 1967 (see Khalili 2007: 154). Indeed, his *fidaʾi* summons the memory of local revolts in the early 20th century against French and British colonial occupation in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Ted Swedenburg argues that the peasantry's prominence as a Palestinian national signifier constitutes a site of symbolic resistance to the specific form of Israeli settler colonialism. The peasant figure provides organic historical links to land and territory. Moreover, the Palestinian *fallah* (peasant) is mobilized as signifier of the people's active agency. The *fallah* as a radical populist symbol of militancy in the present is achieved through historical links to memories of

the 1936-39 Palestinian revolt, where peasants had a central role in the insurrection (Swedenberg 2003).

Nazir Nabaa received his first academic training in the early 1960s in Cairo's Nasserite heyday. Thus, as an artist, the concern for a locally grounded claim of aesthetic authenticity underpinned the creation of his *fidaʾi* subject. While Egyptian artists eulogized in their paintings the rural *fallah* as 'the authentic' Egyptian subject (see chapter 5), Nabaa excavates a Levantine Arab *fallah* in claiming the 'authenticity' of the contemporary guerrilla. Likewise, Mustapha al-Hallaj, the Palestinian-born artist who lived in Beirut following training in Cairo's Fine Art academy, pursued the icon of the *kufiya*-clad *fidaʾi* in wood engraved prints turned posters in 1969 for Fatah [Fig. 12].

It is the graphic work of Palestinian-born artist, Ismail Shammout, that consolidated the iconic image of the *fidaʾi* and garnered its hegemonic cosmopolitan appeal. He was able to do so by way of his position as head of the PLO's arts and media department in Beirut from the mid-1960s until 1982. As the PLO's in-house graphic designer, Shammout art-directed and created numerous posters, pamphlets and publications. His political and artistic trajectory exemplifies the aesthetic overlap and disjuncture between the Arab nationalist and the anti-imperialist revolutionary frameworks of the Palestinian struggle. Two years following his forced displacement from his Palestinian hometown, Ismail Shammout joined the Fine Art Academy in Cairo, where he completed his degree in 1954. In July of the same year, Shammout displayed his paintings in an exhibition dedicated to the 'Palestinian refugee' under the patronage of the Egyptian president Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir (Shammout 1989: 54–55). The event was celebrated in Cairo as the first exhibition of solidarity with Palestine, in which art was foregrounded as an important political site of the struggle. Nasser opened the exhibition in the company of key Arab and Palestinian political figures such as, the Palestinian nationalist leader during the British mandate, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the chairman of the Arab League of Nations, ʿAbdel Khalik Hassouna, and Yasir Arafat who was then acting president of the Palestinian Students League in Egypt. Shammout's early

paintings represented the dire experience of dispossessed Palestinians in refugee camps, conveyed aesthetically through social realism (Shammout 1989: 50). Indeed, Kamal Boullata situates Shammout's paintings in the 'artists of the camps' category (Boullata 2009: 128–32), whose painterly approach 'promoted a populist form of figurative expression' and borrowed 'images from popular metaphors' (127). Following a two-year residency in Rome pursuing further training in the visual arts, Shammout settled in Beirut in 1956. He worked for two years in the advertising department of UNRWA and opened in 1958, with his brother Jamil, a graphic design studio creating advertisements, book covers and illustrations (Shammout 1989: 55). Shammout designed numerous book covers for emerging publishing houses in the late-1950s and early-1960s, most prominently those of the Arab nationalist publisher Dar al-Adab (see chapter 5). The experience he amassed in designing for print facilitated his later role, from 1965 onwards, as the leading graphic designer of the PLO's art and media department. While he maintained a realist approach in his painting, the printed matter he designed for the PLO was executed in distinctly modernist graphics, which combined abstracted figurative forms, flat colours and photomontage [Figs 13–16].

In one of his earlier posters Ismail Shammout positions the *fidaʾi* at the centre of a quintet of figures representing the different straddles of society [Fig. 13]. Aligned next to one another, the figures form pillars holding a classical pediment, on which 'Palestine Liberation Organization' is inscribed in bold letters. Each figure is depicted symbolically in abstract graphic forms and identified by clothing codes: a traditional peasant, a modern woman, an administrator and a factory worker. The *fidaʾi* in this composition is identified by a triad of symbols: guerrilla fatigue, AK-47, and *kufiya* covering the figure's head and face. The first two symbols codify the *fidaʾi* as a revolutionary guerrilla akin to anti-imperialist struggles stretching from Latin America to Vietnam (see chapter 7). The *kufiya,* however, codifies the figure as a revolutionary in the particularity of the national liberation struggle. Its original function as traditional peasant headgear is subverted for the purpose of guerrilla anonymity in a people's struggle for self-determination. The manner

of wearing it on the head is clearly distinguished in the poster from that of the traditional peasant figure to its right. The *kufiya* in this new graphic form thus carries through its symbolic reference the articulation of a transnational revolutionary struggle with place-specific claims of a national liberation.

Ismail Shammout developed from this early iteration to produce an icon of the Palestinian *fidaʾi* in guerrilla action, striding forward, Kalashnikov in firm grip. Rendered in graphically simplified symbolic form, akin to pop art aesthetics that embodied the public images of revolutionary heroes and film stars alike (eg. Che Guevara and Marilyn Monroe). This modern icon was omnipresent in the PLO publications of the early 1970s [Figs 16 and 17]. The aesthetic dimension of the Palestinian *fidaʾi* thus also linked it to the cosmopolitan circuit of visuality, in and through which the discourse of the 'heroic guerrilla' circulated and revolutionary subjectivities were formed. The cosmopolitan aesthetics of the Guevara-modelled *fidaʾi* challenged Orientalist representations of the Arab insurgent as backward, traditional and irrational (Chamberlin 2012: 25). In 1973, Shammout designed a poster that followed Yasir Arafat's landmark visit to East Berlin's 10th World Festival of Youth and Students. The PLO leader was presented to the gathering audience in the company of Angela Davis, delegates of the Vietnamese NLF, the PRC, Warsaw Pact states and African liberation movements (Chamberlin 2012: 175). The poster illustrated Arafat's public announcement upon his return, claiming that 'at the event, the PLO had been invited to take up "the banner of the global struggle" from the Vietnamese revolution' (ibid). The image depicted literally a banner with 'victory' inscribed on it in Arabic being passed on from one guerrilla fighter to another. The only mark differentiating one freedom fighter from the other is their peasant headgear; one wears a pointed straw hat, the other a *kufiya* [Fig. 18]. In the close to 20 years that separates this poster from Shammout's first major exhibition in Cairo, a number of discursive displacements can be noted. The dispossessed refugee that constituted the subject of his painting is substituted by the actively defiant Palestinian *fidaʾi* and his/her agency on a world stage. Modern graphics articulated the revolutionary struggle in lieu of the social realism of his earlier paintings.

Solidarity with Palestinians shifted from the patronage of Arab regimes, specifically here from ʿAbd al-Nasir's, to the PLO as an autonomous liberation movement, the vanguard of Arab struggle with Israel, and connected to anti-imperialist revolutionary movements globally. The revolutionary cosmopolitan framework of the PLO was carried in and through the aesthetics of printed matter, while the Palestinian *fidaʾi* displaced discursively and aesthetically the Egyptian and Algerian *fidaʾiyeen* as models of revolutionary political subjectivity and aesthetic sensibility of liberation struggles in the Arab world. The new *fida'i* figure thus embeds the Palestinian revolution within an internationalist framework of solidarity in anti-imperialist struggle, while locally situating the resistance through the radicalized symbol of the *kufiya*.

In 1975, Kamal Boullata chose a popular poem by Mahmoud Darwish (1942–2008), 'the poet of the Palestinian Resistance',[11] to render into image the icon of the *fidaʾi* on postcards printed in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Palestinian Revolution by the PLO [Fig. 6]. The drawing features a portrait of a *fidaʾi* in a raised fist posture, red sickle in hand, defiantly facing the viewer, eyes wide open and filling the gap left by the subversive cloak of anonymity: the *kufiya*. This internationalist repertoire of revolutionary symbols is rendered in an aesthetic that makes claims for an Arab cultural particularity. The composition offers a formal echo between the *kufiya* and the open sky, punctuated by a blazing red sun over the horizon. Separated by a black mass, both formal surfaces have the same tonality and are textured by ornamental patterns. Boullata stylizes the *kufiya*'s geometric pattern into a simplified and

[11] Born in 1942 in Palestine, Darwish's poetic début began under Israeli occupation. He was introduced by Ghassan Kanafani in his 1968 book on the literature of resistance in Occupied Palestine. Darwish moved to Beirut in the early 1970s and became close to Yasser Arafat as an adviser and member of the PLO Executive Committee. 'His mordant wit, fierce political independence, and exceptionally refined cultural sensibility kept him at a distance from the frequent coarseness of Palestinian and Arab politics' writes Edward Said (1994). The Palestinian poet was also recognised internationally; he was a recipient of the Lotus Prize (1969), The Lenin Prize (1983), France's Knight of Arts and Belles Lettres (1997), the Lannan Foundation Prize for Cultural Freedom (2001) and The Golden Wreath (2007).

irregular arabesque and fills the sky with a dense texture formed of his handwriting in Arabic. The hardly readable text figures visually the following poem by Darwish:

> Tell me not:
> I wish I were a baker in Algeria
> That I might sing with a freedom fighter.
> Tell me not:
> I wish I were a shepherd in Yemen
> That I might sing of the eruptions of time.
> Tell me not:
> I wish I were a waiter in Havana
> That I might sing of the victories of the sorrowful.
> Tell me not:
> I wish I were a young porter in Aswan
> That I might sing to the rocks.
>
> My friend!
> The Nile will never flow to the Volga,
> Nor will the Congo or the Jordan River flow into the Euphrates.
> Each river has its own source, its course, and its life.
> My friend! Our land is no barren land.
> Each land is born in due time;
> Each dawn holds its revolutionary promise.
>
> (Translated by Elmessiri 1982: 101) [12]

Darwish's poem situates the Palestinian revolutionary struggle within a historical map of Third Worldist insurrections yet stresses its autonomous moment. It is the last line of verse that Boullata has chosen as an inspirational source for his drawing. The text, deferred to the depth of the composition, is

[12] In Elmessiri's translation the last line reads: 'With every dawn, a freedom fighter rises'. I have translated it differently here to be closer to the original Arabic version, which refers to a revolutionary rather than a 'freedom fighter': '*kul fajrin, wa lahu mawʿidu thaʾir*!'.

denied its principal function to be read. Appearing as an ornament-like texture, vacillating between the regularity of a repetitive pattern of graphic signs and the irregularity of writing as an embodied gesture, poetry offers itself up to the visuality of letterforms rather than to that of reading. Boullata displaces the aesthetics of revolutionary poetry to the visual sensibility of Arabic letterforms, to the poetics of the graphic sign. His visual exploration of Arabic through what he describes as 'word-images' characterized the aesthetic experimentations he pursued, earlier in his career, as an artist in his revolutionary heydays: 'Throughout the decade following the 1967 war, all my work centred around verses or quotations from contemporary Arabic writings and its figuration was mainly concerned with the interpretation of text' (Boullata 2009: 315). Like other contemporary Arab artists, Boullata struggled to foreground visuality in a culture that ascribes aesthetic authority to traditions of the Arabic word, in sacred text, poetry, song and calligraphy (see Boullata 2015). The dual modality of seeing and reading, an attribute of calligraphic conventions in Islamic art history, was explored in modern experimentations with abstraction in painting and in printed graphics. Referred to as *hurufiya*, deriving from the root *harf*, meaning 'letter' in Arabic, this aesthetic undertaking, which materialized in various stylistic genres, did not necessarily represent a continuation of the Islamic arts of calligraphy (see Shabout 2007: 75–96). Artists such as Boullata, for instance, explored Arabic letters as formal elements in a visual composition to invoke only latently their poetic reference. The aesthetics of letters as such articulated place-specific claims of artistic decolonization. In the context of the Palestinian struggle, they situated visual art politically in dialogic relation with the popular appeal of Arabic poetry, especially its revolutionary form. The intertextuality across aesthetic forms — poetry, song and visual arts — in the public culture of the Palestinian revolutionary discourse, I want to suggest here, is symptomatic of the politics of solidarity. Inversely, this multi-sensorial intertextuality — seeing, reading, hearing — is also productive of relations of solidarity, in and through cultures of circulation and the portability of revolutionary artefacts.

Imagining the 'Land of Oranges' in Word and Image

Constituting a national culture in a liberation struggle (Fanon 1963) is also about narratives that attach people to places they call 'home' (Slymovics 1998). Particularly when their experience of the nation has been severed, these places become themselves objects of hegemonic institution in an intertextual chain of references running through public discourse, memory narratives, images, signs and symbols. As Edward Said notes in the case of Palestinians:

> Perhaps the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been over the right to a remembered presence and, with that presence, the right to possess and reclaim a collective historical reality, at least since the Zionist movement began its encroachments on the land. (Said 2002: 242)

Representations of Palestinian landscapes and material culture constitute another dominant theme in images advocating the struggle for nationhood. The iconography of cultural heritage, folklore and landscape consolidates a collective imagination of a romanticized past 'home' imbued with the history of communal practices associated with it. The *kufiya* is one symbol in a linked repertoire of cultural icons, which function as politically loaded signs in the liberation struggle. These symbols articulate in text and image the materiality of place and mobilize a community around a shared motive, to reclaim its lost land. In the contingency of political institution, posters attesting a Palestinian identity act as counter-hegemonic sites of resistance to the Zionist discourse that has denied Palestinians land and history. These posters, again to borrow Said's words, 'dispel the [Zionist] myth of an empty landscape and an anonymous, non-existent people'.[13] Ripe bright oranges, firm olive trees, women in embroidered dress, picturesque old towns, all take on their symbolic role to denote Palestine, land and people, in posters commemorating, for instance, Land Day on 30 March. Likewise, the icon of the colourfully

[13] Said is referring to the popular Zionist statement which accompanied Jewish historical settlement: "A land without people for a people without land".

ornamented Dome of the Rock signifies Jerusalem and summons up the struggle to liberate it from Israeli grip. Arab artists have given visual form to a whole repertoire of shared symbols drawn from post-1967 poetry, literature and song. Works by Palestinian poets, especially Mahmoud Darwish and Tawfiq Ziyyad, were turned into the lyrics of songs in the 1970s. Broadcast from Lebanon on the 'Radio of the Revolution',[14] these songs and poems became so popular 'that most people knew them by heart' (Massad 2003: 31). Among the earlier popular songs that inspired artists was the 1967 ode to Jerusalem '*zahrat al madaʾin*' (the flower of cities) written and composed by the Rahbani brothers and performed by the Lebanese diva, Fayruz. The lyrics hymn Jerusalem's multi-confessional history, emphasizing Christianity and Islam (Massad 2003: 26). Thus Fayruz sings the sad themes of loss and metaphors of return while affirming the necessity of resistance as a means to a peaceful end:

> The gate of our city shall not be locked,
> For I shall go to pray.
> […]
> For Jerusalem is ours, and the house is ours
> With our own hands we shall restore the glory of Jerusalem
> With our own hands, we shall bring peace to Jerusalem
> Peace shall come to Jerusalem
>
> (Translated in Massad 2003: 26)

Syrian artist Burhan Karkutli (1932–2003) interprets this song to compose an enchanting poster representation of Jerusalem [Fig. 19]. Minarets, church towers, crescents and crosses interconnect betwixt flowers adorning intricately ornate facades and spectacular birds perched amidst arched windows, bulging domes and tiled rooftops, evoking the layers of religious and cultural histories

[14] In 1971 the PLO established the Radio of the Revolution ("*Sawt Filastin Sawt al-Thawrah al-Filastiniyyah*") in Lebanon (see Massad 2003: 30–31).

that formed the city's architectural and urban fabric. The title 'Jerusalem is ours and victory is ours' fills a rising sun that illuminates the historic city. It discursively relays the poster image to Fayruz's song and completes its message of hope of an imminent return through the allegory of a new dawn. Formally, Karkutli's aesthetic approach draws in black line an intricate non-perspectival composition where ornamental motif and subject matter intertwine in mesmerizing detail that collapses distinctions between form and content. Karkutli's contribution to the struggle for Palestine's liberation, to borrow the words of Marcuse with which I opened this chapter, resides equally in the aesthetic form. Content and form are indissociable in his printed drawings. Together they constitute a totality which intimately embodies the politics of land and history. Like his contemporary, Egyptian artist-designer Helmi el-Touni (see chapter 5), ornament is not antithetical to a modernist aesthetic pursuit; but rather, and more politically pertinent in this context, ornament holds place-specific claims of artistic authenticity. Thus in Karkutli's printed graphics in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, aesthetic decolonization carry the politics of resistance to occupation and a 'new sensibility' of hope in the revolutionary conjuncture post-1967.

Burhan Karkutli studied painting in Cairo's Fine Art Academy between 1952 and 1958, in the same years as el-Touni. Mohieddine Ellabbad remembers fondly how as a younger generation of artists in Egypt they 'learnt a lot' from Karkutli and 'were astonished by his position on art, life, collegiality, friendship and selfhood' (Ellabbad 1987: 125). Karkutli led a bohemian artist life. Upon completing his degree, he left Cairo for Madrid and from there moved to Casablanca. He then pursued artistic training in printmaking/engraving and mural painting in East Berlin. Karkutli returned to teach in the Fine Arts Academy of Damascus in 1967, only to leave it again a year later to head to Beirut, where he worked as an independent illustrator for various PLO-affiliated presses and progressive publishing houses. He finally settled in Frankfort, Germany in 1969 but kept active his politico-aesthetic commitments of solidarity with Palestine from his German exile. Indeed, Palestine constituted a major theme in his artwork, paintings and printed

illustration, to the point that he has often been referred to as a Palestinian artist (al-Khalidi 2004: 76). Karkutli's socialist politics informed his artistic themes centred on people's plight for freedom and resistance against oppression. Formally, his figurative approach renegotiates realism out of its didactic aesthetics through the enchantments of ornament and its place-specific claim of aesthetic authenticity. In a 1967 interview, while still in Damascus, Karkutli explained how his travels exposed him to contemporary debates on realist art in socialist states. He notes having become more tolerant of abstract art and appreciative of its modern iterations, particularly in the applied arts (in al-Khalidi 2004: 317). He firmly held on, however, to a populist endeavour to revolutionary art in its everyday aesthetic manifestation through printed media. On this point, Karkutli shared with Egyptian illustrators and graphic designers the double claim of aesthetic authenticity, place-bound and radically populist, mobilised in the Cairo-Beirut publishing circuit (chapter 5). In correspondence with Syrian art critic, Ghazi al-Khalidi, in 1971, Karkutli notes concerning the recent founding of a Union for Arab artists:

> I think the best way of starting this union is to set up a modern press for colour printing. This is essential for the dissemination of art and its democratisation across the Arab world. It is similar in role to that of a publishing house. The modern press will make the painting like the book available to citizens and will contribute to the income of artists.
>
> If painting reflects revolutionary values, its dissemination in print across the Arab world will bring these values to every home and within the sight of every citizen. (in al-Khalidi 2004: 194–195)

Writing from his German exile, Karkutli was enthusiastic about the political prospects of such a transnational union set up through an initiative of Arab artists. He cautioned, nonetheless, against official state patronage and bureaucratization that would hinder its radical promise if an independent printing press was not pursued. It is precisely this role that Beirut's printing and publishing industry provided for dissenting political groups post-1967,

including the various Palestinian organizations in the early 1970s. Solidarity with Palestine ignited collaborations between visual artists, poets and writers in this revolutionary conjuncture. An intertextual expression, in image and words, was manifest on the printed surface of books, just as in street posters. The experiment of Dar an-Nahar's 'precious books' paved the way for similar aesthetic explorations, enunciated, however, from radical political subject positions, which altered books in content, form and materiality.

One paradigmatic example is the homage to Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani's politically committed literary oeuvre, which abounds in numerous artistic interpretations by Arab artists in film, theatre and in print. Kanafani, as a journalist and critic in Beirut, played an important role in introducing what he coined 'the literature of Resistance' in Occupied Palestine. He first wrote in the Arab Nationalist Movement's newspaper *al-Hurriya*. In 1969, he co-founded the newspaper *al-Hadaf*, the organ of the PFLP, and was its editor-in-chief, thus acting as the organic intellectual of the radical leftist Palestinian organization. Born in 1936 Palestine, a child of exile and camps himself, Kanafani has written short stories that characterise the political, social and human realities of the Palestinian experience (Harlow and Riley 2000: 14). The protagonists, symbols and complex memories that populate his stories have had a social life of their own well beyond Kanafani's oeuvre. One finds the symbols of his novels — Umm Saad, oranges, rifles, Haifa, among other Palestinian towns — circulating in everyday public discourse on Palestine, most notably in posters and other prints. It is perhaps because the Israeli secret service understood that literature impinges on social life as much as it is informed by it, that Kanafani was assassinated in 1972. But the social lives of text stubbornly surpass their author; or, to cite Roland Barthes (1977), meaning is born in the text's encounter with readers. The politics of which, in this case, had already disentangled from the author before the Israeli state brutally took his life. Post-structuralism was perhaps not something the Israeli army and its

secret service understood then.[15] Kanafani's poignant narratives were interpreted visually by Arab artists and published in Beirut. I discuss Burhan Karkutli's illustrations of *Atfal Ghassan Kanafani* (The Children of Ghassan Kanafani) published by Dar al-Fata al-Arabi in chapter 6. In what follows, I move to the work of Iraqi artist Dia al-Azzawi.

In 1973 Dia al-Azzawi signed *Drawings for the Land of Oranges,* published by the Committee for the Commemoration of Ghassan Kanafani, a year following the author's assassination [Figs 20–22]. The book's title dedicates al-Azzawi's drawings to Palestine, 'the land of oranges'; and that on account of Kanafani's having originated the term in one of his popular short stories, *The Land of Sad Oranges*. The book consists of 33 black ink drawings inspired by Kanafani's short stories. Each drawing is coupled, on the facing page, with the title of the original literary piece. Intended for international dissemination, the titles were translated into seven different languages. A short preface attests to the refugee turned revolutionary, to the life of the politically committed Palestinian writer. More pertinently, it suggests to readers that the book is designed in such a way as to allow them to tear out the page and frame it as an independent picture. Karkutli's utopian vision of the dissemination in print of art's revolutionary promise is carried through the design of al-Azzawi's book. The textual form of the book is here subverted to the visuality of its imprint. Indeed, the book is no longer an object defined by its being leafed through and read once its pages are undone, as soon as the page acquires the new visual role of an autonomous drawing on a wall. Al-Azzawi's book thus hovers in the interstitial space between an artist's portfolio of drawings and the book as a 'democratic multiple' (Drucker 1995). It is the politics of the latter which lends it the tension that unsettles its aesthetic and material dimension. Unlike his earlier collaboration with Dar an-Nahar (chapter 4), there was nothing of the 'precious book' here. *Drawings for the Land of Oranges* is a small format, standard soft-cover book — and one that was distributed free of charge.

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[15] The Israeli army apparently reads now Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as part of its counterinsurgency and military training (see Weizman 2006).

The artist's book as a 'democratic multiple', notes Johanna Drucker, is historically linked, on one hand, to the post-1945 greater availability of inexpensive modes of reproduction, and on the other, to the proliferation of artists' books in the political ferment of independent and experimental art publishing of the 1960s and 1970s (1995: 69–72). Both historical conditions were at work in Beirut's contemporary revolutionary conjuncture. This category of the artist's book, as theorized by Drucker, takes on the characteristics of the free circulation of books, and, unlike a painting, develops 'its capacity of being preserved through that mobility' (88). 'That is the nature of the democratic multiple', Drucker contends, 'the ready availability of an independent artist's vision in book form' (88). Following on from Drucker, I propose that the books of solidarity with Palestine in the post-1967 Arab conjuncture, signed by al-Azzawi among other Arab artists, need to be conceived as political artworks embodied in the public role of the book as a 'democratic multiple'. Unlike the 'precious books' published by Dar an-Nahar, the artist's books of solidarity with Palestine were not only concerned with advancing the aesthetic form of the book, rather, and equally so, with its radical political promise. The aesthetics of the book, in both its content and form, and in its productive imaginative force unifying sensibility and reason (Marcuse 1969), was recruited in the struggle for liberation in the revolutionary quest for a new Arab future (Boullata 1970).

In 1969, Al-Azzawi co-authored with five other Iraqi artists a manifesto entitled 'Towards a New Vision'.[16] Known thereafter as the 'New Vision Group', they embraced art's revolutionary promise and called for a more politically active role for Arab artists as critical agents in this historic moment of defiance of the 1967 defeat (Naef 1996: 229–235; Shabout 2007: 125–129). The conceptualization of art and politics in Iraq had also changed in the aftermath of 1967. 'Let us be the vanguard of defiance', artists boldly declared from Baghdad and saluted martyrs of the popular liberation struggle as 'the glory of this nation' (cited in Shabout 2007: 126). As intellectuals and artists in

[16] The artists were: Mohammad Maher al-Din, Salih al-Jumae, Rafi' al-Nasiri, Ismail Fattah, and Hashim Samarchi.

Iraq sought to reconceive the relation between art and politics outside the framework of the post-colonial state, the figure of the autonomous *fidaʾi* and revolutionary armed struggle presented a new model of praxis (see al-Bahlooly 2013: 91). Indeed, a number of left-wing Iraqis joined the PFLP, first in Jordan, and then in Beirut and South Lebanon.[17] The artists' 'new vision' was radical not only in political content but also in calling for a new aesthetic form. The group rejected what they saw as an ossification of tradition in contemporary Arab nationalist pursuits in art, as this manifesto proclaimed: 'considering the past as a constant [fixed] vision is but a deception, intended to freeze the contemporary experience in historically exhausted moulds' (cited in Shabout 2007: 127). The group did not reject artistic explorations of the past; rather, these artists' conception of modernity and its dialectical relation to tradition had changed from that of their predecessors. Moreover, the group called for a widening of the horizons of sources from which inspiration could be drawn, beyond strictly nationalist foci to include traditions of the wider region and of humanity as a whole (ibid). Art realizes its revolutionary promise 'towards a new vision', as the manifesto proclaimed, by responding to political conditions with renewed aesthetic sensibility, premised on a cosmopolitan framework of humanity and Arab futurity.

Dia al-Azzawi abandoned the Sumerian symbols and material culture which had inspired his early drawings, and now drew instead from contemporary political reality (Shabout 2007: 129). Palestine's liberation struggle now occupied his vision and displaced the ancient artefacts he had contemplated in the Iraqi national museum in Baghdad. His drawings thematically focused from 1969 on the figure of the *fidaʾi* and on the concept of martyrdom (see al-Bahlooly 2013: 92–94). With this visual transformation in subject-matter, an alteration in form and media also ensued. Al-Azzawi explored the reproducibility of posters as well as books in articulating the new sensibility of the Palestinian revolutionary conjuncture. Visualizing text was his new method of aesthetic experimentation in the sensorial modalities of

[17] This is particularly the case of those members of the Iraqi Communist Party suppressed by the Baath regime in Iraq since the latter's bloody seizure of power in 1963.

seeing and reading. In *Drawings for the Land of Oranges,* al-Azzawi combines political solidarity with the Palestinian cause and artistic homage to the literary oeuvre of a revolutionary intellectual. The compositions are bolder and more dynamic in the contrast he creates through the tense play of lines, form and counter-form, black ink on the white surface of the page. His drawings, stripped of earlier ornamental motifs, hover at the edge between abstraction and representation, not settling in either of these realms. Figurative elements appear only immediately to disappear, almost disfigured by the energy of lines taking off in autonomous streaks leaving behind incomplete and disjointed bodies. In fact, al-Azzawi's drawings can hardly be described as illustrations of Kanafani's text. The short stories may very well be a point of departure that al-Azzawi draws inspiration from. But as the printed set of drawings shows the original text is a catalyst for a wider chain of references and associations that materialize visually through the artist's interpretation and formal explorations. On this he writes: 'the unique value of any visual work is to be totally independent of the subject that inspired it' (cited in Shabout 2007: 130). This autonomous re-authoring of literary texts in visual mode was a dialogical method that al-Azzawi explored further in subsequent work drawing from Arabic poetry (see Shabout 2007: 131–32). From the diaries of a *fidaʾi* and the prose of Kanafani, his attention to the Palestinian cause shifted to the poetry written in its plight. It is to another book he created in the aftermath of the 1976 massacre at Tal al-Zaʿtar — a Palestinian camp in the eastern outskirts of Beirut — that I shall turn to. But first, I want to situate, by way of conclusion, the Palestinian revolutionary struggle and its downturn, as some have claimed it to be (Sayigh 1997, Chamberlin 2015), in the violent quagmire that formed the beginning of a protracted civil war in Lebanon. The event of Tal al-Zaʿtar constituted an important juncture in this civil strife, which was the object of artistic gestures of solidarity and commemoration. In examining the representation of this violent event, I return to Boullata and end with his work — another illustrated book on Tal al-Zaʿtar. In analysing both Boullata and al-Azzawi's books, I show how the artist's book as 'democratic multiple'

critically invoked the limits of revolutionary discourse in figuring the violence of the event.

Global Counterinsurgency, Local Proxy: Beirut Divided

The revolutionary promise that Beirut held in and through the Palestinian movement ran up against a power structure that interlocked global and local forces. As the PLO projected its guerrilla tactics onto the world stage and intensified its armed liberation struggle from the Lebanese southern border with Israel, it garnered the solidarity of global anti-imperialism. In doing so, however, it collided with one of the world's superpowers. If Vietnam marked another victory of Third World revolutionary forces following on from Cuba and Algiers, the US was not going to stand by while the 'the banner of the global struggle' was being passed on to the PLO in the Middle East. The 'Nixon Doctrine', aiming to thwart revolution in the Cold War peripheries, relied on a network of regional 'friendly regimes' and proxy forces, providing them with military aid to suppress revolutionaries (Chamberlin 2015: 258–59). The US, in tandem with Israel, its 'special ally' in the Middle East, responded to the PLO's 'global offensive', as it did to anti-imperialist guerrillas elsewhere in the 1970s: through military containment and counterinsurgency tactics which exacerbated local conflicts and protracted civil wars (ibid: 259). Lebanon's precarious sectarian polity could not have come out unscathed.

Israel launched indiscriminate attacks on Lebanon as a multi-level counterinsurgency tactic. It acted punitively on the Lebanese population for harbouring the Palestinian resistance, 'making this support costly in property and lives lost to assassination [and] bombing' (Khalili 2013: 58). Escalating Israeli bombing raids between 1968 and 1975 on Lebanese infrastructure, Palestinian refugee camps and southern Lebanese villages caused the death of hundreds of civilians and resulted in substantial damage and material losses

(see Sayigh 1999: 358).[18] Disproportionate Israeli reprisals for guerrilla attacks heightened political polarization in Lebanese society over the Palestinian armed struggle on its soil (Sayigh 1999: 359). Furthermore, joint Israeli military and intelligence operations executed targeted killings of key Palestinian political and intellectual figures in Beirut.[19] Israel mounted pressure on the Lebanese state to take repressive action against guerrilla forces (Chamberlin 2015: 159–161), exacerbating the anger of the Left against the Lebanese army, which it denounced as 'always present for internal repression and always absent when it came to national defence' (Traboulsi 2007: 175).

When Israel bombed Beirut's airport in 1968, a major international aviation node at the time, it made sure to impress the message that Arab Hanoi would be antithetical to Beirut's economic projects, not least in respect of its cosmopolitan tourism infrastructure. This message — pursued through the 1970s — resonated among the Lebanese ruling élite, particularly the Christian-Maronite establishment and affiliated right-wing Lebanese nationalist political parties. The latter grouping, later known as the Lebanese Front coalition, saw in the rise of the Palestinian guerrilla a threat to state sovereignty and, most importantly, feared that the radicalization of the Lebanese Left, in alliance with the PLO, would threaten the very sectarian structure that granted Christian-Maronites hegemonic rule in Lebanon. The Lebanese nationalist coalition articulated its antagonism through relations of equivalence, which linked a liberal economic discourse with a sectarian Christian political subjectivity and with US politics in the Cold War divide. The contingency of the latter sectarian discourse constituted a hegemonic formation, which in effect lent the Lebanese Front the role of 'state surrogate' (Stoakes 1975) as a militarized

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[18] Official statistics showed that Israel had launched 1,437 attacks and 55 air raids during 1974, killing 167 civilians and wounding another 412, besides military casualties (Sayigh 1999: 358).

[19] These include: Ghassan Kanafani and Anis Sayegh, director of the Palestinian research centre in 1972; and 1973 commando operation in Beirut in which the two major political leaders of PLO's Fatah organization were assassinated, Abu Youssef al-Najjar and Kamal Adwan, as well as the Palestinian poet Kamal Nasser.

counterinsurgency. Following a series of clashes which brought the Palestinian forces into violent confrontation with the Lebanese army intermittently throughout the early-1970s, the Lebanese Front coalition took matters of 'security' into their own hands as of the mid-1970s. The Front had no qualms in making a strategic alliance with Israel, seeking support in training and arms (Ménargues 2004: 73–74), and in acting later as pliant proxies policing the southern border (Khalili 2013: 105–118). With both sides trained and armed, Lebanon plunged into a bloody and destructive civil war.

In the early phase of the war, from 1975 to 1976, known as the 'two-year war', violent confrontations reconfigured the spatiality of Beirut along military battlegrounds and mobile frontiers demarcating each warring faction's territorial might. By 1976, demarcation lines hardened and developed along sectarian segregation, dividing Beirut into two: East and West. The cosmopolitan city thus violently imploded on itself. On the Western side, the Left, in close collaboration with the Palestinian guerrilla groups, proclaimed their side of Beirut to be liberated from the forces of imperialism that obstructed their revolutionary path, and through force of arms promised to topple the Lebanese sectarian socio-political regime. The Lebanese Front, waged a fierce battle to 'securitize' the city's eastern peripheries — Beirut's 'belt of poverty' — cracking down on Palestinian refugee camps, as well as on Lebanese Muslims, while acting with no less impunity against Christians on the Left who disavowed their sectarian identity. This ruthless crackdown left a death toll in the thousands and forced the displacement of hundreds of thousands as a consequence of "cleansing" east Beirut of "foreigners", notably Palestinians.[20] Posters of right-wing factions of the Lebanese Front reiterated

[20] On 3 January 1976 the Lebanese Front enacted a tight blockade of food, fuel and medical supplies to the Tal al-Zaʿtar, Jisr al-Basha, and Dbayya refugee camps and to the Maslakh-Karantina shanty town and the low income Lebanese Muslim neighbourhood of Nab'a in east Beirut, affecting the lives of some 150,000 people. The Lebanese Left and the PLO retaliated by gaining grounds south of Beirut and joining forces to escalate attacks eastwards in efforts to relieve the siege. Their failure was complicated by the collusion of the

graphically a public discourse of enmity towards Palestinians and ridiculed their plight [Fig. 23]. This discourse constructed a 'hostile imagination' (Keen 1988) that dehumanized Palestinians and legitimized their killing. Doubtless the arrogance of young and armed guerrillas in the proximity of predominantly Christian suburbs of East Beirut also heightened fears and exacerbated antagonism towards Palestinians (see Sayigh 1999). Syria's military intervention into Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese Front in 1976 — under the guise of 'peace keeping' Arab Deterrent Forces dispatched upon resolutions taken by the Arab league — exacerbated the pervasive sense that the revolutionary promise of the Palestinian guerrilla and the Left in Lebanon were under siege, and not only by local foes. Tal al-Zaʿtar was the last Palestinian refugee camp in East Beirut to fall violently following fierce bombardment and a blockade of close to two months. As the defence of the camp faltered and fighters surrendered, some residents desperately made their way out, while between 1,000 and 2,000 civilians who did not manage to flee were lined up and shot in the morning of 12 August 1976. Bulldozers shortly afterwards razed the camp to the ground. The death toll for the overall period of Tal al-Zaʿtar's blockade alone amounted to 4,280, the majority of whom were civilians (Sayigh 1999: 395–401).[21]

Figuring Violence in the Body of the Book

> Under the law of the aesthetic form, the given reality is necessarily sublimated: the immediate content is stylized, the "data" are reshaped and reordered in accordance with the demands of the art form, which requires that even the representation of death and destruction invoke the need for hope — a need rooted in the new consciousness embodied in the work of art. (Marcuse 1978: 7)

Lebanese army on the side of the Christian militias and the intervention of the Syrian army into Lebanon in the same year (Sayigh 1999: 372–391).

[21] 300 infants, including new-born babies, died of malnutrition and dehydration during the siege (Sayigh 1999: 401).

The siege of Tal al-Zaʿtar was the subject of commemorative practices officially marked by the PLO and allied Lebanese political parties, for instance in posters praising 'heroic steadfastness' in defence of the camp and condemning 'the atrocity of the massacre' [Fig. 24] (Maasri 2009). Unofficial testimonies of surviving refugees, in popular storytelling and song, narrated the hardships of civilians under siege (Khalili 2007: 168–171). A documentary film, *Tal el-Zaatar* (1977) — a transnational collaboration between three filmmakers, Mustapha Abu Ali (Palestinian), Jean Chamoun (Lebanese), and Pino Adriano (Italian) — features footage shot before and during the siege and relates the traumatic experience of the camp community and the testimony of survivors.[22] Poets such as Mahmoud Darwish paid tribute to the victims of Tal al-Zaʿtar and transformed their narratives of hardship into verse. His acclaimed ode, *Ahmad al-Zaʿtar,* interpreted in song by Lebanese composers such as Khaled al-Habr, Ziad al-Rahbani and Marcel Khalife, allegorized Tal al-Zaʿtar as a metaphor of Palestinian perpetual suffering. Likewise, as gestures of artistic solidarity, Dia al-Azzawi and Kamal Boullata each visually interpreted Darwish's poem in the form of books.

Dia al-Azzawi's book, *Nashid al-Jassad* (The Body's Anthem) post-dates the event by three years. The Beirut-based publisher, Dar al-Muthalath, produced two editions of al-Azzawi's drawings in commemoration of Tal al-Zaʿtar's 52-day siege and bombing. The first, produced in 1979, is a limited edition of 39 large format silkscreen prints (65 x 65 cm) assembled as loose sheets in one portfolio. The silkscreen prints were exhibited in Baghdad and together with this limited edition were produced with the aim of fundraising in support of survivors of the camp (al-Bahlooly 2013: 75). The other edition, published a year later, is a hardcover illustrated poetry book [Figs 25–28]. Al-

[22] Rushes for this film were smuggled to Italy for production in 1977 with the help of the Italian Communist Party (see Buali 2012). Films in the archive of the PLO's Palestinian Cinema Institution (PCI), including *Tal al-Zaʿtar*, were lost during the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982. The film was digitally reconstituted only recently from the Italian copy, by renowned contemporary Palestinian artist Emily Jacir and activist Monica Maurer who worked with the PLO's film unit (see Murphy 2013).

Azzawi's drawings accompany and visually interpret three poems: 'Ahmad al-Zaʿtar' by Mahmoud Darwish, 'La Mort est arrivée en riant a Tel el-Zaatar' (Death arrived laughing to Tal Zaʿtar' by Tahar Ben Jelloun,[23] and 'yasaran…hatta jabal al-zaytun' (Leftwards … towards the Mount of Olives) by Yusuf Sayigh. The book is trilingual — Arabic, French and English; it provides the reader with a historical account, photographic evidence, along with translations of all three poems and texts.[24] The two-tiered edition displaces the economy of 'precious books' into the politics of solidarity. Al-Azzawi's book performs the role of the 'democratic multiple' in commemoration of the violent silencing of a revolutionary promise and the brutality enacted against civilians in the camp. In his introduction to the book al-Azzawi states:

> The Body's Anthem: pictures I chose of that siege. It is not a dirge, nor is it the document of a dark massacre — It is an expression that seeks to create a free memory persisting against oppression, until a time when it can exhaust oppression's glowing evil. A time that will summon the blood of friends and brothers, hastening the return of the martyrs. When the nation will be bread clean of soil and blood. A space unhindered by black treachery and the nets of disguise. When feet will cross safely over beautiful times. And men will not sell their dreams.
>
> (As translated into English in the book)

Though al-Azzawi writes a hopeful statement of an ongoing struggle against oppression, visually he paints the disjointed memory of a violent tragedy, formed of the haunting remains in a mass grave. Arabic letters, akin with his *hurufiya* method, figure simultaneously as traces of the poetic texts he chose and as handwritten gestures embodying the erratic trace of violence in the body of the book. Amidst the fragmented traces of an amorphous memory, pieces of

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[23] Translated from French into Arabic by the Moroccan author Muhammad Baradah.

[24] Translations into French by Etel Adnan and into English by Sumaya Damluji.

text and the thick texture of abstract graphic forms and lines, we can untangle the haunting images of the human body in distress, shrieking faces and outstretched hands. Graphic symbols intercept these figures: numbers, arrows and dotted lines suggest the traces of a cartographic map, deconstructed in the violent quagmire of a persistent memory. Al-Azzawi's drawings bear witness to the event, not in its claim of historical evidence as photography might — not in the 'that-has-been' of photography's indexicality (Barthes 1980: 82) — but as drawings that bear witness to the haunting of memory, to the pain of witnessing a historical event, as it persists, disjointed and amorphous, here and now. Solidarity, in the form of the artist's book as 'democratic multiple', lies in the act of drawing which embodies the pain of bearing witness to violence. [25]

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[25] Saleem al-Bahlooly (2013) reads al-Azzawi's work on Tal al-Zaʿtar and the artist's idea of the persistence of memory diferently. He translates al-Azzawi's introduction to English and bases his interpretation on this, rather than on the original English text in the book. He situates the work within the history of Iraqi art in the 1960s and the body of work of al-Azzawi. Thus he reads 'a free memory that persists against oppression' in *The Body's Anthem* within the Shiite tradition of martyrdom and struggle against oppression — the commemoration of al-Hussayn as a martyr figure (*husayniyyat*) — and the ancient epic of Gilgamesh. His analysis of the critical stance al-Azzawi takes in this work, removes it from the political context of the Palestinian liberation struggle and the civil war in Lebanon. In fact the little contextualization he provides in conclusion is historically flawed (ibid: 96–97). The Palestinians, according to al-Bahlooly were 'left stateless' when 'the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War' (ibid: 96). He refers hastily to 'the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1979' (97), which in fact happened in 1976 in the midst of the siege of Tal al-Zaʿtar. On that basis the Syrian regime has been held responsible for the fall of the camp and the atrocities committed against its residents, if not through indirect collusion with the perpetrators — the Lebanese Front — then as an intervening military power which silently observed and sanctioned the killing. This historical fact is what prompted much of the poetry al-Azzawi relies on to condemn 'the Arab betrayal'. Furthermore, al-Bahlooly refers to a 'representational void' (ibid: 75) after Tal al-Zaʿtar — 'there were no witnesses, no photographers' (ibid: 75) — when this was surely not the case, especially not with the film *Tal al-Zaʿtar* (1977) and Boullata's two edition books (1976 and 1977) that preceded al-Azzawi's. His reading of *The Body's Anthem* is indicative of the shortfalls of art-historical approaches that rely on the artist's oeuvre and national history as interpretive frameworks, when the artists in question were far more mobile in their political engagements than art-historians are often willing to acknowledge.

Ahmad Zaatar: A poem by Mahmoud Darwish, with illustrations by Boullata, was first published in English in 1976 by the grass-root organization Free Palestine Press in Washington DC, where the artist had moved. A second bilingual (Arabic-English) edition was published a year later in Beirut by the Palestinian Union of Writers and Journalists. Printed in a small format, in black ink on white paper, the book as a 'democratic multiple' (Drucker 1995) performs here a double politico-aesthetic role: as a critical witness to the violent event and as an act of solidarity with the victims. In this poem Darwish merges the epic, as a narrative form, with poetry, the metaphoric and rhythmic play of linguistic signs. His epic hero slips between embodying the besieged camp and the smell of *zaʿtar*, the wild aromatic thyme that grows in the Levantine countryside. 'Ahmad al-Zaʿtar' slides between an allegorical representation of a Palestinian narrative of wretchedness, resistance and steadfastness — 'I am the Arab Ahmad […] I am the homeland, the ongoing journey to the homeland' — and the reality of the event, the violent betrayal that is the siege of Tal al-Zaʿtar, where 'from the East to the West the swords were being sharpened'. Boullata draws across the pages of the book an allegorical portrait of 'Ahmad' [Figs 29–32].

The book opens with a double page blackened by ink covering almost the entirety of its surface. In reversed colour, white on black, two eyes reveal a hidden figure; graphics around the eyes suggest the arabesque motif of a *kufiya*. In the veil of black ink Boullata's former big-eyed hero seems to hide: the defiant *fidaʾi* he had imagined and crafted a year earlier on postcard. Only this time the big eyes betray fear and wretchedness. This image, anchored by the handwritten line 'and only mountains dare to hide me', displaces to the realm of visuality, and in the materiality of ink on paper, the poetics of Darwish's opening verses:

> To those hands made of thyme
> and darkened stone
> I voice this cry
> To Ahmad
> Forgotten and alone

The passing clouds have left me
homeless and unknown
And only mountains dare to hide me
in a barren home.
I emerge again from the ancient wounds
Approaching till I see
The details of the land
I emerge again in the year the sea
was breached from the cities of ash
When I found myself alone.

(Translation: Rana Kabbani 1976)

On the subsequent pages Ahmad's body and face are drawn contorted behind besieging lines. Once again, Boullata relays, in his handwriting, the meaning of the image to Darwish's lines of verse that inspired his illustration:

I am the Arab Ahmad
Let the besiegers come!
My body is the fortress
Let the siege come!

Eyes wide shut, on the subsequent pages, Boullata's figure has lost its initial revolutionary garb: the *fidaʾi*'s *kufiya*. From his US exile, Boullata responded to the violence of the event by drawing the 'Arab Ahmad' denuded of any signs of the revolutionary promise he announced in 1970.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Arab artists responded to the 1967 defeat and were radicalized by the revolutionary promise of the Palestinian liberation struggle. It shows how the concept of *iltizam*, political commitment through the arts, was rearticulated from the nationalist imperatives of the post-colonial Arab state to Third Worldist and internationalist frameworks of revolutionary anti-imperialism. I have argued that this radicalisation of the role of the artist in

society was productive of new aesthetic sensibilities that were carried in and through the reproducibility of printed media. The mobility of posters, mail art and artists' books lent visibility to the Palestinian struggle and aestheticized its revolutionary discourse in the public realm. Political art in this context radically reconfigured putative binary relations between form and content, art and public culture and, between art and design. The intertextuality of signs linked nodal concepts of liberation, land and people into a revolutionary discourse that was articulated in multi-sensorial modalities: image, text, sound. One sees a poster by Karkutli on the street and it conjures the voice of Fayruz singing 'Jerusalem is ours, and the house is ours' to the music of the Rahbanis. One hears Fayruz's song on the radio and it conjures the haptic visuality of Karkutli's drawings of the old city. This inter-sensorial textuality, I suggest, is at the core of political relations of solidarity. It is produced by these relations and productive of solidarities in and through the discursive and aesthetic horizons of revolutionary artefacts and their affective labour. 'Art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (Benjamin 2007) is neither simply a repressive instrument of the modern nation state, nor simply subservience to the system of consumer capitalism in the cultural industry (Adorno 2007: 110–133). The chapter shows how the flourishing publishing industry, technologies of printing and transnational distribution amassed through the sixties from Cairo to Beirut was put to use in the 1970s in the service of the PLO's various media and publishing activities. Beirut's cosmopolitan art market, its visual economy and transnational Arab artists were all mobilized in the radical quest for a 'new sensibility' in the Palestinian revolutionary conjuncture. As I will develop the argument in the following chapter, the aesthetics of Arab Hanoi displaced the cosmopolitanism of the Paris of the East, from Eurocentric to Third Worldist revolutionary circuits of visuality.

The historian Yazid Sayigh marks the end of the Palestinian revolutionary phase in 1973, following successive crackdowns on guerrilla activities by Arab governments from Jordan to Lebanon (1999: 148). 'State-building in exile', he notes, ushered in Yasser Arafat and the PLO's politics until the 1982 Israeli invasion of Beirut (319–327). While the period between

1967 and 1972 may constitute a revolutionary phase defined by the statements and actions of politicians, its temporality in aesthetic practices may not necessarily match. Artists such as Kamal Boullata took a critical distance from the revolutionary discourse that mobilised their earlier work in the aftermath of Tal al-Zaʿtar. Others still held on to its promise a little longer. The next chapter attends to the aesthetics of revolutionary armed struggle and transnational politics of solidarity amid tensions between radical and diplomatic processes from the mid-seventies onwards.

Chapter 7

Draw Me a Gun: Radical Children's Books in the Trenches of Arab Hanoi

> Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. (Arafat 1974)

The symbolically charged and militant words above closed an equally poignant speech by Yasser Arafat at the United Nations General Assembly in 1974. The event, broadcast globally, represented a historic moment in international politics towards recognizing Palestine's right to self-determination; Arafat was the first non-state official to be invited to address the UN Assembly in its plenary session. As Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Arafat spoke officially on behalf of the stateless Palestinian people. His speech was followed by an overwhelming standing ovation by the UN delegates. The following week the assembly passed a resolution that affirmed the 'inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including: 'the right to self-determination…The right to national independence and sovereignty… [and] the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their home and property… and calls for their return' (cited in Chamberlain 2013: 247). The PLO, a year later, was granted observer status in the United Nations.

Arafat was literally bearing neither a gun nor for that matter an olive branch. In point of fact, he carried with him from Beirut to the UN headquarters in New York a tiny colourfully illustrated booklet, no larger than the palm of a hand, titled *The Home*. It had recently been published by the newly founded Beirut-based children's publishing house, Dar al-Fata al-Arabi, a joint authorship between the Syrian writer Zakariyya Tamer and the Egyptian illustrator and book designer Mohieddine Ellabbad [Figs 1–6].

The booklet, page by page through a simple line of text and an accompanying illustration, rhythmically explained how animals each had their home:

> The chicken has a home; the chicken's home is the coop.
> The rabbit has a home; the rabbit's home is referred to as
> the warren.
> The horse has a home; the horse's home is called the stable.
> The fish has a home; the fish's home is in rivers and seas.
> The bird has a home; the bird's home is called the nest.
> The cat likes to roam the streets but it too has a home …

It thus introduced in the manner of children's books the taxonomy of animals with their corresponding homes as unambiguous truth claims eventually to reach the logical deduction that: 'Every human being has a home. The home is the place that gives every person a feeling of safety and happiness'. The accompanying illustration portrays an idyllic conglomerate of houses and peoples. Distinctive architectural characteristics indicate the variety of dwelling typologies of the world; smiling faces in different skin colours look out of the window frames from the warmth and safety of their homes. The booklet articulates home through a universal humanist conception: despite the differences between humans — skin colours and material (architectural) cultures, just like the differences between animals and their types of dwellings, a home is a basic need, a right for everyone. But the narrative then reaches its climax, turning to the more complicated political problem: 'The Palestinian has no home.' The text makes this dramatic statement next to an illustration of a

sad young boy standing alone beside a shabby tent in the night. The beautiful order of the world is arrested in this double page. The reader is compelled to sympathize with the wretchedness of the Palestinian youth and grapple with the conditions of the exception that his homelessness poses to the simple order of things as laid out so far. The next double-page follows on with this:

> Where is the home of the Palestinian? The home of the Palestinian is Palestine. But the enemy of the Palestinian took over his home and threw him out.

Here again, the illustration relays more meanings than the text alone would. We see houses on fire. The domed rooftops and arches that adorn the houses reference the prototypical Islamic vernacular architecture of Middle Eastern towns. The ambiguous 'enemy' is revealed on the subsequent pages through a similar semiotic interplay of text and image:

> Who is the enemy of the Palestinian? The enemy of the Palestinian is he who occupied the home of the Palestinian.

While the text defines the abstract concept of enmity with the illegitimate act of occupation of one's home by another, the illustration gives more immediate visual clues as to who the enemy is; a large and menacing Israeli tank driven by an equally hostile-looking soldier. Set against a pitch-black background frame reinforcing the dramatic conclusion, we understand that the Israeli soldier — the Palestinian's enemy, who occupied his home — has caused the wretchedness of the Palestinian child. Unlike all the other people and animals in the world he is denied the right to a home. He thus feels unhappy and unsafe. The story does not end, though, with this desolate deduction. The subsequent double page closes the narrative on a hopeful note prescribing what's to be done:

> How can the Palestinian regain his home? The Palestinian will regain his home through struggle and sacrifice. The Palestinian shall return home. The home of the Palestinian belongs to the Palestinian.

The illustration depicts a trophy-like barrel gun, standing proud between the sun and moon, amidst the brightness of an orange coloured background frame. The gun stands on the page for someone to grab it. It is an open invitation for a hero, someone who will struggle and sacrifice to put an end to the wretchedness of the Palestinian and help him reclaim his rightful home. The historical certainty of the liberation of Palestine is articulated on this double page through a nexus of signs, symbols and an aesthetics of hope, human agency and armed struggle.

The invitation to take up arms that this booklet proposes as a means to resist occupation and reclaim a national homeland is perhaps not so easy to grapple with today, especially when aestheticized in the context of children's literature. Neither is the carrying of a gun, albeit symbolically, by Yasser Arafat in the midst of the international institution for peacekeeping. The booklet and Arafat's words are linked not only by the Palestinian cause they share and advance; they are embedded in the discourse of liberationist armed struggle, which, as both cases reveal, was not inimical to the international public addressed, not even the United Nations delegates who gave Arafat a standing ovation, after his concluding words.

The booklet received its own share of public recognition. *The Home* won two book awards in 1975: one from the Beirut Arabic Book Fair as part of its annual selection of the 'most beautiful Arabic books' and an honourable mention from the internationally reputed Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava. The PLO printed translated editions of the publication (in French, English, Spanish and German), which accompanied Arafat and were distributed to the convening UN delegates as part of a concerted media campaign for Palestine (Mikdashi 2013). More translations ensued in the following years (in Italian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Persian and Japanese) some of which were produced by foreign publishers in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance while others were produced by the PLO's satellite bureaus in cities abroad (Ellabbad 1987: 54–55).

To unpack the discourse of revolutionary armed struggle and associated circuit of visuality as expressed in this booklet and in Arafat's address to the

UN I begin by situating these two signifying practices within the global discursive framework of a Third Worldist revolutionary moment. I then take a close look at the aestheticization of armed struggle and its circulation through transnational solidarity networks that connected anti-imperialist struggles in places like Guatemala, with people in Congo, Lebanon or Palestine and with geographies as far afield as Vietnam. Following this voyage, I return to the locality of the Palestinian question, particularly to how it linked a revolutionary Third Worldist discourse with an Arab nationalist one. I examine the publications of Dar al-Fata al-Arabi as a project that exemplifies the aesthetic conjuncture of the 'Arab Hanoi' in the temporality of Beirut's long sixties. The publishing house represented a radical node of solidarity among Arab artists, intellectuals and writers committed to the Palestinian cause and to revolutionary change in the Arab world. I will be discussing how, as in *The Home*, Dar al-Fata's books articulated the politics of the present liberationist discourse through the visual and textual poetics of children's literature, and, in doing so enlisted the Arab child in its radical promise of futurity. In tracing *The Home*'s social life, from production in Beirut to its international itinerary, I critically reflect on the historical junctures and disjuncture of the Palestinian struggle with global politics of solidarity, tensions between radical political art and political diplomacy, the utopias and disenchantment of a generation of politically committed Leftist Arab artists and intellectuals.

Arafat's Imaginary Gun

Before advancing the question of Palestine, Arafat opened his speech with a long preamble that situated his address in relation to the global political geography of his audience — the delegates that made up the Assembly, within a post-colonial Third Worldist space and time. He first greeted the newly elected President of the Assembly and saluted his heroic past as a freedom fighter in the Algerian war of liberation. He moved on to congratulate the new member states, which had recently achieved independence from colonial occupation. He did so while conjuring universal humanist ideals and citing the UN charter and its responsibilities in respect of upholding freedom, equality

and the right of people to self-determination. He then drew his audience's attention to as yet unresolved structural inequalities and violence in the Third World, listing one by one the countries with on-going and emerging conflicts in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. He urged the Assembly to support the oppressed peoples of the Third World in their legitimate struggles against racial discrimination, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Arafat thus framed the question of Palestine within the international anti-colonial struggle:

> Just as colonialism and its demagogues dignified their conquests, their plunder and limitless attacks upon the natives of Africa with appeals to a "civilizing and modernizing" mission, so too did waves of Zionist immigrants disguise their purposes as they conquered Palestine. Just as colonialism as a system and colonialists as its instrument used religion, colour, race and language to justify the African's exploitation and his cruel subjugation by terror and discrimination, so too were these methods employed as Palestine was usurped and its people hounded from their national homeland. (Arafat 1974)

He presented the emergence of the PLO as a legitimate national liberation movement and popular armed struggle connected with other Third Worldist anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements, in common struggle for a new peaceful and just world order. 'I am a rebel and freedom is my cause' he goes on to say before the UN assembly, as he appealed to its members to support the Palestinian people's legitimate struggle for self-determination and right of return to their land. Arafat's presence at the UN, however, was the result of a diplomatic shift in the PLO towards peace negotiations in return for statehood endorsed by the Arab League of Nations (Sayigh 1999: 344, Chamberlain 2015: 238). This shift marks, according to historian Yazid Sayigh, a new phase of Palestinian state building in exile; Arafat was representing at the UN 'a national community with a distinct institutional character' (Sayigh 1999: 344).[1]

[1] Arafat's turn to peace negotiations was denounced as a 'betrayal to the Palestinian cause' by more radical organizations within the PLO, such as George Habash and the PFLP,

His audacious closing line symbolically sums up his plea for a just peace while signalling a political turn to diplomacy as a means of attaining it, 'Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand' he twice urged the assembly — thereby implying, in an open-ended poetic gesture, the possibility of putting the gun down.

His verbal utterance conjures in the minds of his international audience an image they are all too familiar with: the revolutionary with his gun. After all, Arafat was standing in the place where Ernesto 'Che' Guevara had stood in his guerrilla fatigues exactly a decade earlier. Arafat's rhetoric suggests that he not only galvanized the political significance of this connection but that he and those who wrote his speech — none other than the illustrious academic Edward Said and the poet Mahmoud Darwish — made sure that an aesthetic equivalence could be summoned in the imagination of the viewers and listeners. This equivalence links up the revolutionary struggle of the two political figures and collapses the space and time that separates them embodied in the spectacle and the poetics of Arafat's discourse.

AK-47s and the Aestheticization of Armed Struggle

The revolutionary guerrilla, or 'freedom fighter' to use the rhetoric of the day, was a quintessential trope in the repertoire of signs, symbols and myths occupying the imagination of revolutionary fervour, in and through which transnational political subjectivities of the Third World were formed and actualized on the battlefront.

The trope of the gun-carrying guerrilla occupied many photographs in the press, films, and posters from the 1960s on and into the 1970s. Since the success of the Cuban revolution in the late-1950s, the iconography of the heroic, victorious guerrilla brandishing his gun, was already in the making. The photograph of Fidel Castro with his comrades in a moment of victory is

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who formed the 'rejectionist front'. They considered that the formation of a rump Palestinian state would grant legality to Israeli aggression, which is equivalent to surrender (Chamberlain 2015: 229–30).

prototypical [Fig. 7]. The momentary euphoria captured by the lens of the camera gets frozen in time and extended by the circulation of the photograph in the international media. A poster bearing the same photograph further immortalized and aestheticized the revolutionary moment [Fig. 8]. The Cuban revolution was 'highly photogenic', David Crowley notes, commenting on how its revolutionaries performed gun salutes for the cameras of the world's media (Crowley 2008: 215-16). Cuba's success seduced revolutionaries elsewhere to take up the gun, not only as a means of struggle, but also aesthetically when confronted with the camera. Examples of the iconic victorious guerrilla group portrait are numerous and far reaching. From the FMLN in El Salvador to the Lebanese National Movement resisting the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon, the same prototypical photographic pose echoed across the globe. And more often than not, these momentary black and white photographic shots were graphically stylized and their temporality extended and multiplied on coloured posters [Figs 9–10].

Just as the stylized portrait of Che canonized the looks of the youthful revolutionary as the heroic guerrilla, the visual rhetoric of the gun-carrying guerrilla, typified by the AK-47, codified and aestheticized revolutionary armed struggle. The globally ubiquitous symbol of the gun depicted alone, or held firmly by a clenched fist, or as a marker of identity for the 'freedom fighter' carrying it was appropriated aesthetically in photographs, on film, on printed posters and magazines and even in logos by the disparate liberation movements that constituted the geographies of struggle in the Third World [Figs 11–12].

Much has been written about the image of Che Guevara in its mediation of the revolutionary archetype of the 1960s, and on the clenched fist as the quintessential symbol of dissent and resistance (Casey 2009, Crowley 2008, Prestholdt 2012, Ziff 2006). Despite its ubiquity, few, if any, scholarly texts have addressed the discursive and aesthetic articulations of revolutionary violence in visual culture. Perhaps the most radical and ethically polemical in its political expression, it was the image of the AK-47 that formed part and parcel of the repertoire of symbols that stood for revolutionary discourse of the

1960s and '70s. It is the sign that relates most candidly and without compromise to the embeddedness of violence within the discourse of the revolutionary Left at the time. The image of the heroic gun-carrying revolutionary guerrilla, especially when aestheticized and publically mediated as such, normalizes the meanings it carries within the discursive spaces of its circulation. An analysis of the visual codification of armed struggle remains a complicated task that requires careful mapping of its signs within the discourse that enabled their construction and circulation, with shared meanings, values and associated practices, as I shall be discussing below.

Contemporary intellectuals of the Left emphasized the emancipatory agency of violence in revolutionary struggle against oppressive and exploitative political structures. From Frantz Fanon in Algiers writing on behalf of the colonized in the Third World, to the cultural revolution of Mao Zedong in China and Che Guevara's revolutionary anti-imperialism in Latin America, and their respective endorsement in Europe by Jean Paul Sartre (1963) and Regis Debray (1968), the discourse of 'revolutionary violence' gained global significance in the 1960s (Varon 2004). In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon writes: 'The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. This rule of conduct enlightens the agent because it indicates to him the means and the end' (1963: 86). Violence in Fanon's discourse of anti-colonial struggle is retributive; it is morally justified as a means of liberation from colonial subjugation. Crucially, it is a subjective cathartic process for the colonized to reclaim human agency denied to him/her by the colonizer. In his preface to the book, Sartre builds on Fanon's argument to state that 'The rebel's weapon is a proof of his humanity'. For if he gives in to the oppressive force of the colonizer, 'he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces' (Sartre 1963: 22).

If Fanon theorized and urged a 'new humanism' realizable in and through revolutionary violence from the colonized world, Guevara embodied the heroic persona of the new youth and supplied the guerrilla methods for Third Worldist anti-imperialism. Basing himself on the successful model of the

Cuban insurrection, he mobilized and strategized for 'immediate and uncompromising armed struggle' as a means to create the revolution and eliminate imperialist structures of exploitation and domination in his manual of *Guerrilla Warfare* (Guevara 1961). Titled after the equally influential manual of Mao Zedong (1937), it is premised on tactics through which an insurrection, relying on the local peasantry, could confront a conventional army greatly superior in force, weapons and military infrastructure. The guerrilla's gun, namely the low cost and rugged AK-47,[2] thus stands in defiance of the advanced military apparatus of the enemy.

The aestheticization of armed struggle as the new revolutionary means, invokes agency and hope to those who have been structurally oppressed. Aesthetic sublimation, notes Herbert Marcuse, invokes the redeeming character of catharsis, 'Catharsis itself is grounded in the power of aesthetic form to call fate by its name, to demystify its force, to give the word to the victims — the power of recognition which gives the individual a modicum of freedom and fulfilment in the realm of unfreedom' (Marcuse 1978: 10). The trope of the freedom fighter, gun in hand, thus represents a cathartic rupture in the representation of the collective self, from an image of distress and servitude, to that of heroic action, self-determination, and hope for an imminent national liberation.

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[2] The necessity of cheaply armed and mobile fighters renders the AK-47 a favoured weapon of guerrilla warfare. Versions of the Kalashnikov were produced in at least nine countries in different variants, some of these in cottage industries. The Soviets might have distributed large numbers free of charge to their allies worldwide. However, a study has revealed that out of an estimated total of 50 million AK, only 4 million were actually produced in the Soviet Union (see Graves-Brown 2007). In the late 1960s China was the main arms supplier of Fatah, including the Chinese Kalashnikov (see Chambarlain 2015: 61–62). I am working on an article that analyses the transnational circulation of the AK as an object-image in Third World revolutionary anti-imperialism. I argue that the visual and material culture of the AK-47 was productive of transnational revolutionary subjectivities that developed in the Third Worldist interstice of a Cold War Manichean order. I have presented this work-in-progress in a paper titled: 'Drawn me an AK-47' at the Design History Society annual conference in September 2014.

Arafat's imaginary 'freedom fighter's gun' and *The Home's* textual and visual narrative are well inscribed in the discourse of 'revolutionary violence' and linked not only by the Palestinian cause they foreground but in the transnational temporality of decolonization and anti-imperialist revolutionary struggles of the Third World. The revolution for the Palestinian refugees was 'the road map of return'; a common idiom that circulated in and through the plethora of political posters from the 1970s [Figs 13–16]. Armed struggle represented the means to that end (Sayigh 1999) and 'a way out of the limbo of the camps, a restoration of their humanity' (Sayigh 1979: 150). The revolutionary discourse held material resonance in the camps, as related by one of its dwellers in the 1970s: 'A man who had done twelve-hour guard duty would keep on clutching his gun after he was told to rest because he felt it was the symbol of his freedom, his hope for the future' (Sayigh 1979: 177). Like other tropes in the Palestinian repertoire of symbols, the aesthetics of the freedom fighter's gun was inter-textual and multi-sensorial (chapter 6). It is not only tantamount to the *fidaʾi* figure; the symbol of the gun also circulates autonomously from its holder, in literature such as Ghassan Kanafani's many short stories, in poetry and song such as Um Kulthum's '*Asbaha al-ʾana ʿindi bunduqiyya*' (I have now got me a rifle),[3] or in popular militant songs such as 'Kalashnikov'[4]. What remains to be addressed, however, before returning to the specificity of the Palestinian issue, is what enabled this discourse and associated signs, symbols and aesthetics to travel so fluidly across national borders, connecting these disparate geographies of struggle.

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[3] The song is written by the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani and composed by Mohammed ʿAbd-el-Wahhab (see Massad 2003: 28).

[4] Kalashnikov was produced by the Fatah associated central band Al-Firqa al-Markaziyya (see Massad 2003: 31). There is a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary song by the same title.

Solidarity and the Transnational Imagination

> A colonized people is not alone. […] The great victory of the Vietnamese people at Dien Bien Phu, is no longer, strictly speaking, a Vietnamese victory. Since July, 1954, the question which the colonized peoples have asked themselves has been, 'What must be done to bring about another Dien Bien Phu? (Fanon 1963: 70)

The revolutionaries of the Third World, while hailing from disparate political and cultural locales, were well aware that their struggle connected with others elsewhere in the world. The Third World, as an imagined political geography of transnational solidarity, was discursively constituted in the historical contingency of revolutionary texts and practices. 'The Third World finds *itself* and speaks to *itself* through his [Fanon's] voice' (Sartre 1963: 10) or through Guevara's call for anti-imperialists of the world to create 'two, three, many Vietnams' (Guevara 1967).

The Left in the 'developed world' was not impermeable to the revolutionary discourse from the Third World. Young revolutionaries read Fanon and interpreted his text as dispossessed subjects in different places and times: it inspired Bobby Seale and Huey Newton to found the Black Panthers; Steve Biko circulated the book to his comrades in the South African Students Association; Bobby Sands, of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) read it in a Belfast prison (Bhabha 2004: xxix – xxx). The radicalization of youth in the 1960s along anti-imperialist Maoist or Guevarist positions was a pervasive phenomenon, revealing lassitude with the bureaucratic communism of Soviet Russia and impatience with the traditional Marxist models for revolutionary change (Varon 2004). The rise of a globalised New Left is epitomized by the simultaneity of uprisings in 1968, where the streets of Paris, Prague, New York, Tokyo, Berlin, and Mexico City became, one by one, theatres of urban political dissent, which in most cases resorted to militant direct action.

New Left movements 'were consciously internationalists'; solidarity was at the core of their revolutionary discourse (Varon 2004: 1). In its most typical public display, solidarity with the Third World took the form of protests

demanding a halt to the US war in Vietnam. In more radical expressions, militants in Europe and the US took up arms. The idea of 'bringing the war home' was the radical alternative to the political dictum of the day demanding to 'stop the war in Vietnam' (see Varon 2004). Militant groups in the United States, such as the Weather Underground, who popularized that slogan in text and image, imagined themselves as part of one and the same battle with their Third World comrades against a common enemy: US-led imperialism (ibid: 7) [Fig. 17]. The Red Army Faction in West Germany espoused revolutionary violence in its rhetoric and aesthetics [Fig. 18], and in its notorious actions. Its founding members trained with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and extended support to the Palestinian struggle (see Varon 2004). So did the Japanese Red Army, who with the PFLP staged a formidable attack on Israel's Lod International Airport in Tel Aviv in May 1972. A poster hailed the event in Japanese text, accompanied by the internationally ubiquitous image of the raised AK-47 (Chamberlain 2013: 154–56).

Mobilized by radical networks of solidarity, a transnational revolutionary subjectivity was constituted through a global flow of discourses and an associated repertoire of symbols. Particularly useful here is Arjun Appadurai's transnational conceptualization of 'the imagination as a social practice', which he contends is a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity and central to all forms of agency in the new global order (Appadurai 1996: 31). He argues that everyday media cultures could bring pleasure to their varied publics as well as provoke resistance and inspire agency, 'it is the imagination in its collective forms that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labour prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action and not only for escape' (Appadurai 1996: 7). The global symbolic appeal of Che Guevara linked disparate political movements and helped form a radical imagination (Prestholdt 2012: 507). Likewise, Palestinian discourses since the 1960s, as Laleh Khalili argues, lie at the intersection of global and local politics (Khalili 2007: 13). She understands transnational discourses as broad ways of imagining the world. Their breadth lends them the flexibility for 'more

textured adaptations and interpretations in more spatially restricted contexts, such as nations' (Khalili 2007: 12).

Transnational solidarity was expressed in, and carried through, the flow of revolutionaries, associated media cultures and ensuing aesthetics. Revolutionaries travelled along the geographies of struggle, fought alongside each other and met in international congresses such as the Afro-Asian alliance meeting in Bandung (already in 1955), in Algiers in 1965 or at the Tricontinental Conference in Cuba in 1966. The Tricontinental, put together by the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL), was particularly active in reporting on anti-imperialist struggles across the Third World and propagating revolutionary discourse along with corresponding visual rhetoric and aesthetics. It effectively and diligently mobilized different media channels for that purpose, which included the legendary OSPAAAL posters and the *Tricontinental* journal [Fig. 20]. The posters silkscreened in vigorous colours hailed liberation movements across the three continents through simplified graphics and pictorial abstractions reminiscent of contemporary pop aesthetics (Cushing 2003, Frick 2003). The posters and the journal were published in four languages (Spanish, English, French and Arabic) and distributed through subsidiary networks in Cuba, India, Panama, Mexico and Lebanon. *Tricontinental* subscribers were promised posters issued by the Organization as part of its annual solidarity campaigns.

Lebanon thus acted as a distribution node in the Middle East for the journal through Dar al-Farabi publishers, an affiliate of the Lebanese Communist Party, while posters were sent to allied Lebanese left wing and Palestinian parties.[5] The distribution of such literary and aesthetic media helped define conceptions as well as sensibilities of transnational solidarity among readers and viewers. If a shared library of revolutionary literature and icons enabled the portability of discourses across national boundaries (Varon

[5] Distribution networks and subscription schemes are listed in the backmatter of *Tricontinental*. OSPAAAL posters were also regularly sent to the Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon, which was closely allied to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

2004), image-based printscapes extended the imagination of transnational solidarity to the realm of visuality and aesthetics.

The rise of the Palestinian revolutionary movement, situating itself as an anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist liberation struggle like others in the Third World, aroused international solidarity in the late-sixties and an influx of volunteers. Solidarity materialized on the battlefield and through posters and film. Aside from the Cuban-based OSPAAAL prints, artists, graphic designers and filmmakers from Mexico, Argentina, Italy, France, the UK, the Netherlands and all the way to Japan, joined their Arab comrades in lending political and aesthetic visibility to the Palestinian struggle.[6] In 1978, the PLO's art department put together *The International Art Exhibition for Palestine*, an itinerant collection for a museum in exile, much like the Museum of Resistance in Exile in Solidarity with Salvador Allende. The exhibition comprised close to 200 works donated by artists from 30 countries in solidarity with Palestine (see Khouri and Salti 2016).[7]

From 1970, as Beirut's imagined political geography was being redefined as the revolutionary 'Arab Hanoi' (Traboulsi 2001: 39), its cosmopolitan modes of artistic and intellectual production and mechanical reproduction were being appropriated in the radical quest for a 'new sensibility' in the trenches of the Palestinian revolutionary promise (see chapter 6). With this I return to *The Home* to analyse what the aesthetic embodiment of the Arab Hanoi entailed in this radical publishing project. I examine the publications of

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[6] The Palestine Film Foundation organized a festival in London titled 'The World is with Us' (May 16- June 14 2014) showcasing an archive of films in solidarity with Palestine testifying to the International scope of solidarity in addition to the revolutionary film movement produced at the Palestine Film Unit.

[7] During the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982 the building where the works were stored, as well as the exhibition's archival trace were destroyed (Khouri and Salti 2016). In a effort to reclaim this lost material history, curators Christine Khoury and Rasha Salti have recently conceived a new exhibition under the title 'Past Disquiet: Narratives and Ghosts from The International Art Exhibition for Palestine, 1978', which was first on show at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) in 2015 and then at the at the Haus der Kultur en der Welt, Berlin in 2016. (Khouri and Salti 2016).

Dar al-Fata al-Arabi as a project that tightly weaved the imperatives of education, aesthetics and a politics of locality at the juncture of a revolutionary promise and state building in exile.

Dar al-Fata al-Arabi: Radical Children's Books in the Trenches

In 1974 the pan-Arab Children's publishing house Dar al-Fata al-Arabi was launched in Beirut. Over the next couple of decades it would produce an outstanding body of Arabic books that revolutionized children's literature in terms of politics, pedagogy, writing and aesthetics in the Arab world. The project was born out of the necessity for an alternative education commensurate with the revolutionary moment. Nabil Shaath and Mamdouh Omar, then two active intellectual figures in the PLO, spearheaded the initiative in collaboration with the Palestine Planning Centre. The education committee of the Centre had been involved in reviewing and revising UNRWA's curricula and textbooks. They endeavoured to compensate for the deficiencies in national education among second-generation Palestinian youth in the camps, particularly in terms of knowledge of the modern history of Palestine (Sayigh 1979: 184–85). The academic Ibrahim Abu Lughod, advisory member to the educational review committee at the Palestine Planning Centre, advised that conventional Arab education was ill-suited to a generation of Palestinians in exile engaged in a demanding liberation struggle. His study concluded with the following (Abu Lughod 1973: 111):

> Palestinians will have to ponder the very important implications of several factors if there is to be a successful continuation of their struggle for the liberation of Palestine. The first is the ultimate meaning of educating Palestinians for secure jobs, which at present seems to be the major characteristic of education in the Arab states, rather than for liberation; or to put it differently the relevance of educating a community in exile according to a curriculum and by methods appropriate for a stable and on-going society. The second is the implication of educating the Palestinians without attention to

> their Palestinian consciousness and identity. Third, one must study the implication for future revolutionary strategies of a more highly educated population.

Dar al-Fata was thus primarily conceived to fill a gap in the education of a Palestinian youth whose connection to Palestine, let alone the idea and material experience of the nation, had been severed by enforced exile. It strove to create a radical alternative to conventional Arab education. The aim was to create a literature that spoke to children in the Arab world, regardless of nationality or class, about their shared cultural heritage and about universal issues of equality and justice, rights they shared as humans with others in the world (Mikdashi 2013). Through this framework, an awareness of the Palestinian peoples' plight for justice was foregrounded but did not constitute the publications' only subject matter.

Urging for 'radical children's literature now', Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel posit that, 'Neither children nor literature for them can be extricated from politics. By choice or by default, children often get drawn into the "adult" worlds of politics, violence, and power struggles'. Radical children's books address the structural problems concerning 'many flawed assumptions about children and childhood, as well as the causes of inequality, injustice, and exploitation around the world' (Mickenberg and Nel 2011: 445–46). Dar al-Fata, I argue, is one pioneering case of radical children's books in Arabic born in the trenches of Arab Hanoi.

The project radically departed from prevailing children's books in Arabic, which relied predominantly on translating classical European literature and more often than not also copying the accompanying illustrations (Ellabbad 2003b). Writing and producing quality books in Arabic for children did not yet form a serious concern for publishers in those days. 'To even think about children was revolutionary!' asserts Nawal Abboud, an artist and activist in children's literature whose work in this field began as an illustrator with Dar al-Fata (Abboud 2013). In that sense, Dar al-Fata aimed to decolonize children's literature in knowledge, aesthetics and imagination and to instil a

revolutionary consciousness articulated along a pan-Arab subjectivity. The publishing house thus represented a promise of futurity contingent on an Arab youth yet to come.

The initiative may have been prompted by the PLO, but its implementation into a full-fledged publishing house — including funding — was independent and pan-Arab in scope (Mikdashi 2013). An editorial committee, chaired by the Palestinian scholar Ihsan Abbas, took charge of defining the pedagogical plan of the publishing house and accordingly devising different book series considering literary style, educational objectives and age groups. Writers and artists from different corners of the Arab world were invited to take part in Dar al-Fata's politico-aesthetic adventure. Texts from emerging children's literature authors, such as Zakariyya Tamer (b. Damascus 1931), were solicited. Prominent radical fiction authors, such as Sonʿallah Ibrahim (b. Cairo 1937), were encouraged to redirect their creative pens to the young. Literary texts and poetry were selected from the oeuvres of the likes of Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish and Fuad Haddad (b. Egypt 1927–1985). Scholars were engaged in developing the educational books covering different knowledge areas in creatively simplified and whimsically illustrated narratives, including Arab cultural and scientific heritage, world cultures, and the general sciences.

The series can be categorized into four broad areas. The first encompasses fictional narratives catering for different age groups' learning abilities and imaginative potential. These include the popular *Qaws Quzah* (Rainbow) series targeting children aged between 3 and 6, of which *The Home* is one example [Figs 21–27]. Young people over 8 and 12 are catered for respectively in the Future for Children series [Figs 28–34], and Arabic short stories series. Most prominent among the latter is *Atfal Ghassan Kanafani* (The Children of Ghassan Kanafani), which I return to discuss below, beautifully interpreted in elaborate black ink drawings by the Syrian artist Burhan Karkutli [Figs 40–45]. Other series cover Palestine and the struggle for liberation in the series *Hikaya ʿan al-Watan* (Stories about the Homeland) [Figs 35–39]; the Arab world's cultural heritage through folk stories, poetry and tales of major

cities; stories of peoples and cultures of the world, with translations of key fairy tales by La Fontaine, the Grimm brothers and Hans Christian Andersen; and simplified science, including the significant Arab contributions to the history of science [Figs 46–48].

Graphically, Dar al-Fata's books represented an 'aesthetic manifesto' as described by its founding art-director Mohieddine Ellabbad (1940–2010). Still in his early career at the time, Ellabbad belonged to the generation of illustrators of Nasserite Egypt who strove to articulate a double claim of aesthetic authenticity, place-bound and radically populist, through printed media (Chapter 5). He relocated to Beirut in 1974 to join Dar al fata in its formative year. Ellabbad joined the team when the Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata (chapter 6), initially solicited for this task had decided to leave Lebanon. Boullata had begun proposing the different formats and sizes that would identify the different series. Ellabbad's vision marked the next decades of Dar al-Fata's publications. His 'aesthetic manifesto' meant, the following, in practice:

> We got rid of the Mickey Mouse type drawings. The idea was to present a new 'rough' aesthetic that was at the same time visually powerful and artistically complete — something that was local and that rejected the sentimental and bourgeois nature of the dominant form of illustration at the time… That was what I was looking for, not to be just driven by the demands of creating images for propaganda. (Ellabbad 2009: 28)

His statement illuminates the politics guiding the design of Dar al-Fata's books, both graphically and in their illustrations. His starting point is not entirely innocent of the political reference Mickey Mouse held generally as a symbol of US imperialism. Ellabbad, however, is voicing here a double resistance — political and aesthetic — to the hegemony of Walt Disney on children's imagination globally, controlling and shaping their aesthetic tastes (see Dorfman and Matelart 2006, Jack Zipes 1985). The 'rough aesthetic' is contrasted with the aesthetic sterility of a clean set of homogenous lines and

standardized colour palettes particular to the drawings of commercial giants like Walt Disney. This globally pervasive style of drawing shaped the landscape of children's publishing industry in the second half of the 20th century. The aesthetic roughness, coupled with visual poignancy that Ellabbad seeks to articulate is commensurate with the revolutionary moment — the desire for a renewed affective horizon for Dar al-Fata's readership. This desire is further expressed in the rejection of the prevalent bourgeois sentimentalism in illustration — a pretend rosy world that distances the child from its own experience of everyday political reality. One may indeed ask what the point is of representing to a child, who is born in the camps, living in sub-proletarian conditions, and whose siblings have joined the Resistance, a happy family sitting around the dinner table in their perfect middle class home, with their perfect bourgeois manners and perfect family morality, as mainstream children's publications generally did. Dar al-Fata's books, as exemplified by *The Home*, do not shy away from broaching contentious political issues and difficult concepts. The books in fact concoct a world where children face challenges, take initiatives and dream of possibilities. They are motivated by concepts such as freedom, as in *Rima's Balloon* [Figs 22–23]; or belonging in *The Coloured Crow* [Figs 24–25]; friendship in *The Wooden Horse;* hope in *The Life of a Tree*; and inspired by the power of collectivity in the solidarity of birds, as in *The Return of a Bird* (awarded the Bronze medal in the 1982 Leipzig Book Fair). Children also learn how to overcome fear through heroic stories of *fidaʾiyeen*, when bullets, bombs and death routinely creep over their lives in the camps, as in *Al-Samt wal-Mukhayyam* (the silence and the camp), written by Zein-el-abedin al-Husseini and illustrated by Helmi el-Touni [Figs 35–39].

Furthermore, Dar al-Fata's manifesto stipulates the necessity of locally grounded aesthetics. In *Kashkul al-Rassam* (The Illustrator's Sketchbook), one of his self-authored illustrated publications [Figs 49–52], Ellabbad elaborates what this imperative entailed both in theory and in practice. The autobiographical narrative dwells on his experimentations in forging a visual and aesthetic culture that is grounded in the child's everyday reality, yet, all the

while catering to her imaginative desires. For instance, he draws a number of cat characters in styles and features recognizable in world-famous visual cultures (eg. comic strips, animated cartoons) and then writes, 'I should forget all the drawn cats I have seen, and proceed by drawing the cat I know, the one I see everyday in my neighbourhood; it might be different than the other cats but it is "my cat"'. In *Kashkul al-Rassam*, Ellabbad ponders further upon the un-learning he committed to as a visual artist attempting aesthetically to reconcile himself with his social reality and define for himself and his readers a sense of cultural identity. Thus he relates how he came to realize that the colour paint tube imported from Europe with the label 'flesh', which he learnt to paint with his human figures, did not match the skin colour of his own hands. He likewise reflects on the constitutive differences between reading from left to right (Latin scripts) and right to left in Arabic. He is concerned with how it affects the way the reader's eye moves on the page, and in consequence how elements on the page should be laid out to express the dynamic action of an illustrated character. For instance, he asks, should that character enter the page from the right or the left to imply swiftness? In this book and in other series published by Dar al-Fata, such as the simplified sciences, Ellabbad designs pages that are reminiscent in layout to the old Arabic manuscripts, especially illustrated ones. He composes the graphical elements in a way that structurally explores the relationships between the space of the margins, the skeletal frames of the text, the organic lines of drawing, creating thus visual tensions that impart an optical depth to the page, an impression of thickness and density that confuses the visual conventions of foreground and background.

Ellabbad called upon a number of artists from the Arab world to join his aesthetic experiment. This rendered Dar al-Fata's books rich and versatile in artistic expression whilst being framed by the politics of the aesthetic manifesto. Evidently Ellabbad was selective about the artists to whom he extended the invitation. Those who joined shared his decolonising aesthetic aspirations, but also Dar al-Fata's leftist political impetus and imperative for a radical change in Arabic children's literature. Dar al-Fata relied on a network

of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle among Arab artists and illustrators, some of whom lived in Beirut. As discussed in chapter 5, Beirut, through its thriving pan-Arab publishing industry has attracted left-wing intellectuals and artists from the region in the 1960s. The influx of cultural actors, from Egypt, Syria and Iraq — who had fled the increasingly repressive military regimes of postcolonial Arab nation-states — was compounded with more drastic regime changes in the early 1970s.[8] Beirut's spatial-temporality as the revolutionary Arab-Hanoi, broadened and further enriched the transnational flow, encounters and collaborations among artists, intellectuals and revolutionaries (chapter 6). Dar al-Fata al-Arabi was one such node in which these networks of solidarity converged and successfully materialized.

From Syria the illustrations of pioneering modern artists such as Youssef Abdelke, Burhan Karkutli and Nazir Nabaa graced stories written by Dalal Hatem, Ghassan Kanafani, and Zakariyya Tamer. Both Nabaa and Karkutli studied in Cairo's fine art school and were friends with Ellabbad. Karkutli's illustrations for *Atfal Ghassan Kanafani* (The Children of Ghassan Kanafani) presents a case in point in terms of the shared politico-aesthetic approach with Ellabbad and contemporaries from Cairo [Figs 40–45]. The Children of Ghassan Kanafani is an edited compilation of short stories by the acclaimed Palestinian author set between 1936 and 1967. Each features a Palestinian child as its main protagonist, who, despite being structurally dispossessed, participates in some small form in effecting change (Harlow and Riley 2000: 14). Karkutli's drawings arm subjects that populate the pages of the book, young girls and boys and their family, with the power of dignified rage. Faces are defiant; bodies stand firm. The old look determinedly ahead with stern anger, and the young confront the reader with a glimpse of innocence in their big wondering eyes. Their Palestinian identity is indicated in peasantry symbols, embroidered clothes and *kufiya.* One of the drawings, illustrating the story *al-Banadiq fil Mukhayam* (Guns in the Camp), represents the historical rupture that discursively separates the revolutionary with his gun

[8] The coming to power of Anwar al-Sadat, Hafiz al-Assad, respectively in Egypt and in Syria.

from the despairing Palestinian refugee. Designed like a visual game of 'spot the difference' between the two panels, the subtle transformation in visual elements — cloud vs. sun, pouch vs. rifle, headgear and village location in the horizon — hides a far more politically complex substitution in the transformation of subjectivity [Fig. 43]. Content and form are indissociable in Karkutli's printed drawings. Together they constitute a totality, which intimately carries the politics of land and history as a counter discourse to the Zionist myth of Israel as an empty landscape. Compositionally, the drawings are non-perspectival. Karkutli puts to contemporary use the conceptual and temporal structure of miniature painting within the illustrated modern frame. He interprets Kanafani's complex temporality — wrestling with Palestinian chronology, historical closure and memory (Harlow and Riley 2000: 17) — in the spatial dimension of the same picture frame. Spatial composition thus refers to moments in time unfolding in the story rather than depth of field. The flatness of the image is compensated by the affective mediation of the quality of the black line on the surface of the white page. Karkutli deploys two line qualities. The first consists of bold, thick and rugged black lines delineating the structural shapes of his human subjects. Thus the aesthetic dimension of the black line imparts the necessary firmness in struggle, steadfastness in the face of historic conditions of displacement and erasure. The second black line contrasts with the first in its fine and infinitely malleable quality. Variations on the line here optically distribute light in the composition and define tonalities of surface areas. The visual effect is achieved through a sophisticated interplay of form and counter-form in the contrast of black on white paper. Karkutli's training in printmaking and engraving must have informed his creative agility in composing the inked and non-inked surfaces. These brittle black lines, which take on the optical logic of hatching, are composed of intricate permutations on various patterns and motifs. The aesthetics and politics of Palestinian embroidery on clothes determine the ornamental logic of the patterns filling and defining surfaces in the composition. Every little part in the composition is taken over by intricately fine lines following a logic of repetition that adheres to the aesthetic of ornament. Like weaving a carpet, or

embroidering on fabric, Karkutli stiches in black ink on paper enchanting modern permutations of the arabesque line. The politics of this graphical stitch not only claims a place-bound authenticity but also dispels some haptic magic: it is the poetics of hope necessary to any political struggle.

Dar al-Fata relied most heavily on the overwhelming labour of the 1960s generation of Egyptian illustrators and political cartoonists, Ahmad Higazy, Mahmoud Fahmi, Adli Rizkallah, and Bahgat Othman, the colleagues of Ellabbad in Cairo's *Sabah el-Khayr*, who joined him and Helmi el-Touni in Beirut. The Cairo-Beirut circuit of visuality, which was at the core of the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing with el-Touni (chapter 5), has once more defined, through Ellabbad, the decolonizing and radically populist aesthetics of another Beirut-based political publishing project. Beirut's flourishing publishing industry, its transnational network of intellectual and technical skill-sets formed of authors, designers, printing and distribution was displaced into Dar al-Fata's project of radical children's books. Books were produced at leading Beirut printing establishments[9] and in print runs reaching up to 5,000 copies. Transnational distribution was facilitated through the annual Arabic Book Fair in Beirut. As in the case of the Arab Institute for Publishing, the Algerian and Iraqi states would buy advance copies of 1000 from each book title.[10]

Higazi, Fahmi and Rizkallah shared a flat in Beirut with Ellabbad and together transformed the space into an intensive workshop for six months to see close to 67 books to completion in the founding year of the publishing house. Ellabbad and his comrades left Beirut in 1976, following a series of quarrels over the autonomy of Dar al-Fata from the PLO. Ellabbad was keen, as stated in the 'aesthetic manifesto', that the project would not become a

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[9] Colour separation was done at Leogravure and offset printing at Zakka Graphic centre.

[10] The Iraqi state eventually developed its own national publishing house for children and stopped buying in the same quantities from Dar al-Fata. Moreover, Abdul Wahhab Kayyali who had facilitated the distribution of Dar al-Fata's books to Iraq, began his own publication series for children in 1977, illustrated by Helmi el-Touni and Bahgat Othman (chapter 5).

propaganda instrument for the party. The ill fate of other radical art projects under the patronage of the post-colonial state, especially in Egypt, was something he was all too familiar with. From Cairo, Ellabbad and his comrades continued illustrating and designing Dar al-Fata's books, away from any dictation of the politbureau. The publishing house would relocate a year later to Cairo, with Rizkallah as the new art director in lieu of Ellabbad, and continue to print and distribute from Beirut amidst the civil war. Once in Cairo, Ellabbad set up 'The experimental Workshop for Children's Books' as an independent platform where he pursued the politico-aesthetic explorations and collaborations he began in Dar al-Fata.

Reflecting on this special conjuncture of artistic fecundity and political solidarity in Arab history, Hasna Mikdashi, long time member of Dar al-Fata's editorial committee, told me:

> They came here, to be close to the camps, to work for the Palestinians in the camps, especially children… They wanted to serve the revolution, participate in the progressive transformation of the Arab world and contribute to the next generation. They shared an unbelievable enthusiasm, a very unique experience of working together. They were committed *multazimeen* as revolutionaries to a common struggle. (Mikdashi 2013)

It is the concept of *ilitizam* (commitment), she stressed in our conversation, which is for her at the heart of what qualifies as political solidarity among cultural actors in a revolutionary moment. It is commitment to and engagement with a political struggle that defines transnational frameworks of solidarity through cultural practice. As the discourse shifted from its revolutionary Third Worldism to humanitarian activism with the rise of international NGOs in the 1990s (Khalili 2009), that very 'commitment' with the Palestinian cause that linked it with political struggles elsewhere in the world was dropped from the rhetoric of transnational solidarity. The currency of activism, *nashat*, has displaced 'commitment' *iltizam* in qualifying artistic and cultural practices of the sort. The rhetoric of *fannan nashit* (activist artist) stands today in lieu of

fannan multazim (committed artist) and perversely points to the anachronism in the latter's discourse. Activism after all may very well have emerged from the dystopia that followed the utopian 'commitment' of the 1960s and '70s revolutionary fervour. In what follows, I return once more to *The Home* to illustrate this shift.

In 1985 a derivative English edition of *The Home*, published in London, was in circulation without prior knowledge and permission of the publisher or authors. It credited them but made deliberate alterations to the text and the illustrations, which subverted the initial meanings and political message. Beginning with the title, the new booklet replaced *The Home* with *The House.* With this subtle yet cunning slippage, the reference to a national belonging was eliminated. The Palestinians' struggle to claim a national home they have been deprived of, the new title suggests, is turned into a problem of housing — a depoliticized deprivation of shelter, no more. Even more politically significant alterations ensued in the last few pages of the story. 'Who is the enemy of the Palestinian? The enemy of the Palestinian is he who occupied the home of the Palestinian' gets replaced with 'Who took the home of the Palestinian? Strangers came and took the home of the Palestinian. They forced him out' (Ellabbad 1987: 54). The definition of enmity construed by the political act of occupation that Zakariyya Tamer laboured to convey in the original text is blatantly dismissed. Likewise, The Star of David, referencing the Israeli flag, and identifying the menacing tank drawn by Ellabbad, is simply erased. 'Strangers' indeed, in lieu of 'enemies', 'come and take' rather than 'occupy'. Just like the title, the substitutions on this double page serve to discursively depoliticize the Palestinian struggle for justice. To cap it all, the booklet closes with the following statement:

> How can the Palestinian return to his home?
> The Palestinian will return to his home when his rights are regained.
> The Palestinian needs your help, understanding and support.

Revolutionary 'struggle and sacrifice' and the 'road map to Palestine', which inspired agency and gave hope to Palestinians, is in these lines disingenuously excised. From being agents of their own liberation, spearheading an Arab revolutionary moment and subsuming others to their cause, they are rendered helpless victims in need of international sympathy and support. As Laleh Khalili (2007) has argued, the revolutionary heydays have given way to a discourse of humanitarian aid that re-inscribes the Palestinians back into a narrative of suffering and charity. Evidently, the illustration of the gun, the very symbol of Third Worldist revolutionary struggle, has been erased.

The social life of *The Home,* its journey from Dar al-Fata's workshop in Beirut to the United Nations headquarters in New York with Arafat in 1974 and subsequent translations to twelve languages, relates in its discursive folds and through the materiality of its encounters with readers around the world the historical juncture of the Palestinian struggle with global politics. The latest plagiarized edition, addressed to an English-speaking readership in 1986, indicates this rupture in the discourse of revolutionary Third Worldism and associated politics of solidarity. *The House* embodies the discursive substitutions of this political disjuncture.

Furthermore, *The House* is no less revealing of the historical contingency of the Palestinian struggle in transnational Arab politics and institutions. It was after all published by none but the Arab League of Nations in its London office. The depoliticized Palestinian cause and the silenced transnational Arab revolution, which may seem textual on the pages of this book, are in fact part and parcel of the same discursive apparatus that had severe material consequences for Arab Hanoi. In 1982, following siege and indiscriminate bombing that ravaged Beirut, Israel forced the Palestinian resistance to a humiliating withdrawal from the city and punished the Lebanese for harbouring the liberation struggle. A month later, Israeli troops invaded and occupied Beirut. The historical blow dealt to Beirut capped a series of attempts, which strove to disarticulate the transnational revolutionary politics that Arab Hanoi had promised in its discursive conjuncture. On the one hand, a threatened Lebanese nationalist political establishment acting as the

counterinsurgency strove to violently suppress any revolutionary fervour. On the other hand, the Palestinian liberation struggle was gradually disentangled from a pan-Arab revolutionary framework as Arab states began to broker peace agreements with Israel. If Arafat's 1974 speech at the UN politically and poetically signalled the possibility of putting the gun down, Israel made sure to crush the Arab Hanoi in 1982, and the Arab League of Nations later politically disarmed any revolutionary remnants in *The House*.

I conclude here with the poignant words of Ellabbad (1987), responding to the fraudulent distortion of his work and political opinion, which beautifully capture the anger and disenchantment of a generation of Arab artists and intellectuals who have been committed, in their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, to revolutionary change in the Arab world:

> How did we reach this stage? How did the disrespect, violation and disregard of people and their thoughts reach this stage? Could the dismissal of the Arab citizen's rights — including keeping the integrity of one's opinion — reach this stage?
>
> Do the institutions of power consider themselves unrestrained to expropriate individuals from rights to their own literary and artistic works? Is protection and respect limited to the rights of the rich over their properties in wealth, real estate, jewellery, stocks, and bonds? Why didn't the Arab League create a publication of its own to express its new political position, instead of smearing and humiliating the works of others just because they are readily available in bookstores? Did Arab lethargy reach this stage? Did being 'civilized' or 'accepted' from 'the international community' and 'international public opinion' come to be understood as being servile, negligent and suppliant?
>
> […]
>
> And now! Do I take the original and fraudulent copies to the police in Britain so that they close down the Arab League's office in London and instruct it about copyrights? Or do I ask Interpol to arrest the Chair of the Arab League of Nations in Tunis, and jail

him for the theft of copyrights as well as for fraud and distortion of a writer and an illustrator's political positions? Or shall we perhaps respond in the same manner; we publish a fraudulent book and attribute authorship to his excellency the Chair of the Arab League of Nations, and pretend in the text that he supports the rights of Palestinians in reclaiming their occupied land through all legitimate means?

(Ellabbad 1987: 55)

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated how Beirut emerged in the post-1967 Arab historical conjuncture as a radical node of aesthetic encounter and solidarity in a globally expansive geography of revolutionary anti-imperialism. Central in this was the aesthetic emergence of an 'Arab Hanoi' to displace a Euro-Mediterranean oriented discourse of cosmopolitanism with Third Worldist and internationalist revolutionary frameworks. This radical aesthetic configuration developed historically in the interstices, overlaps and disjunctures of Arab post-independence printscapes and associated circuits of visuality, linking Beirut to Cairo and Baghdad — among other Arab capitals — in a transnational economy of publishing. These fluid, yet politically entangled, circuits — formed through the mobility of artists/designers, printed artefacts, political and aesthetic discourses — converged and contended with one another in Beirut's long 1960s. Their convergence set the conditions of possibility for a radically articulated cosmopolitan visuality to emerge in and from Beirut in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab defeat and with the consequent rise of the Palestinian liberation movement on a global terrain of revolutionary politics.

My argument challenges historiographies of visual culture in the post-independence Arab world, which posit Lebanon as the liberal exception and too readily and too easily flag up European-oriented cosmopolitanism, the hegemony of the Lebanese Christian élite and sectarian incongruity. In particular, I have demonstrated the necessity of overcoming the lopsided limitations of national frameworks and the value of focusing instead on the city as the space of convergence and confrontation in a wider Arab politico-aesthetic field of relations. Similarly, my argument dispels narratives of rupture between art and politics in the aftermath of 1967. Rather, that the defeat

precipitated a discursive disjuncture in this relation, which displaced the concept of *iltizam* — political commitment through the arts — from the nationalist imperatives of the post-colonial Arab state to the revolutionary promise of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Here again, to see this at work, we need to move away from the nationally circumscribed optic of the Palestinian struggle in this particular revolutionary conjuncture and examine instead how it mobilized artists and intellectuals across state borders. Furthermore, to trace this discursive disjuncture, we need to be attentive to the outflow of politico-aesthetic relations from Cairo at this particular moment, and to the shift of the centre of transnational Arabic publishing to Beirut, in a geographical reversal of the Arab *nahda*. We thus need to reconceive our interpretive frameworks to account for the movement of objects, subjects and discourses under historical study. I have therefore conceptualised transnational interconnections and analysed multi-faceted cultural configurations of global modernity through *transnational circuits of visuality* as a methodological framework. This analytic lens draws on post-Marxist theory, postcolonial critique and cultural globalisation theory in a decentring strategy that troubles putative binary relations between the 'West' and the 'non-West' and between the 'global' and the 'local'; and destabilises understandings of these notions — and indeed that of the nation — as bounded categories. Far from constituting a *depoliticised* form of multicultural pluralism, this approach accounts for the work of hegemony; it foregrounds nuanced and decentred readings of power relations in global cultural encounters. While this thesis has been primarily concerned with the case of Beirut's long 1960s, the application of this conceptual framework can, and I believe should, be extended to other historical contexts and geopolitical conditions in the study of visual culture in its modern global configurations.

My focus on Beirut's long 1960s, as a moment of intense and radical movement, geographically and politically, is also of importance for global art and design histories of post-war and Cold War modernisms. Scholarship in this area has been recently attentive to the roles of art and design in relations of inter-state diplomacy. The thesis expands the geographic purview of this

discussion and opens up a path for the examination of the role of visual culture in transnational politics of solidarity mobilised by radical political movements. Studies have hitherto focused on particular New Leftist and Third Worldist movements of the late 1960s and 1970s in specific locales. But there is so much yet to be uncovered once the national and Euro-American, 'Western', centric frameworks are lifted. As fluid, yet politically articulated force-fields, circuits of visuality have seeped through ideological and material borders of nation-state, ethnicity, race and religion, uniting these radical movements in a struggle, imagined and fought, on a globally interconnected stage. This discussion is crucial for debates about contemporary forms of political activism in art and design on the Left and to radical political theory more generally. For the history of late 1960s revolutionary anti-imperialism foregrounds transnational solidarity as a nodal concept for radical political intervention in a struggle understood as locally situated yet — crucially — globally interconnected.

I have argued, finally, that an understanding of political relations needs to account for visual and aesthetic fields in the hegemonic constitution of subjectivities in everyday life. My focus on the visuality of printed matter sheds light on graphic design as an important site of discursive struggle. This is a modality that requires interdisciplinary frameworks to analyse the nexus of visual culture, design and politics. Here again, the archive that forms the basis of this study prompts us to ask new questions; and to venture, however precariously, onto new terrains not delimited by disciplinary frontiers. I am reminded here of the erudite prose of Michel Foucault, and tempted to appropriate his contention to close my argument. Do not ask precisely in which discipline this thesis lies; leave it to the border police to control our movements and check that our visas are in order (1989 [1972]: 19).

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