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TOWARD AN ARABIC MODERNISM: POLITICS,
POETICS, AND THE POSTCOLONIAL

by

ALAA TAHA
B.A. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, 2019

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores modernism's temporality and location through the examination of Arabic modernism's occurrence. In this thesis, I question whether the authenticity of modernism derives from its temporality period or its literary content while concurrently investigating several poems by Lebanese authors Kahlil Gibran and Nadia Tuéni and Syrian poet Adonis. Additionally, I trace Arabic modernism's influence to the early 1900s-1910s to the conception of the Mahjar movement and the Pen League, an Arabic literary society consisting of Arabic immigrant writers. As I discern the political impact within Arabic writings, I explore political events, such as World War I and its aftermath, that heavily influenced Arabic literature and modernism. Subsequently, I acknowledge Lebanon's position in both a colonial and postcolonial context and dispute the simple notion that the Eastern world entirely comprises Western practices and traditions. I accomplish this by exploring Nadia Tuéni's contribution to Arabic modernism through the dual questions of translation and postcolonial theory. By considering these critical political and literary factors, I hope to call attention to Arabic modernism's influence and temporality.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1976, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane defined modernism as “a movement that is international in character and marked by a flow of major ideas, forms and values that spread from country to country and developed into the main life of the western tradition” (28). This idea insinuates that modernism is solely a Western construct. Likewise, in his book, *A Homemade World* (1973), Hugh Kenner proposes a perception of modernism circumscribed by Western geography: “America went on getting from the writers it rewarded what it thought it wanted from writers. It also got, want it or not, its own modernism, a homemade variety” (xvi). This notion encompasses the issue that American writers were laying the groundwork for modernism, but in doing so, they deliberately premised modernism on American writers and literature. Kenner’s statement proves that many still felt modernism to be the preserve of America and other western countries. We know that modernism is made up of ‘isms’, but what is less studied is the extent to which these movements facilitated and fostered cross-cultural literary exchanges.

Over the past two decades, this conceptualization of modernism has changed. Susan Stanford Friedman argues, “[M]odernity need no longer reside solely in a specific set of institutional, ideological, or aesthetic characteristics emergent in the post-Renaissance West, radiating globally along the pathways of empire and postcoloniality, and appearing as pale copies of western genius” (“Definitional Excursions” 22). Friedman is criticizing our understanding of diffusion modernism: “we need to look for the interplay of modernity and tradition *within* each location, that is, within both the West and the regions outside the West” (“Periodizing Modernism” 434). Beyond the triumvirate and Europe, remains the Levant, an often-disregarded

field in literary modernism scholarship. Despite its inclusion, the Levant remains neglected and largely untold, even in 'global' modernism. Scholars, such as Robyn Creswell, Stefan Meyer, Yaseen Noorani, and Saddik M Gohar, have discussed the Levant's key role in global modernism. Their meticulous discourses concerning the association between Arabic modernism and its western counterpart raise significant issues, but there is still much to be said about Arabic modernism's augmentation of Arabic works and evolution.

Modernism in the Middle East

Much debate has been centered on modernism in the Middle East and whether Arabic modernism is classified as modernism based on the time of its emergence. According to Friedman, "Modernity, of course, has no single meaning, not even in one location" (*Planetary Modernisms* 49). Scholars, including Eric Bulson, Tyrus Miller, Douglas Mao, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, have addressed global modernisms and their locations, while others, such as Stefan G. Meyer and Robyn Creswell, have touched on modernism in the Middle East. In *The Experimental Arabic Novel*, Meyer "uses the experimental Arabic novel as a model or case study by which to examine and interrogate the Western notion of modernism" (1). Meyer raises the issue that Middle Eastern writers are interminably weighed against Western writers: "This issue of modernity in the Arab world had always been seen as inextricably bound with that of its relationship to the West, as synonymous with Westernization" (10). This has the effect of disparaging the Middle East's advancement in literature and art. In light of this, he distinguishes Arabic literature as an independent movement, one that operates autonomously from the West's contribution to modernist literature, and one that also paradoxically influences it. Though the

Arabic novel is relatively recent in the face of Western literature, Meyer elucidates that it has always participated in modernism, primarily during its peak in the 1960s (4). Furthermore, Meyer broaches the concept of alienation within the Arab literary community: “Arab writers have been alienated fundamentally from political processes and institutions. They have been censored, exiled, and their books have been banned” (6). This matter plays a key role in influencing the perception of Arab literature and its association with political contention, as Meyer demonstrates.

Robyn Creswell shares a similar perspective of Arabic modernism. To Creswell, modernism is not “a period style (nor a lifestyle). It is instead a movement of artistic canonization and revision” (7). His book, *City of Beginnings* (2019), considers Arabic modernism and a Beirut magazine, *Shi’r*, in an enlightened approach. Arabic literature, perhaps, appertained to “the relations between cultural power and political power; rivalries between nationalism, secularism, and Marxism; and the transmission of literary authority” (11). To achieve this, Arab writers used translation in their writings—which Creswell further defines as “a historical act of preservation, displacement, and transformation” (14). For Arabs, preserving their history appeared to be their primary intention. On the other hand, Arabic modernists sought to expand their writing form and experiment with global literature. With the spread of modernism in the Middle East and experimentation within Arabic literature, however, tension arose between Arab modernists and their adversaries, who “frequently accused them of despoiling the cultural heritage [al-turath]” (14), as they believed modernism countered and revoked the Arabic literary tradition. In addition, Creswell remains optimistic in his aspirations for the future of Arabic modernism scholarship:

The Arab modernists' investment in the discourse of man is one example of their eagerness to join a global intellectual culture. One hope for this study is to place Arabic poetry in a dialogue of contemporaries with other postwar currents of thought: humanists, posthumanists, liberals, Marxists, and others. (19)

Through this examination, Creswell reintroduces a propitious discourse regarding the reassessment of the meaning of modernism.

In *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time*, Friedman disputes the traditionally outdated approach to global modernism by “enlarg[ing] the scale of space and time to argue for a fully planetary approach to modernity” (ix). Within the context of the Levant, she does not specifically address Arabic modernism. Alternatively, she considers the Abbasid Dynasty's cultivation of modernity (a surprise, certainly, but a wholly welcomed one). Friedman introduces this matter by providing a brief summary of the Abbasid Caliphate's modernity: “Under the Abbasids, the arts and sciences flourished, creating new knowledge and technologies that drew on a wide array of Classical Greek and Roman texts and religious and secular works from many cultures” (*Planetary Modernisms* 199-200). She further specifies that “the Abbasid Caliphate in the ninth century produced its own modernism, one that emerged out of the convergence of major innovations and change across the domains of society” (Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms* 204). Thus, these excerpts enforce the argument that modernism existed in the Arab community well in advance of modernism's emergence.

Meyer, Creswell, and Friedman present us with compelling analyses and reasonable evidence, and successfully establish a foundation for Arabic modernism scholarship. However, it appears the focal point of Arabic modernism discourse is the Levant, which merely comprises

one section of the Arab community. For example, “Modernism in the Arab world has been dominated throughout most of the twentieth century by the discourse of identity—religious (Islamic), political-cultural (Arab), and regional (country). ... Arab countries of the Maghreb have had a fourth layer of identity to grapple with: geographical (continental)” (Shabout 529). With this in mind, countries, such as Morocco and Egypt, are often forgotten or disregarded—perhaps because they are not classified as the Middle East. It has been established that Arabic modernism had blossomed significantly in the Levant. However, modernist scholarship regarding Arabic-speaking countries beyond the Levant is sparse.

Additionally, though Creswell briefly alludes to the Mahjar movement, he fails to expand on the Pen League, a literary society where Arab writers would discuss their writing and politics, and discourse associated therewith. This society of Arabic writers united writers alike in a country where Arabic was quite uncommon. Arab writers who migrated to America desired to expand their art, and those who joined the Pen League could do this with others like them.

Scholars have debated the temporal parameters of modernism. Scholars like Maurice Beebe pinpoint the 1950s as the time when it emerged. In his essay, “Introduction: What Modernism Was,” Beebe argues:

Many people still think of the history of literature in terms of the classical, the medieval, and the modern periods. For them “Modernism” is a term broad enough to cover the past five or six centuries, and they may well resent our appropriation of the word for a period which constitutes but a small fraction of that extended time (1066).

This then poses two contentious questions: ‘When did modernism take place?’ and ‘What defines modernism?’

Robyn Creswell has pointed to the fact that Arabic modernism emerged not in the 1910s, but the 1950s: “Arabic Modernism was a literary movement of exiles and émigrés who planted their flag in West Beirut during the mid-1950s, when the Lebanese capital became a meeting ground for intellectuals from across the region” (1). Beirut modernism comprised Arab minds that united to establish new forms of Arabic writing and nurture traditional Arabic poetic forms. As modernism in Europe and America gradually declined in the late 1950s, it concomitantly flourished in Beirut. During this period, little magazines such *Shi’r* (1957) and *al-Adab* (1953) gained additional popularity and attention. Adonis and Yusuf Al-Khal, founders of *Shi’r*, exhibit their contributions to modernism through the development of this Arabic magazine and their own literary collections and styles. Adonis’s poetry, comprising imagism, symbolism, and politics, established the title of most influential Arab poet. In poems like “Season of Tears,” Adonis uses imagism to portray the perspective of Abd al-Rahman I, a prominent historical Islamic figure. This further links him to renowned imagist figures such as Ezra Pound.

Despite the importance of little magazines to the modernist scene in Beirut, like the middle east itself, its magazines remain under-theorized and understudied. Even in the face of increased scholarship about the Middle East, the issue of Arabic magazines persists in remaining unexplored. The recent volume of *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Europe 1880 – 1940*, fails to take into account Beirut’s literary contribution. The issue of categorization and how the Middle East fits within geographic parameters has hampered investigations into its modernisms.

The Little Magazine

Before addressing modernist magazines in the Middle East, it is critical to discuss modernism and the little magazine in the West. As stated by Tyrus Miller, “‘Modernism’ is not a term equivalent to ‘Imagism,’ ‘Futurism,’ ‘Surrealism,’ ‘Vorticism’ and the like ... instead, it is the term invoked to suggest what such particular and divergent programs have in common” (23). On the other hand, Friedman claims that “[t]o assume ‘Western modernity’ ... as the baseline, point of origin, and measure of all other concurrent and subsequent modernities does not sufficiently rethink the framework of modernist studies” (x). Literary modernism could assuredly become contradictory toward its own purpose if modernists and critics alike refuse to acknowledge or explore locations beyond the West, or in this case, a culture in which its native language is not English. Reading, composing, and translating literature to a predominantly English-based movement can undoubtedly have its obstacles, but it is not impossible. To put this in perspective, Jorge Luis Borges, a well-known modernist figure, composed his works in Spanish, which were later translated. This demonstrates that translating a text would be but a minor inconvenience in the world of modernist writers.

On the one hand, we could argue that Arabic is a more complex language than Spanish, and therefore it is difficult to translate. On the contrary, global writers, including Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Lu Xun, constitute literary modernism itself. The issue of translation has hampered the expansion and study of international literary works. Md. Ziaul Haque highlights the difficulty of translating by addressing the obligatory criteria of translated literature: “A literary translator must also be skilled enough to translate feelings, cultural nuances, humour and other delicate elements of a piece of work. In fact, the translators do not translate meanings but

the messages. That is why, the text must be considered in its totality” (97). This point restricts the distribution of translated texts seeing as the process of translating a text into an alternative language consists of more than just the act of translation; It employs a methodical effort to retain the same essence and message as the original text.

The little magazine takes precedence in the subject of modernism. It is a paramount component of Western modernism, and as we will briefly discuss, Arabic modernism as well. In his book, *Little Magazines, World Form*, Eric Bulson discusses the little magazine’s influence on global modernism:

So even while we continue to think about the little magazine as a technology that made modernism in the West, we can’t ignore the fact that it was a world form, which enabled literary production in countries like India, Japan, and Argentina in the 1920s, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Barbados in the 1930s and ‘40s, and Nigeria and Uganda in the 1950s and ‘60s (3).

The little magazine was a method used for sharing modernist movements through literature, and thus without it, modernism would not have existed. At a time when technology was limited, the little magazine served as a form of technology to spread the movement beyond the ‘wealthier’ regions where it already prospered. In other words, “[c]apital cities were frequently the places with the greatest concentration of little magazines, and they often had the power to pull in others from center and periphery alike” (Bulson 49). Writers used the little magazine to expand to other countries and cultures.

In 1912, Harriet Monroe founded a distinguished little magazine called *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. The magazine “published nearly all those who became known as the most

important poets of the modernist era” (Newcomb 7). *Poetry*’s influence on modernism is especially seen in the Middle East in the 1950s, approximately forty-five years after the magazine’s conception. Perhaps this is due to Monroe’s desire to expand the modernist movement to the community: “While other modernist editors of the 1910s attempted to find a single patron or small moneyed coterie ... Monroe’s fund-raising methods proposed poetry as a form of civic culture, and aspired to involve as many members of the community as possible” (Newcomb 10). *Poetry* became influential because Monroe accomplished the objectives she set for herself and her magazine.

The exterior of the magazine was just as symbolic as the content it published. The cover page of the little magazine most likely determined its popularity, purpose, and target audience. For example, the cover of *BLAST* in 1914 was a bright pink background with the title in bold, black capital letters splayed diagonally, taking up the entire front page. The founder, Wyndham Lewis, had done this to perhaps attract the attention of others. Another distinct example that comes to mind is the cover of *The Smart Set*, which remained relatively similar from 1910 to mid-1917. Whereas *The Smart Set*’s front covers in 1910 and onward usually consisted of a sophisticatedly dressed couple, the covers following mid-1917 showcased closeups of women with refined elegance. It appears they intended to establish a sense of superiority with the nature of these designs. If a cover of a magazine appealed to people, it would compel consumers to procure it, regardless of their lack of financial means. Considering this, Eric Bulson discusses the magazine’s exterior:

The attention to these “formal properties” of layout, design, texture, type, size, and scale radically changed how readers experienced the “visible word,” and even more than that,

it was intimately connected with the way the modernist literary field took shape, involving, as it did, a global network (sometimes a “not- work”) of writers and artists tasked with figuring out what this medium could do (and could not), how it could be adapted to connect (and disconnect) writers, readers, magazines, and movements, and when and where it could go (and not). (Bulson 21)

There were additional factors that went into the production of a magazine beyond the content, such as selecting the paper, determining the size, color scheme, and the overall objective of the magazine. In other words, the little magazine did not only consist of uniting literature, but the process of creating the magazine was an art in itself.

Middle Eastern Magazines

Eric Bulson’s statement, “NO LITTLE MAGAZINES, no modernism: it’s as simple as that” (1), is especially pertinent to modernism in the Middle East. As Arabic modernism flourished in Beirut, so did the little magazine. In 1952, a Lebanese writer by the name of Suhail Idriss founded *al-Adab* (*‘the Literature’*), a little magazine “sustained by his own publishing house, which became over the following three decades the region’s pan-Arab platform for a new form of nationalist literature” (Boullata 23). Just five years later, in 1957, *Shi’r* emerged. As Creswell claims, *Shi’r* was “a quarterly dedicated to poetry and poetry criticism” founded by Yusuf Al-Khal, “a Greek Orthodox Lebanese with shrewd editorial instincts, who lived in America from 1948 to 1955 and took the moniker for his new journal from Harriet Monroe’s famous ‘little magazine’ of the same name” (3). *Shi’r*’s experimental, receptive, and collaborative approach generated some strife with *al-Adab*. But this form of modernist attitude was still relatively new to the Arab world of literature. For some, specifically the patriotic *al-*

Adab, it had even been deemed disgraceful (Bawardi 235). As it may be, it raised the question: why would anyone ruin the traditional Arabic form? Middle Eastern poets and writers had different styles of literature, and therefore, many were against conforming to the West. It was a rational fear of the eventual erasure of their language and art.

Amid such concerns, *Shi'r* quickly rose to popularity and crossed boundaries by expanding internationally with the help of co-founder Adonis, a Syrian poet “who was among West Beirut’s immigrants and the preeminent figure of the modernist movement” (Creswell 4). Though Adonis did not speak English, he was educated on Western modernism and literature “from the gate of French literature” (Giv and Shahbazi 1379). This is comparable to Al-Khal in that he also discovered modernism from a Western perspective, rather than studying it through a Middle Eastern perspective. In hopes of associating with the West, Al-Khal contacted Ezra Pound and proposed some kind of collaboration between the two and *Shi'r* (Faddul 74). This was unusual for an Arabic little magazine.

Although *Shi'r* and *al-Adab* were the most influential little magazines, they were not the first to circulate the Middle East. Prior to the rise of Arabic modernism in the 1950s, two other little magazines sought to modernize literature:

al-Sufur (1915-1924) and *al-Fajr* (1925-1927). Both periodicals were characterised by a strong desire for renewal and modernisation of society and literature. Whereas *al-Sufur* had a philosophical and cultural background and treated literature as a means for change, *al-Fajr* was devoted totally to the new literature that should be Egyptian, modern and realistic (de Moor 85).

The little magazine also existed in the Middle East during the late 1890s. Although *al-Sufur* and *al-Fajr* were attempting to revolutionize Arabic literature, it was not until *al-Adab* and *Shi'r* arose that Arabic modernism truly flourished in the 1950s.

While Arabic modernism in the Middle East was taking initiative, it was also expanding to America. In 1913, just three years before *al-Sufur*'s publication, the Arabic magazine '*Al-Funoon*,' emerged in New York City. Its founder, Nasib Arida, was a Syrian writer and poet who desired to create a magazine that other Arabic-speaking writers could contribute to and promote. This was especially targeted at members of the Mahjar movement, Middle Eastern writers and poets who immigrated to America. *Al-Funoon* (1913), which I discuss in a later chapter, becomes prominent for its integration of translations of global writers such as Oscar Wilde and Friedrich Nietzsche ("Al-Funun"). Ultimately, its goal was to bring culture to America, and to spread global culture to Arabic speakers.

On the other hand, *Shi'r* aspired to do the opposite. The Western approach Al-Khal discovered during his residence in the U.S. influenced his little magazine *Shi'r*. Al-Khal's admiration for T. S. Eliot's work became apparent when, in 1958, he published multiple Arabic translations of Eliot's poems in *Shi'r*, "including *The Waste Land*, 'Ash-Wednesday,' 'The Hollow Men,' 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' and *Murder in the Cathedral*" (Faddul 81). This was one of the first translations of Eliot into Arabic. Unlike its predecessors that prioritized the art of Arabic writing, *Shi'r* understood the essence of global modernism and introduced this Western figure (Eliot) to Middle Eastern natives. It is entirely possible that if Al-Khal included such translations, then perhaps he was attempting not only to replicate his style but to also distribute Eliot's work to the Middle East and to those who did not speak English. Two years

following Eliot's death, Al-Khal paid respects to Eliot by publishing an elegy in *Shi'r*, expressing his admiration for his work and style (Faddul 81). Western modernism impacted Al-Khal deeply, but his little magazine *Shi'r* exceeded expectations in demonstrating this influence.

Conversely, we could argue that Al-Khal did not intend to incorporate Arabic modernism into global modernism, but rather, he intended to eradicate Arabic literary customs and replace them with Western traditions and values. By publishing T. S. Eliot in *Shi'r*, he promoted the Western ideologies he had been taught in America. With this in mind, it is understandable that Al-Khal directed his attention to bringing forth Western values. If not for the nationalistic artists and writers, then for those who appreciated global trends.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter of this thesis expands the concerns of this Introduction by exploring further the timespan of modernism's occurrence and its status as a global movement. Scholars have long debated modernism's temporal and geographic remits, and this chapter aims to outline these key debates by asking 'When did modernism take place?' and 'What defines modernism?' Taking into account recent work by Miller, Walkowitz, and Friedman, among other scholars, I question whether the authenticity of modernism derives from its temporality period or its literary content. Against these debates, I situate the Beirut literary scene as it evolved in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and the major critical models used to explore the Middle East and its literatures. While critics have pinpointed the 1940s and 1950s as the temporal parameters of Arabic modernism, I argue instead that it can be traced back to the early 1910s and 1920s. With this in mind, I examine Adonis's poems, "The Banished" and "Season of Tears," among others. I further delve into the Mahjar movement as well as the Pen League, an Arab

literary circle created by Abd al-Masih Haddad, Nasib Arida, and eventually Kahlil Gibran and Mikhail Naimy.

In the second chapter, I explore the political events that heavily influenced Arabic literature and modernism. In 1915, one year following the outbreak of World War I, a shortage of food struck Beirut. The Great Famine of Mount Lebanon persisted for two years, and the country lost approximately half of its population to starvation. This tragedy prompted Arab literary figures, such as Kahlil Gibran, to publish works in mourning for the lives lost. In this regard, I employ Kahlil Gibran's poem "Dead Are My People" to understand the influence politics has on Arab modernists' writing. After World War I came to an end, France's colonization of Lebanon severed Lebanon's ties to the Ottoman Empire. France's control of Beirut in 1920 brought political aid to the country and an expansion of French culture and literature. Subsequently, in 1948, throughout the Arab-Israeli war, thousands of Palestinians found refuge in Beirut. This new home sparked a surge of literature and art, which, in turn, contributed to Beirut's modernism movement at its peak.

The Middle East is often viewed as the Other by Westerners: "For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (Said 43). This 'political vision' extended to a social issue. If the majority of Westerners viewed the Middle East as the Other, it would have been challenging to establish and maintain fully transnational forms of literary exchange between the East and West. Though prominent Arab writers such as Al-Khal, Adonis, and Gibran achieved it, discussions concerning their texts are relatively sparse in comparison to other global modernists.

This chapter further examines a particular movement within Beirut modernism: the little magazine scene that flourished in the 1950s. Friedman underlines J. M. Blaut's concept of European diffusionism: "Blaut suggests that this storyline assumes a center/periphery model of modernity that arose in conjunction with Western imperialism as one of its major rationalizations for colonial rule" ("Periodizing Modernism" 429). Using the magazines *Shi'r*, *Al-Adab*, and *Al-Funoon*, among others, I argue that the modernisms within them do not entirely reflect diffusionist models in which the East apparently copied or imitated preexisting Western modernisms, but instead show how modernism meant something very different to Lebanese writers.

The final chapter examines several of Nadia Tuéni's poems from her translated collection *Lebanon: Poems of Love and War / Liban: Poèmes d'amour et de guerre* (2016) with an emphasis on translation and postcolonial theory approaches. I argue that while Tuéni's role in modernism may seem apparent through her poetry, she has been scarcely referred to as a modernist. As a result, I pose critical questions regarding her identity, including the central issue: "Could we consider Tuéni an Arabic modernist when she is a Francophone poet?" Finally, this chapter addresses Tuéni's potential allusions to political events, such as the Lebanese Civil War.

Modernism's emergence sparked numerous debates about its international reach, and discourse by critics such as Christopher Butler, Walter Kalaidjian, Eric Hayot, Nergis Ertürk, among others. Over the decades, discourse has varied significantly: from the debate that modernism was primarily a Western movement, to the argument that Arabic modernism is not associated with the modernism movement. The foundation of Arabic modernism discourse has been previously established, but there is still much to be explored about modernism's temporality

and location, Arab writers and their work, and Arabic modernism's temporality and location. On the other hand, the little magazine takes precedence in modernist's international broadening. If not for periodicals, global expansion would have been unlikely in a society that lacked an online presence. Magazines cultivated modernism because they were a method of exchanging poetry and prose. Through this, we can discern Yusuf Al-Khal's inspiration from Monroe's *Poetry* when naming his own periodical, *Shi'r*. Ultimately, Arabic modernism's role and participation in global modernism has constructed an avant-garde approach to poetry and prose, and thus, has contributed to the overall development and progression of modernism.

CHAPTER ONE: GLOBAL MODERNISM'S CONTEXTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Critical Interpretations of Modernism

C. Barry Chabot defines modernism as “a fairly capacious term, one covering a range of literary practices. ... it is the term invoked to suggest what such particular and divergent programs have in common. It is a *period* concept” (10). Chabot is implying that such “literary practices” comprise modernism, a movement that is, in his belief, set in a particular period. Though Chabot centers his argument primarily on postmodernism, he concisely addresses his conviction of literary modernism by stating, “as a period concept, modernism must be approached more broadly and its distinctive features sought in the relationships it establishes with both the literary tradition and the immediate cultural context” (11). Indeed, I concur with Chabot’s assertion that it is imperative that scholars examine modernism through cultural context. Contrarily, I digress with the notion that they must only approach it broadly. It is critical that modernism is studied through various contexts, regardless of its temporality.

Chabot further approaches modernism through a cultural perspective, explaining, “The existence of something termed modernism in other cultural realms does not mean that these various artistic modernisms have much in common. Different cultural realms have different histories, needs, and opportunities; and these differences combine to assure that ‘modernism’ will mean different things in each. (17)”

In other words, Chabot believes that the concept and interpretations of ‘modernism’ within each culture deviate from one another. Clement Greenberg makes a similar claim regarding modernism’s temporality in his essay, “Beginnings of Modernism.” He argues that, unlike previous literary movements, “‘Modernist’ can’t be used with the same freedom; it remains time-

bound, more historically specific” (77). However, he acknowledges that it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace back to the exact year of its conception (77).

Alternatively, with modernism’s universal transcendence arose additional disparate contributions to the movement altogether. The technological advancements within the last few decades have presented scholars with fresh opportunities to reconsider modernism’s prominence and competency. This elevation in technology is one of the several critical advancements Susan Stanford Friedman proposes in her book *Planetary Modernisms* (2015): “to provoke questions, not to settle them—to map new ways of thinking rather than to set new boundaries of thought” (2). The surge of contextualizing and reframing our perceptions is a radical shift, indeed, but one that is wholly crucial to modernist scholarship. Friedman’s objective in her argument is not to completely eradicate modernism as ‘we know it’ but to “keep alive the contradictions in the field, affirming that this tension is dynamic and open to productive interrogation” (2). If such is the case, we could agree that modernism encompasses its subset movements such as Arabic modernism or even Modernismo.

Additionally, Friedman approaches spatiality within the context of modernism: “Spatialization is a compensatory gesture, but ultimately modernist studies needs to engage in what I have been calling the *geohistory* of modernity: narratives of modernity’s sweep across the globe and through time” (84). Friedman’s prospect of modernism scholarship is that it must extend internationally and to various periods, as opposed to centering scholarship on one country or a single time frame. In this case, Friedman is challenging critics such as Chabot and Greenberg by suggesting that perhaps modernism is not as period-based as many critics believe.

Similarly, Mao and Walkowitz specifically address spatiality in “New Modernist Studies.” Spatiality’s role in modernism takes precedence as its study is critical in global modernist research. Mao and Walkowitz establish an introduction of spatiality by denoting, “Spatial broadening has meant not only that scholars now attend to works produced in, say, Asia and Australia but also that they investigate complex intellectual and economic transactions among, for example, Europe, Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean” (738). They evoke an excellent point when considering economic factors in global literary discussion. Economic facets may profoundly affect a country’s literary scene, as I will address later in this chapter.

Mao and Walkowitz further acknowledge that “[s]cholars argue that modernism reveals itself to be a more global practice once we extend the historical period to the late twentieth century or even as far back as the early seventeenth” (738). The idea that modernism could have existed in the seventeenth century is a bold assertion to make, but one that I support. Are scholars claiming that the concept of modernism has always existed? If that is the case, they could be correct. However, I question if this form of modernism (in the seventeenth century) would still be considered associated with the ‘official’ modernist movement when it transpired well in advance of modernism’s approximate conception.

For instance, Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers correspond with the idea that “there is no such thing as modernism—no singular definition capable of bringing order to the diverse multitude of creators, manifestos, practices, and politics that have been variously constellated around this enigmatic term” (1). However, I contend that the function of the term “modernism” is to collectively designate a general concept, in which cultures across the globe could further develop and contribute to in their own ways. In other words, if we consider modernism’s

subdivisions that appertain to various cultures, it does not imply we are seeking to expunge the concept of modernism itself. Modernism is precisely its meaning: to modernize and conceive newfangled and avant-garde developments. Modernism is also a label for a movement that comprises a multitude of writing forms, genres, and categories. Perhaps we can perceive that modernism is no longer identified as a single concept and that it was possibly never this way at all. Likewise, to define modernists as ‘white males living in the early 1910s and 1920s’ would be considerably ludicrous. If modernism is an all-inclusive concept, as we have discussed, then I expect that we could consider anyone a modernist.

Additionally, akin to Mao and Walkowitz’s claim regarding spatiality and economic factors, Latham and Rogers suggest that “scholars might locate the origins of modernism in any number of world-historical events and circumstances, from the women’s suffrage movement to the Berlin Conference (1884–85)” (2). As Friedman has done by discussing the Abbasid Caliphate¹, it is entirely conceivable to delve through history and discover countless examples in which ‘modernism’ took place.

As I will demonstrate thoroughly in my analysis below, Arabic modernist figures are customarily inclined to incorporate Arab history into their writing as a form of respect, admiration, and commemoration. The acme of Arabic modernism’s influence in the 1950s advanced fresh perspectives of prose and poetry. Though discourse on Arabic modernism, also called “Beirut’s modernist moment” (Creswell 4), remains sparse, Robyn Creswell and Stefan G. Meyer have established an enlightening foundation.

¹ I briefly discuss this in the Introduction.

According to Creswell, “the Beirut modernists addressed themselves, albeit at times obliquely, to the signal debates of their day: the relations between cultural power and political power; rivalries between nationalism, secularism, and Marxism; and the transmission of literary authority” (11). Otherwise stated, it has been previously established that Arab modernists center their writing on political and economic issues. That is not to say, however, that this is the entirety of their focus. Arab poets, such as Adonis and Nadia Tuéni, who I will explore in due course, have framed the majority of their work on political events and the emotional impact that stems from such events. Meanwhile, Meyer elucidates that “just as in the West, different literary styles coexist with one another today ... according to prevailing social, cultural, and political conditions. So that today in Syria, the realist novel is still the preeminent form, while in nearby Lebanon novelists are increasingly writing in a style more heavily influenced by current global literary trends” (5). As we recall, Arabic literature continues to not only be significantly impacted by economic and political events but also trends and forms that pertain to literature work. On this account, perhaps we can argue Arab literature’s global predilection presents it with methods of expanding modernism in its own way.

The Inception of the Mahjar Movement

The prominence of Arabic modernism during the 1950s was certainly not the first and only time of Arabic literature’s rise to popularity and influence. A similarly aberrant movement transpired nearly three decades earlier, this time in America, that served as an inspiration to eminent Arabic modernists, including Adonis and Yusuf Al-Khal. The Mahjar (المجهر or diaspora) movement emerged during the early 20th century by means of the Arab writers who

had emigrated with their families from Arab countries, such as Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, to the U.S. in pursuit of a prosperous life. Such figures, in a state of isolation (as one is in a country that is not their own), sought solace in each other's commonalities and pursued their aspirations of expanding Arabic literature to the Western world.

In 1916, two Mahjari writers, Nasib Arida and Abdul Masih Haddad, founded "al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah," or "the Pen League."² This literary society's objective centered primarily on cultivating Arabic literature in America. According to Richard Alan Popp, Nasib Arida's "concern was for the development of Arabic literature and its genres, which he undoubtedly believed to be vehicles for social reform. He saw it as important, furthermore, that each writer be able to exchange his or her ideas freely with others in the union so that they did not work in isolation due to distance or political ideology" (33). The Arab-American population was sparse in the face of other ethnicities in America. As I noted previously, Arab literati prioritized conveying their history through writing, including their political views. The Mahjar movement supported the notion of discussing their political viewpoints and literary theories. By 1920, the Pen League's members made the decision to reform the society, though they still referred to Arida and Haddad's initial foundation. Along with the founders, the Pen League consisted of notable figures including Mikhail Naimy and Kahlil Gibran, among others, such as Ameen Rihani, Rashid Ayyoub, Nudra Haddad, and Elia Abu Madi.

Much like Arabic modernism, the Mahjar movement sought to renovate Arabic. For example, Haddad "agreed completely with 'Aridah in principle that what the Arab-American community needed were literati who did not imitate the past and who could supply their

² This is also known as the 'Pen Bond.'

community with material that represented it historically, culturally, scientifically, socially, politically and spiritually, in addition to receiving just recompense” (Popp 34). On the other hand, Haddad believed “Arab-American literati should be more socially active in their works, as Western journalists were” (Popp 34) in order to efficiently disseminate Arabic literature in the U.S. In the course of time, the Mahjar movement demonstrated its success as many members established themselves by contributing to and creating Arab-American periodicals, particularly *al-Funoon*. However, I will discuss this more in-depth in the second chapter.

The Middle East: Major Critical Models

To fully comprehend Beirut’s literary development, we must first examine a pivotal Arabic modernist figure’s poetry. Adonis, the co-founder of *Shi’r*, exhibited his contribution to modernism through the development of this Arabic magazine and his own poetry collections and style. His poetry, comprising of imagism, symbolism, and politics, established the title of most influential Arab poet.

The international influence on modernism is not a new revelation, and *Shi’r*’s contribution to modernism may give the impression of imitating Western modernism. This is not the case. For the purpose of differentiating between Western modernism and Arabic modernism’s approach, we must first look at “Season of Tears” by Adonis, who published this poem in 1965. The speaker of “Season of Tears,” “Abdulrahman al-Dakhil, falcon of Quraish,” expresses an unpleasant response to Damascus, his homeland (Adonis “Season of Tears” 66). The poem indicates Abd Al-Rahman is plagued with dreams about Damascus when he narrates, “I dream of Damascus” (“Season of Tears” 69) and feels no urgency to return to his home

country: “It falls quiet, the call of return” (66). He repeats this line multiple times throughout the poem, suggesting that he no longer wants to return to Damascus after his treacherous escape, and understandably so. Additionally, Abd Al-Rahman admits he frequently reflects over his past when he says, “Wronging myself, I roll my history, slit its throat / in my hand, rouse it back to life” (67). Following this line, he states, “I shepherd my eras, torture my mornings” (67), suggesting that ‘shepherd’ may mean ‘guide,’ and therefore, he longs to guide memories of a previous time away from his mind. The final nail in the coffin is the line, “calling out, Damascus / die here and let your promises burn / calling out, Damascus, die, and never return” (“Season of Tears” 69). This explicitly illustrates Abd Al-Rahman’s emotions towards these incidents. The “promises” represent the life that could have been and the future of which he had dreamt, but upon the rise of devastating events, those promises were burnt. “Season of Tears” suggests Abd Al-Rahman is reminiscing about his traumatizing past in Damascus.

Adonis’s ability to depict Abd Al-Rahman’s pain and loss in this poem evokes a heart-wrenching response from the readers. However, without context or an understanding of Abd Al-Rahman’s background, it may be impossible to empathize with his loss. Abd Al-Rahman I was born in Damascus in 731 CE, into the Umayyad Dynasty. He was only twenty-four years old when the Abbasids Caliphate defeated the Umayyad Dynasty in 750 CE and slaughtered his family (Goodyear). After five years of traveling to seek a permanent sanctuary, Abd Al-Rahman reached Spain, where he settled down and reestablished the Umayyad Dynasty. He ruled “as Amir for 33 years after his proclamation at Cordoba, and the length of his rule was a major factor in the success of the Umayyads” (Kennedy n.p.). Abd Al-Rahman I died in 788 in Spain. Although Adonis chose to write this poem in Abd Al-Rahman’s perspective to emphasize a

particular pain of one's native country, perhaps, Adonis is incorporating his own pain from Syria.

The location in this poem specifically influences the story Adonis is telling. Along with alluding to Damascus throughout the entirety of the poem, Adonis specifies certain locations within Syria. He establishes almost a familiar atmosphere by recalling different parts of Syria while retaining that potent feeling of loss. For example, in the lines, "I dream of Damascus, / of terror in the shadow of Qassiyun" (Adonis "Season of Tears" 69), Abd Al-Rahman I is reminiscing about a mountain in Syria and the moments he experienced fear. In other words, we can understand how growing up in a country does not always denote love and comfort, particularly in countries that have been destroyed by warfare. This idea of loss, and arguably, post-traumatic stress disorder, appears constantly throughout the poem: "I carried you, a debt on my youth / in the greenness of Ghota, the foothills of Qassiyun" (Adonis "Season of Tears" 69). It is the loss and fear of one's motherland that shape this poem to deeply affect its readers.

"Season of Tears" pushes the limits of global modernism by addressing the Middle East's historical events. Adonis's incorporation of imagism further reflects Western values, such as Ezra Pound does, when he writes, "I walk and the Euphrates alongside me walks, / the trees follow like flags" (Adonis "Season of Tears" 67). Additionally, in "Season of Tears," Adonis refers to Abd Al-Rahman as "al-Dakhil," an Arabic translation of "the Enterer." This refers to Abd Al-Rahman's entrance to Spain prior to becoming the Emirate of Cordoba. It is quite valuable to note the significance of Abd Al-Rahman's journey as he crossed borders from the Middle East to Europe and established an empire in Spain, and thus became a prominent figure in both Syria and Spain's history:

As one of the lone survivors of the Umayyad Dynasty after the Abbasids defeated the Umayyad Caliphate, Abd al-Rahman bridged the Umayyad Caliphate and the Umayyad Emirate of Cordoba in Spain. Although he did not start Muslim rule in Spain, Abd al-Rahman established it as a vibrant, independent, and long-lasting political and cultural power. (Goodyear)

In this fashion, this poem is symbolic for Adonis. His contribution to modernism encompassed bridging Arabic and Western modernism in hopes of shedding light on the Middle East.

“A Mirror for Beirut,” also published in 1968, comprises three sections that may reflect Adonis’s perception of Beirut. The poem begins with the lines, “The street is a woman / who reads [Al-Fatiha] when said, / or draws a cross” (Adonis “A Mirror for Beirut” 99). “Al-Fatiha” is the first Surah (or chapter) of the Quran. It is typically the first Surah one memorizes as it is the basis for every prayer. Within these first three lines, Adonis manages to incorporate both Islam and Christianity, in an effort to provide others with clarity regarding Beirut’s inhabitants—that Beirut is not only inclusive of Muslims. This further highlights the unification of such a country, especially during the Arabic modernism period. The second stanza begins with the same line as the first: “The street is a woman / who bites any who go past” (99). Perhaps this repetition is used to depict the dangers of Beirut’s streets. Similar to “Season of Tears,” the imagism in “A Mirror for Beirut” is pertinent to the overall modernist craft of Adonis. The imagism within this poem falls under the classifications of brevity and illustration:

Flowers painted on shoes
and the earth and sky
a box of colors—

and in cellars. (Adonis “A Mirror for Beirut” 100)

These lines invoke an image, and perhaps a personal memory, of walking down the streets of the war-torn country and passing by brightly painted walls that reflect the warmth and intimacy of the country’s residents. The poem presents a sense of unification, despite the bleak undertones. As the overall poem progresses, and as we move from one poem to another, a harsh reality emerges through the impoverished condition of a country that provided a sanctuary for refugees. Moreover, the locations reflect the disposition of the poem: “The street is a woman,” “in cellars,” “A cemetery” (Adonis 99-100). During my recurrent trips to Beirut, I witnessed the streets, teeming with vehicles, where adults and children alike not only pleaded for money but also sold various kinds of trinkets on the side of the streets to obtain any sum of income. There are two sides to a coin, and in Beirut’s instance, one was thriving while the other was, perhaps, abysmal.

The third poem, “The Banished,” published in 1957 in an anthology of Adonis’s first poems, reflects a somber image. The poem was published close to the time of *Shi’r*’s publication, and therefore it is likely that Adonis’s writing style resembles that of his work in *Shi’r*. Much like the former two poems, the location of “The Banished” plays a pivotal role in this poem’s message. However, Adonis does not specify in which country this poem occurs. Initially, it seems Adonis is alluding to Palestine when he states, “Your country is no longer here.’ / We who rebelled against the intruder / who were destroyed and banished” (“The Banished” 9). However, we can conclude that Adonis is most likely referring to Syria for two reasons: Syria is his birthplace, and, at the time of its publishing, it is most likely that Syria was in politically delicate circumstances.

Western modernism's influence on Arabic modernism is apparent in these poems. However, we also see a unique approach in "Season of Tears," in which Adonis is incorporating a Middle Eastern figure to emphasize the importance of Islamic and Arab influence. Adonis further elaborates on Abd al-Rahman's emotions in "Season of Tears," which sets him apart from other Arab poets. As reported by Fakhreddine, "Adūnīs's poetic language is constantly reflecting upon itself and its place, while his poetic persona is that of a poet, a rebel, a rejectionist, and a visionary" ("Two Projects of Modernism" 42). The location, period, and individual of this poem establish its meaning, similar to "A Mirror for Beirut" and "The Banished."

The interpretation of "The Banished" from a Western reader who has brief knowledge of the Middle East may differ from a Middle Eastern reader who resides there. A first look at these lines would certainly provide a Western reader with an idea of the struggles the speaker has endured: "Your country is no longer here. / We who rebelled against the intruder / who were destroyed and banished" (Adonis "The Banished" 9). In contrast, a Middle Eastern reader, who has prior knowledge and connection to past political affairs, would perceive these lines as an indication of a particular moment in history, as I had done earlier. The first three lines of the second stanza portray a feeling of hopelessness in belonging: "Banished, lost among the roads / a cipher to arms and heart, / hunger is all our cries" (Adonis "The Banished" 9). From a Middle Eastern perspective, we may interpret these lines by referring to a war-torn and politically fractured country that had banished its people, and we may read it through the eyes of people who cease to have a home or a safe place for themselves and their families. In this case, location

is a critical element we must examine and include when approaching and dissecting the literature.

We can see how Arabic modernism interweaves with global modernism and how it presents knowledge and a perspective of cultures and languages that Western modernism is not well-informed about. If these poems did not take place in the Middle East, this endeavor would not be as notable. This is because the Middle East is not commonly discussed or written about in literature like its counterpart, the West. The locations of these poems, along with their context, acknowledge the struggles the Middle East has encountered and continues to experience. They pay tribute to the social, economic, and political issues Arabs encounter on a daily basis. This contrasts with the recurrent signs of disregard or xenophobia, as well as the West's perception of the Other. For instance, Edward Said depicts an illustration of this in his book *Orientalism* when he states, "The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America, is disheartening. There exists here an almost unanimous consensus that politically he does not exist, and when it is allowed that he does, it is either as a nuisance or as an Oriental" (Said 27). It is perhaps a relief that Arabic modernism promoted some form of awareness.

Additionally, the locations of these poems are more or less significant than the prose poem in view of the fact that they have been translated to English. This is not to imply that the poetry itself is not impressive, as it is a consequential outcome (and innovation) of *Shi'r's* publications (Fakhreddine 243). However, the locations of these poems almost define them.

In her article "Two Projects of Modernism in Arabic Poetry," Huda J. Fakhreddine confronts the common approach within critiquing Arabic modernism by stating,

When studying modern poetry in Arabic, one often comes across works with a focus on the western influences on the movement, with the rare passing mention made of possible references for this revolutionizing project in the Arabic poetic tradition. It is as if a conscious project for change in poetic expression could only be in opposition to the literary tradition and directed by western or non-traditional influences. (Fakhreddine “Two Projects of Modernism” 18)

I concur, despite that I have done the very action she publicly criticizes. However, it is critical, in the case of Arabic modernism, to touch upon the general context of global modernism prior to addressing a movement that supposedly developed afterward.

Furthermore, with addressing the influence of Western modernism on Arabic modernism and vice versa, it is almost impractical to compare the English language to Arabic, particularly in regard to prose and poetry. The Arabic language remains intricate and a subject of research. However, an overview is as follows: “In Arabic literature there are clear cut definitions of poetry and prose (nathr), distinguishing them from one another, so that prose cannot be confused with poetry” (Moreh 330). All three poems previously discussed have been translated into English. However, with an initial examination, “Season of Tears,” “A Mirror for Beirut,” and “The Banished” are free-verse poems, which differs from the Arabic prose poem. Therefore, it is unlikely I can successfully examine their poetic form through Arabic protocol.

Arabic Modernism: A Movement in Retrospect

Arabic modernism’s emergence in 1950s Beirut revises our understanding of locations and the time when modernism took place. Through my examinations of Adonis’s “Season of

Tears,” “A Mirror of Beirut,” and “The Banished” through a Postcolonial lens, I reaffirm that although Western modernism ultimately influences Arabic modernism, the latter remains distinct in its approach. Its association with modernism does not deter it from contributing its own influences on modernism.

In 1965, Adonis published the poem “Season of Tears” from the perspective of Abd al-Rahman I. The poem’s depiction of Abd al-Rahman’s response to the traumatic events of his past, when the Abbasids Caliphate slaughtered his family, and the historical accounts of Abd al-Rahman’s influence as an amir, his crossing borders from the Middle East to Europe, and his establishment of the Emirate of Cordoba in Spain, demonstrate an example of unification for descendants to follow.

In 1968, Adonis published “A Mirror of Beirut,” which exhibits a sense of unification through religion, similar to “Season of Tears,” which alludes to a historical figure in history who united cultures and countries through his escape from his homeland. On the other hand, “The Banished” depicts a loss of home and safety, which solely is contingent on the location of the poem. “Season of Tears,” “A Mirror of Beirut,” and “The Banished” provide a diverse approach to global modernism seeing as they address issues the West is sometimes too reluctant to confront. There is a traceable influence of Western modernism in Arabic modernism which is recognizable through al-Khal’s incorporation of T. S. Eliot’s texts and association with Pound. This, perhaps, results in a form of imitation of their styles. Examining modernism through Beirut’s literary evolution revises our apprehension of the date and location of when and where modernism arose. Arabic modernism contributes its individual principles and innovations to the

global movement, particularly through Adonis's approach to poetry, which distinguishes him from other global modernists.

CHAPTER TWO: POLITICS AND LITERATURE IN LEBANON (1910-1970)

The previous chapter outlined scholarly interpretations of modernism, the Mahjar movement, and the Pen League, as well as Adonis's poetry and its influence on the development of Arabic modernism. This chapter centers on three political occurrences that transpired as a consequence of World War I, which in turn influenced the development of experimental writing that would come to define Arabic modernism. In this chapter, I argue that the political context behind modernism's evolution and texts is fundamental to understanding the external factors that influenced Arabic modernism. As I examine these political events and their outcomes, I demonstrate the disparagement of the Arab world³, and consequently, Arabic writers, that leave many of them underappreciated by Western views⁴.

The first World War produced casualties among both the soldiers and the residents of various nations. At the time, Lebanon maintained its position as one of the numerous countries that comprised the Ottoman Empire⁵. For the sake of brevity, let us explore a critical point in World War I and the Ottoman Empire's history, as this will not only shape one's impression of the Ottoman Empire, but it will further reveal much about the denigration and defaming of the

³ According to Abu Shahid Abdullah, "The negative portrayal of Muslims in the media began intensively after World War II, and in particular from the 1960s onwards. Different issues, such as huge Muslim migration to Western countries, Israel-Palestine conflict, independence of several African countries after the Second World War, overlapping between religious and political interest, and so on might have been responsible for this increased negative portrayal of the Muslim community" (53).

⁴ "In most ways Arab Americans have not suffered as have other, more visible, minorities in the United States. It has been not so much Arab origin as Arab political activity in America that has engendered a new form of 'political' racism that takes prejudice and exclusion out of the arena of personal relations into the arena of public information and public policy" (Samhan 16).

⁵ The Ottoman Empire comprised predominantly Turkish people, but it also included other various ethnic groups, including Arabs.

Arab people in their entirety⁶. By examining a crucial point in Turkish history, the Armenian Genocide, I illustrate how Western perspectives depict the Middle East, and thus, Arab writers. According to an article from the *New York Times*, “After 74 years and countless recriminations, Turkey plans to reopen the archival records on one of the more grisly episodes of this century: the mass deaths of Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Turks during World War I” (Haberman 3). Contrary to Western beliefs, the Turkish government and historians are adamant that the Ottoman Empire was not responsible for the Armenian genocide and that these allegations of such a genocide are entirely inflated (Haberman 3). For example, Clyde Haberman states,

There was no calculated plan of extermination, they say. They put the number of Armenian deaths at closer to 300,000, and they add that about as many Turkish Muslims were killed by Armenians during a period marked by considerable brutality and casual violence on all fronts. ... And they say they expect their case to be proved by long-stored documents from the archives of the Ottoman Empire, which collapsed after World War I, giving way in 1923 to the modern Turkish republic. (3)

⁶ Two critical events are Operation Boulder (1972-1975) and September 11, 2001. Molly Wancewicz encapsulates Operation Boulder as one where “government agents employed invasive and discriminatory tactics in their investigations of Arab immigrants and Arab-Americans. Further, a combination of historical evidence and contemporary analysis indicates that these federal investigations intended to suppress and divide Arab communities” (155). One of these tactics used was in relation to visa requirements: “the United States government required Arab immigrants and Arab-Americans who travelled internationally to obtain transit visas. Though government officials originally promised that these regulations would only affect those suspected of terrorism, the restrictions were applied to Arabs writ large, regardless of their criminal history” (155). Furthermore, following the devastation of 9/11, anti-Islamic-centered discrimination, hate crimes, and prejudice increased exponentially. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Anti-Islamic hate crime incidents increased from 28 in 2000, to 481 in 2001, and decreased to 155 in 2002 (U.S. Department of Justice, FBI, 2000, 2001, 2002). This is not to imply that all Arabs are Muslims and vice versa, as that would be factually incorrect. Nevertheless, these statistics present a general idea of crime incidents toward Muslims, which would undoubtedly include Arab-Americans.

Taking into account that this article was published in 1989, it's more than likely that much scholarship has been issued regarding this misconception⁷. It is further critical to recognize that this representation is not an emerging concept⁸. This Western narrative that portrays the Ottoman Empire adversely reiterates not only the idea of defaming Arabs as savages but also Edward Said's definition of the Other:

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. (1)

If the West presumably requires the East in order to portray itself as cultivated and civilized, according to Said, then where does that leave the East? Is the East required to counteract these claims in an attempt to exculpate itself? In other words, "... as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other" (Said 5). In this case, it can be surmised that this 'natural phenomenon' has directly affected modernism and its influence. Furthermore, along with Said's theory, the concept of decoloniality can be applied to this idea of Western influence:

⁷ See Lewy, Guenter. *Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*. University of Utah Press, 2014.

⁸ See Shaheen, Jack G. "Media Coverage of the Middle East: Perception and Foreign Policy." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 482, 1985, pp. 160–175.

Decoloniality necessarily follows, derives from, and responds to coloniality and the ongoing colonial process and condition. It is a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice—most especially by colonized and racialized subjects—*against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and *for* the possibilities of an otherwise” (Mignolo and Walsh 17).

As I mentioned in the previous chapter (and will reaffirm in this chapter), the Arab world’s affiliation with modernism derived from the influence of Western concepts in combination with Arab culture and literature in order to form a new approach. To illustrate, I will examine Kahlil Gibran’s poem “Dead Are My People” and his manner of responding to a tragic outcome of World War I that befell the Lebanese scene. In doing so, I will increase my understanding of the profound impact politics has on Arab modernists’ writing. Following this analysis, I will explore France-Lebanon colonial relations.

The Tragedy of the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon

Along with the Armenian Genocide, World War I brought forth a major food shortage in Lebanon in 1915. This fatal period persisted for three desolate years, inducing the deaths of at least 20,000 Lebanese residents⁹, and was eventually appointed the title, ‘The Great Famine of Mount Lebanon.’ As a response to this catastrophe, Kahlil Gibran, one of the predominant Arab-American figures to participate in the Mahjar movement and the Pen League, and most notable for his work *The Prophet* (1923), wrote “Dead Are My People,” a poem that explicitly exhibits his sentiments regarding the lives lost during this period. The first three lines of his poem, “Dead

⁹ The exact death toll has never been determined.

are my people / Gone are my people, but I exist yet, / Lamenting them in my solitude...” (1-3) synopsizes the central idea of his poem: his people have died painful deaths and he is left to grieve them from his home in New York. In addition to this lament, Gibran alludes to World War I and its involvement in the deaths of his people by stating,

My people died from hunger, and he who

Did not perish from starvation was

Butchered with the sword; and I am

Here in this distant land, roaming

Amongst a joyful people who sleep

Upon soft beds, and smile at the days

While the days smile upon them. (lines 14-20)

Gibran is signifying that those who did not succumb to starvation suffered a different death; one that pertained to fighting in World War I. Simultaneously, he presents us with a juxtaposition of the tortured Lebanese people and the content Americans “... who sleep / Upon soft beds” (lines 18-19). The manner in which he describes the Americans insinuates that Americans were living rather comfortably at the time, as opposed to participating in World War I. It is unknown precisely when this poem was written or published, but Gibran’s description conveys the impression that he wrote it before the U.S.’s involvement in the First World War on account of expressing that American life was favorable and safe as if it was not participating in the war. This would stand to reason seeing that the U.S. joined World War I on April 6, 1917, while the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon occurred from 1915 to 1918. In this case, perhaps Gibran wrote “Dead Are My People” between 1915 and 1916, or preceding April 1917. Nevertheless, his

description of America and its citizens reflect envy and bitterness; as if Gibran doesn't quite understand why his people had to die, while Americans were oblivious to the devastation in the world. This dichotomy exhibits entirely separate experiences as well as a disregard for the tragedy in the Middle East from the media. These facts reiterate my theory of Arab disparagement and ignorance within the West.

Gibran continuously acknowledges his feelings of guilt throughout the poem, specifically when he writes, "My people died a painful and shameful / Death, and here am I living in plenty / And in peace... This is deep tragedy" (lines 21-23). These simple lines indicate a troubled conscience and feeling of contriteness; that he, a Lebanese man, is living safely in America, while others from his country are starving as a consequence of their place of residence. He frequently reminds us of this shame, which only accentuates his feelings. However, the manner in which he overly expresses his emotions presents the impression that the poem is prioritizing his guilt (of being privileged) rather than the sorrow he's experiencing regarding the death of his people. By way of illustration, he states,

What can an exiled son do for his
Starving people, and of what value
Unto them is the lamentation of an
Absent poet? (Lines 52-55)

His shame is quite overwhelming, and I question why he harbors such remorse in the first place. All things considered, Gibran was not the cause of Lebanon's period of famine. On the other hand, his anguish is to be expected because while he was conscious of the fact that his people were dying, he could do nothing but remain comfortably in his American home. This remorse

persists throughout the poem: “This is my disaster, and this is my / Mute calamity which brings humiliation / Before my soul and before the phantoms” (lines 70-72). However, I would like to put forth the questions: Why does he say, “my disaster?” Is he insinuating that he is also part of the affected? Furthermore, by referring to this three-year incident as his “mute calamity,” Gibran is proposing that this disaster did not garner any attention or concern from the general public, and thus, those who died from starvation were overlooked (line 71). Perhaps this notion contributed to his excessive grief and remorse because he had no other form of emotional release. In those same lines, I pose the question: why does Gibran feel humiliated by the death of his people? He alludes to this in the lines:

Yes, but the death of my people is
A silent accusation; it is a crime
Conceived by the heads of the unseen serpents...
It is a Sceneless tragedy...And if my
People had attacked the despots
And oppressors and died rebels,
I would have said, ‘Dying for
Freedom is nobler than living in
The shadow of weak submission, for ... (lines 87-95).

These several lines indicate a plethora of interpretations. Firstly, Gibran states that the death of his people was a “silent accusation” (88), and thus, is laying the blame on World War I and its political repercussions. Again, he indicates that this tragedy was silent, perhaps owing to the fact that it wasn’t recognized on a global scale. Recently, this period of famine garnered some

attention on account of the present economic crisis and the concern that history will repeat itself. An article from *The National US* refers to the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon as “a period that is now often just a footnote in the history books” (Ghazal), which corroborates that it hadn’t gained much recognition in the first place.

In the next several lines, Gibran begins accusing the Allies of World War I (including Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and Japan) by describing them as ‘despots’ and ‘oppressors.’ He concludes that his people didn’t die for freedom, and if they had done so, he would have considered it a noble act. According to Gibran, the thousands of Lebanese men, women, and children had suffered a death of “weak submission” (95). With this admission, Gibran uses imagery to further express his beliefs in the lines:

If an earthquake had torn my
Country asunder and the earth had
Engulfed my people into its bosom,
I would have say, ‘A great and
Mysterious law has been moved by
The will of divine force, ... (lines 112-117).

Gibran is likening a natural disaster to one that was an outcome of World War I. With this in mind, he further describes that if nature was the sole cause of his country’s famine, then he wouldn’t have been as resentful. However, though locusts were involved in this period’s desolation, they weren’t the entire cause of the famine. In the second to last stanza, Gibran humanizes the people of his country in an attempt to implore readers to understand the gravity of this period and empathize with him. He laments:

They died silently,
For humanity had closed its ears
To their cry. They died because
They did not befriend their enemy.
They died because they loved their
Neighbours. They died because
They placed trust in all humanity (132-138).

He portrays them as peaceful and innocent while encouraging his readers to recognize their humanity. He further recounts how they suffered and died because Lebanon did not yield to its enemies. He continues,

They died because they did not
Oppress the oppressors. They died
Because they were the crushed
Flowers, and not the crushing feet.
They died because they were peace
Makers. They perished from hunger. (Lines 136-143)

Gibran is alluding to the enemies of the war and how the Ottoman Empire persevered, even at their lowest. Additionally, Gibran's use of imagery manifests his interpretation of his people; he describes them as the flowers that were crushed. Flowers are generally known to reflect innocence and purity, and no one deliberately tramples on flowers unless it is their sole intention. In other words, stepping on flowers is typically an act of chance. Therefore, his lines align with the theory that the Lebanese famine was more of a casualty of World War I than a genuine

scheme to starve the people. In this manner, I question if Gibran is admitting that he recognizes that the Great Famine was simply an unfortunate coincidence, as opposed to a calculated political ploy. Gibran's use of imagery in his work further demonstrates modernist influence. This adoption, collated with his familiarity with the Arabic form, provided him with the apparatus to compose a new approach in his writing. To put it simply,

Kahlil Gibran was an oriental who wrote his most important work in the major language of the Western world. But his mode of thinking and feeling, as well as the form and expression he gave his ideas, is characteristic of the people of the East, and of the Arab in particular. Gibran's constant inspiration was his Arabic cultural and literary heritage.

(Bushru'i 52)

This is arguably the primary reason for his major reputation, especially in the U.S., where Arabs were a minority.

French Occupation of Lebanon

In 1920, nearing the end of World War I, France occupied Lebanon and integrated it into the French colonial empire, thus severing Lebanon's ties to the Ottoman Empire. Seemingly, this action induced Beirut's thriving environment seeing as France contributed its own political aid, culture, language, and literature. For instance, archeology played a significant role in this intermix of culture:

Lebanon and France used each other to *create* and *weave* their identities. The French used "culture," as they were the *mission civilisatrice*, representers of the Lebanese culture and heritage. Archaeological research and its embodiment in museums became closely intertwined in order to re-create and reinterpret the other. (Tahan 196)

In addition, Lebanese schools integrated French and English into their curriculum, and thus, illustrated the permanence of France's cultural and social influence. France contributed a significant change in Lebanon's politics, which was indubitably instrumental to Arab writers' work. Carol Hakim presents an overview of France's responsibility for Lebanon's change in policies by asserting,

Undismayed by the new terms of its mandatory mission, which enjoined it to provide "advice and assistance" to the countries under its tutelage and to "facilitate their progressive development" toward independence, France proceeded three months later to march on Damascus, dismantle the British-backed Arab government set up by King Faysal, and divide the country into two separate entities, the independent State of Greater Lebanon and a Syrian state that was further subdivided into several semi-autonomous statelets. (1689)

Alternatively, this modification within Lebanese (and Syrian) politics operated as an inspiration to Arab writers, seeing as traditional Arabic poetry was fueled by political propaganda. In any event, the French's colonization was not entirely beneficial for the Arabs seeing as it depreciated their own value by undoing previous policies enacted by former leaders and officials.

Following its independence from France over twenty years later, Lebanon maintained its French influence. For this very reason, Lina G. Tahan opposes the claim that Lebanon became a postcolonial country. She states, "A country such as Lebanon may be regarded as postcolonial in the sense that it achieved its independence from France in 1943, but it is still colonial because it remained culturally dependent on France and other Western countries" (196). Tahan is expressing that Lebanon is entirely culturally dependent on France and Western countries and

bears no culture of its own. By making this allegation, she is insinuating one of two things: the first is that Arab culture never truly existed. Alternatively, that after its independence, Lebanon ceased its Arab culture and solely retained French influence. However, I assert that neither is the case. Though Lebanon adopted French culture and continues to glean inspiration from the West, Lebanon maintains its rich Arab culture.

In 1948, roughly five years after Lebanon gained its independence from France, a surge of Palestinians took refuge in Beirut following the Arab-Israeli war. This incident and the circumstances surrounding it enabled the people and cultures to unify through their art and literature, particularly after *al-Adab* and *Shi'r* were established:

the art 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 23)

With this in mind, it is reasonable why Al-Khal directed his attention to bringing forth Western values. If not for the nationalistic artists and writers, then for those who appreciated global trends and the concept of modernism itself. However, I will discuss this shortly.

It seems quite transparent that the 1920s introduced Western influence through political agenda that permeated into literary production. Additionally, this period catalyzed Arabic modernist developments during Beirut's ostensible 'official' modernist period in the 1950s.

Modernism in Magazines

Arabic modernism's temporal parameters have been set between the 1950s-1960s. And while periodicals emerged during this time¹⁰, the little magazine within the Arab world existed well in advance of Beirut's modernist period. Little magazines "were a key context and vehicle for such innovation, resolve, and expressions of community: a meeting point for both major and minor contributors to artistic modernism" (Brooker and Thacker 9). There are numerous Arabic periodicals (both in America and the Middle East) that have yet to receive recognition¹¹. However, it is impossible to squeeze them all into one chapter. Rather, I will explore four little magazines that took place before Beirut's modernist moment.

Al-Funoon (or *Al-Funun*) was a short-lived periodical that circulated throughout New York, America in 1913. In a scene that is unfamiliar to the Arabic language, *Al-Funoon* persisted for five years within the Arab literary community. Founded by Mahjar poet Nasib Arida¹², *Al-Funoon* "[d]evoted to the advancement of modern Arabic literature, it published avant-garde poetry, including that of Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān and Amīn al-Rīhānī, opening the eyes of many readers to Western literature" (Meisami & Starkey 237). *Al-Funoon* aimed to engage Arabic writers and readers in a fresh, experimental Arabic form.

Meanwhile, Egypt's *Al-Sufur* (1915-1924) and subsequently, *Al-Fajr* (1925-1927), were both "characterised by a strong desire for renewal and modernisation of society and literature. Whereas *al-Sufur* had a philosophical and cultural background and treated literature as a means

¹⁰ In this case, *Shi'r* and *Al-Adab*.

¹¹ Including but not limited to *al-Ahrām*, *Rūz al-Yūsuf*, *al-Risāla*, *al-Thaqāfa*, *Mir'āt al-gharb*, and *al-Samīr*.

¹² At this time, the Pen League hadn't been formed.

for change, *al-Fajr* was wholly devoted to the new literature that should be Egyptian, modern and realistic” (de Moor 85). In short, *Al-Sufur* and *Al-Fajr* sought to extend progressive thinking to the Middle East, particularly Egypt. *Al-Sufur*, titled for its meaning “Taking off the face cover” (Baron 370) was founded by liberals who denounced the face veil (Baron 372). Similarly, *Al-Fajr* devoted itself to liberal views. According to M. M. Badawi,

[They] disseminated their new ideas on a wide scale and prepared the ground for well-established and respected magazines to publish short stories, and to encourage authors to write them. It also established new critical criteria in dealing with literature, not as something incidental to political and ideological writing, but as a significant independent activity, underlining the interrelationship between literary work and other media of artistic expression. This shifted the emphasis from the political relevance of the work to its artistic form without sacrificing its social or edifying role [...]. (Badawi 285)

This insinuates that Arabic modernism existed well before the 1950s and experimental work was already occurring within these two little liberal magazines. However, given their limited audience, they were not entirely considered ‘transnational.’ As a result, this contribution was not taken into consideration because of its unfamiliarity in Western, such as the U.S. While the difficulty of locating details and scholarship on either periodical (particularly *Al-Sufur*) shapes the frame of ongoing modernist scholarship, several of the *Al-Fajr* volumes have been made available. In order to efficiently decipher its overall objective, we must examine its contents. *Al-Fajr* contains a variety of topics from Cinema and Theatre to Sciences to Literature. Additionally, within the Literature section, *Al-Fajr* includes a translation of a section from Pierre Louys’s *Aphrodite*.



Figure 1. Louy, Pierre. “Aphrodite.” *Al-Fajr*, vol.1, no.4, 1934, pp. 19-29, University of Bonn.

Al-Fajr's integration of Western literature emphasized its modernity. The assimilation of Western texts is something that Arabic modernist journals would later execute as well. With this in mind, it is more than likely that *Al-Fajr* was also practicing modernism in its own way. If *Al-Fajr* was incorporating practices that were relatively modern and new for the Egyptian scene (and it was), then Arabic modernism existed in one way or another before Beirut's movement in the 1950s. Thus, this would redefine modernism's temporal and geographical framework. Meanwhile, in 1932, an Egyptian poet, Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi, founded *Apollo*, “the first periodical in the Arab world to be devoted entirely to literature and the arts” (Badawi 110) unlike

Al-Fajr. This distinguished *Apollo* from other Egyptian magazines¹³, notably when Abu Shadi introduced free verse to the magazine and “into Arabic literature” (Haidar 26).

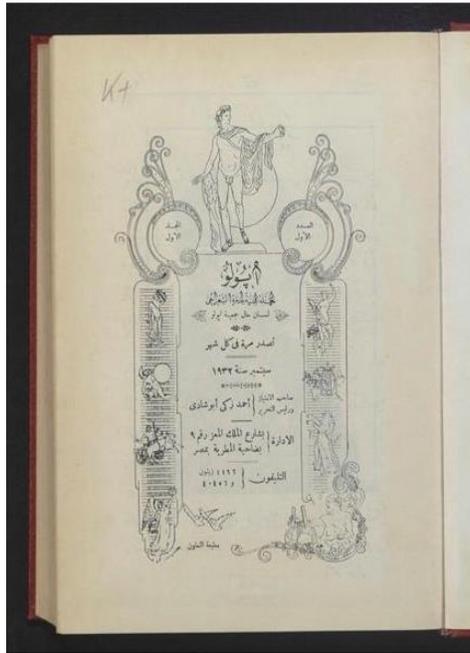


Figure 2. Zaki, Ahmed. “Apollo.” *Apollo*, vol. 1, no.1, 1932, pp.1, University of Bonn.

At the time of the Arabic modernist period in Beirut, two little magazines were especially prominent for their practices: *Al-Adab* and *Shi’r*. *Al-Adab* (1953-2012), a monthly periodical, was established by Suhayl Idris “with a strong inclination towards Arab nationalism and commitment” (de Moor 92). As a result, when *Shi’r* emerged in 1957¹⁴, friction regarding the Arabic form ensued. According to Creswell, “The critics at *al-Adab* consistently portrayed the *Shi’r* group as rival nationalists whose poetic program was disguised propaganda. The political goal of the SSNP, as described by the pan-Arabists, was to deliver Lebanon into Western hands” (53). *Al-Adab* centered itself around the revival of traditional Arabic poetry, which “helped to

¹³ “An important achievement of the ‘Apollo society’ and its periodical was that their influence was not restricted to Egyptian literature and Egypt” (Badawi 126).

¹⁴ 1957-1964

determine the course of modern Arabic literature by publication both of creative work and of criticism and evaluation of contemporary literature” (Badawi 22). The manner in which *Al-Adab* presents itself is quite simple and modern, which only attests to its inclination toward the traditional Arabic form.

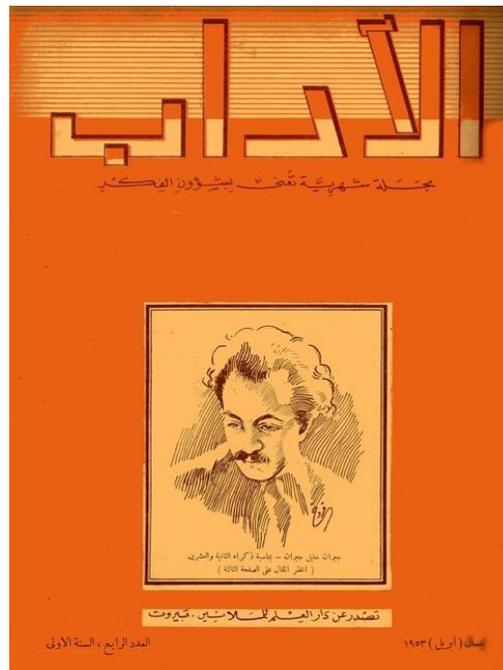


Figure 3. Idris, Suhayl. *Al-Adab*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1953, Beirut, American University of Beirut.

As opposed to *Shi'r*, *Al-Adab*'s editors refused to partake in procuring literary concepts from their Western counterpart. Their meaning of modernism derived from their own experiments that were entirely independent of the West. In other words, their experiments with the traditional Arabic form established their personal frame of modernism. This leads to the question: If *Al-Adab*'s experimentation of traditional Arabic writing was considered modernism, then what was *Shi'r*? To dispute how their completely separate forms contributed to Arabic modernism is inevitable. However, by doing so, it would imply that one is limiting modernism's scope of artistic expression. As it has been made quite clear, *Shi'r* was perhaps, the most influential

unconventional Arabic publication, at the time. But that is not to argue that *Al-Adab* failed to explore innovative concepts. Though *Shi'r* exhibited contrasting beliefs, both periodicals sought to produce a sense of modernity, whether in experimenting with the traditional Arabic form or a new kind of poetry. Badawi simplifies this by explaining,

Arab poetic modernity resulted from two major forces: the influence of the western modernist movement and of the other major experiments that preceded or accompanied it, and the state of Arabic poetry itself at the mid-point of the twentieth century, which responded to intrinsic needs for a change towards a more 'modern' apprehension of experience, aesthetic and otherwise. (132)

Arabic writers who were disinterested in Western modernism practices were wholly invested in modernizing the traditional Arabic form. Meanwhile, others who appreciated the Western movement sought to modernize the Arabic form through alternative means. The intention was roughly the same, but the results were entirely different.

The establishment of *Shi'r* seemed to propel modernism in a way of its own. Yusuf Al-Khal gleaned inspiration from Western modernist concepts during the brief period he lived in America¹⁵, where “[h]e worked in New York in the UN’s information department from 1948 to 1952 and was editor of the New York-based *al-Hudā* from 1952 to 1955” (Meisami & Starkey 429). Following the emergence of *Shi'r*, Al-Khal published his “first volume of mature poetry (*al-Bi'r al-mahjūra*, 1958) [which] open[ed] with a poem, ‘Ezra Pound,’ in which al-Khāl announce[d] to Pound that he ‘would be resurrected *here*, having been crucified by the Jews *out there*’” (429). In addition, his influence of Western modernism is exhibited *Shi'r*’s title, in honor

¹⁵ 1948-1955.

of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, which further attests to the idea that he desired to expand Western influence on Beirut's Arabic scene. Creswell asserts, "The foreign poets who appeared in *Shi'r* were not an international hodgepodge. They were carefully chosen as writers whose work had slipped the bonds of national culture and now floated free in an abstract space of transnational exchange" (29). Despite Al-Khal's appreciation for the West's experiments, however, his outlook on modernism and poetry itself differed substantially. In the West, "The modernist movement is not only divorced from artistic tradition, but also from humanism. It is elitist and focuses on 'select' individuals who are capable of pure aesthetic experience" (Badawi 134); whereas Al-Khal argued that "Poetry ... should be the expression of a truly lived experience where the major objective is humanity" (Badawi 157). Therefore, it can be concluded that Arabic modernism wasn't an extension of Western modernism. Rather, it took inspiration from its counterpart and forged its own cultural experiments.

While *Shi'r* remains to represent Arabic modernism's 1950s period, copies of *Shi'r* are scant and difficult to obtain, unlike Western periodicals. Thus, it is impossible to accurately examine its contents and set against journals such as *Al-Adab* and *Al-Fajr*. While *Shi'r* flourished in some cases, many Arabic nationalists disliked its overall embodiment, and as a result, the anti-*Shi'r* campaign emerged. This organization, led by "several eminent writers and other avant-garde journals, most notably *Al-Ādāb* and its associates" (Haidar 73) denounced *Shi'r* and its Western practices. However, I argue that their criticism of *Shi'r* stemmed from the notion that they believed *Shi'r* wasn't modernizing Arabic poetry in their particular way. Rather, they believed *Shi'r* was completely changing the form. Writers who criticized *Shi'r* simply believed in a separate meaning of modernism.

Lebanon's Politics and Literature: A Reflection

Political affairs, such as World War I and its aftermath, indubitably shaped Beirut's modernist and postcolonial scenes as well as influenced Western views, which could have perhaps promoted inaccurate Arab representations, and thus created prejudice toward Arab writers. However, the purpose of this speculation is not to prosecute or criticize Western counterparts, and nor is it my objective to appoint Arab persons the role of the victim. My intent here is to establish a conceivable basis for the deficiency of studies surrounding works of Arab individuals and determine a fundamental idea for why such inclusivity has not yet been obtained.

That being said, political events also influenced critical literary responses, particularly Kahlil Gibran's "Dead Are My People," in which he laments for the loss of his Lebanese brethren during Mount Lebanon's poignant famine. Gibran's response especially magnifies the significance and severity of this period of famine through his distinct comparison of the American people and Lebanese citizens. This interrelation between politics and Arabic modernism is a critical focal point, notably because Arabic modernists employ poetry and literature to respond to public affairs and express their sentiments. Thus, it can be inferred that much of Arabic modernism's literature is politically impelled.

Furthermore, France's colonization of Lebanon brought a Western influence to the country. Although Arabic modernism acquired influence from the Western world, it primarily retained its own practices as a foundation for literature and poetics. This suggests that many modernists implemented transnational practices, which I'd maintain is modernism's entire essence. For instance, one of the elements that highlighted Beirut's modernist period was Yusuf Al-Khal's periodical *Shi'r*, despite that the concept of the little magazine existed long before the

1950s. This then places Arabic modernism at a different timespan than its initial period. But what could we achieve from this argument that would introduce modifications to modernism discourse? Well, for one, it is the iteration of modernism's transnationalism that really defines modernism's core. In addition, the frequent debate on the meaning of modernism and whether this is a movement that transcends previous theories are critical to modernist scholarship. Therefore, a pivotal way to examine this global movement is through the lens of a scarcely studied branch of modernism, and this is where Arabic modernism enters.

CHAPTER THREE: A FRANCOPHONE ARABIC MODERNIST

The previous chapter explored the way political events have influenced Arab writers and Arabic modernism through an analysis of “Dead are my People,” a poem Kahlil Gibran composed as a response to the 1915 Great Famine of Mount Lebanon. Additionally, I addressed French-Lebanese relations and the effects of colonization in Lebanon, as well as whether we would consider Lebanon postcolonial following its independence from France. Furthermore, Chapter 2 investigated several Arabic little magazines from 1915-1960, such as *Shi’r*, *Al-Adab*, and *Al-Funoon*, among others, and their function in re-establishing the timeframe of the Arabic modernist scene.

This chapter considers Nadia Tuéni’s contribution to Arabic modernism through the lens of postcolonial theory and translation studies. I will introduce this final chapter with a concise outline of the meaning of translation studies and the postcolonial. With this in mind, I will then examine Nadia Tuéni’s poems “My Country,” “Women in my Country,” and “Beirut.”

Translation Studies and the Postcolonial

In his introduction to translation studies, Jeremy Munday expresses, “The practice of translation was crucial for the early dissemination of key cultural and religious texts and concepts” (13). As I will illustrate through a close read of Tuéni’s poems, translated texts present an alternative outlook of a culture that may be perceived in a particular way. Furthermore, Munday explains,

The process of translation between two different written languages involves the changing of an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the

source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL). (8)

Simply put, the process of translating a text begins with the original text, which then surfaces into the oral language. From there, the oral language becomes a translated text, which then is changed into the verbal language. Munday elucidates that “internationalization and communication practices have meant that this traditional conceptualization of translation needs to be broadened to include those contexts in which there is no clearly defined source text” (8-9). However, in the case of Tuéni's French to English translations, it would be referred to as ‘interlingual translation¹⁶.’ Munday proceeds to outline ‘postcolonial translation theory,’ a branch within translation studies:

Though its specific scope is sometimes undefined, postcolonialism is generally used to cover studies of the history of the former colonies, studies of powerful European empires, resistance to the colonialist powers and, more broadly, studies of the effect of the imbalance of power relations between colonized and colonizer. (209)

Though somewhat broad, postcolonial translation theory centers on the influence of postcolonialism within a text. Through translation, there is much to discover about culture and the effects of colonization. Likewise, Susanne Hagemann clarifies its objective by explaining,

The central concern of postcolonial translation studies is the connection between translation and power - more precisely, between translation, colonisation and decolonisation. ... Postcolonial translation studies looks at the history of colonial and

¹⁶ This is “one of the three categories of translation described by the Russo-American structuralist Roman Jakobson (1896–1982)” (Munday 9). The other two categories are ‘intralingual translation’ and ‘intersemiotic translation.’

postcolonial translation, at translation strategies, and at the theoretical basis of translation practice. It explicitly focusses on the question of power and values. (74)

Considering this and given Tuéni's place of birth (Beirut) and the language she writes in (French), it's clear there is a postcolonial matter at play here. I presented an overview of French-Lebanese relations in the previous chapter to preface the political and social developments in Lebanon and prompt an acknowledgment of colonial and postcolonial impact. This relationship becomes especially momentous as I consider Tuéni's poetry and influence. As such, I will begin with a brief introduction of Tuéni before delving into her poems with the context of the postcolonial and translation.

Tuéni and Her Translated Texts

Nadia Tuéni was born in 1935 in Lebanon, approximately a decade and a half predating Beirut's official 'Arabic modernist movement.' She published her first French poetry collection, *Les Texted Blonds*, in 1963, and subsequently became editor of *Le Jour* in 1967. Despite that scholarship does not formally label Tuéni a modernist, her poetry distinctly exhibits modernist techniques, including imagery, similar to notable 'Western' modernist Ezra Pound.

Her collection, *Lebanon: Poems of Love and War / Liban: Poèmes d'amour et de guerre* (2006), illustrates Tuéni's sentiments towards Beirut, its people, and the Lebanese Civil War. Although Tuéni presents her readers with numerous poems about her standpoint, I will examine a handful of poems from her section "Twenty Poems for One Love," including, "My Country," "Women of My Country," and "Beirut." It is crucial to stress that Tuéni's poetry is originally written in French, and thus, the English translations may not be entirely accurate. Christophe

Ippolito centers his article “Intercultural Politics: Translating Postcolonial Lebanese Literature in the United States” on Tuéni’s translated poems and the process of her poetry book. Ippolito, the editor of her poetry collection, then poses thought-provoking questions that challenge the overall concept of translation theory:

Can one translate context and outlook? How is this relevant for the editor’s and translator’s choices, and what role does the experience of the translator play, since most of the time s/he is foreign to at least one of the cultures considered? Can what is taken from a culture be given back to this culture in some way, in the form of responsible, ‘sustainable translation’? What is not transmissible? Is translating merely stealing a culture by fragments?” (181)

While I am unable to compare the English translations to the original French (nor am I able to assess the French text), it is possible to acquire a sense of her poetry’s significance, implication, and essence, which Ippolito questions in his essay. It is additionally critical to recognize and retain cultural factors within Tuéni’s poems. Mustapha Ettobi claims, “When translating literary texts from ex-colonized countries or regions, it is important to preserve their indigenous cultural aspects, in recognition of their existence and value, and avoid the creation or perpetuation of bias” (228). As will be illustrated, Samuel Hazo and Paul B. Kelly manage to successfully preserve Lebanese culture through their translations. However, Ippolito conveys the difficulty in retaining a culture’s experiences through translation:

[S]ome of the poems include words describing elements that are essential to Lebanese culture in general or to the context of the civil war in particular. However, one cannot always point to all of these words and their significance in each context. There is nothing

like translation to give a feeling of incompleteness and imperfection. (Ippolito
“Intercultural Politics” 188)

He then raises his concerns about such translations: “how can one represent Lebanese culture, especially during the civil war? Specifically, are elements of a mythical Lebanon, according to Nadia Tuéni, recognizable, or at least perceivable, in the edited book?” (Ippolito 187). Having said this, let us now examine Hazo and Kelley’s translations of Tuéni’s poems. In her first poem, “My Country,” Tuéni uses precise imagery and metaphors to detail her perception of Lebanon:

My country’s a memory
of men hard as hunger,
and of wars more ancient
than the waters of the Jordan. (Lines 6-9)

Similar to Imagist poets, such as T.E. Hulme, Tuéni’s language alludes to locations and people through powerful imagery. For example, Hulme’s poem, “Above the Dock,” uses intricate imagery to depict a scene:

Above the quiet dock in mid night,
Tangled in the tall mast’s corded height,
Hangs the moon. What seemed so far away
Is but a child’s balloon, forgotten after play. (lines 1-4)

Their poems correspond to one another. For example, Tuéni’s line, “of men hard as hunger” portrays a melancholy image, one that is not unlike Hulme’s line, “Is but a child’s balloon, forgotten after play” (line 4). Both poems further reminisce in a melancholy tone: “My country’s a memory” (Tuéni, line 6) and “what seemed so far away” (Hulme, line 5). Their connection to

the water and nautical themes appears to detail and create images wrought with emotion.

Furthermore, Tuéni relays a reflection of Beirut in the lines:

My country, costumed in uniforms and mere gestures,
condemns a flower for being a flower.

My country has a look of holiness and doubt.

My country is where men die when they have time for it. (Lines 17-20)

The location, Lebanon, seems to exert a major influence on Tuéni, according to the sentiments she conveys in her poems. This is especially notable because these poems were written during a troublesome period for Lebanese residents: the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). In the course of his discussion regarding the obstacles of translating Lebanese texts in the U.S., Ippolito states,

It is extremely difficult to translate the tensions of the Lebanese civil war — the jokes and terror inspired by the bombs, the dangers on the Green Line that then divided Beirut, the gaze of the victim, evenings on the Corniche or Moinot Street, the fortresses and cemeteries of the Druze mountains, the destroyed mosques and churches, torture, feelings, memories, all things that Lebanese readers would share and understand.

(“Intercultural Politics” 181)

This appertains to his earlier question regarding translating culture and its context. Furthermore, the seventeenth line of Tuéni’s poem, “costumes in uniforms and mere gestures,” depicts a potent image of soldiers marching the streets of Lebanon. The next line, “condemns a flower for being a flower” (line 18), is self-explanatory in theory, but there are numerous circumstances to which Tuéni could be referring. One interpretation corresponds to an individual practicing a

religion (such as Islam or Christianity), or specifically a Sunni¹⁷ or Shi'a¹⁸, who has experienced discrimination. The nineteenth line exhibits a form of contradiction and dilemma within the country's demeanor, or the impression it is attempting to present, while the twentieth line seems to emanate the greatest significance and impact: "My country is where men die when they have time for it." This indicates that men, perhaps soldiers, are so preoccupied with the Civil War and fighting for their country that they 'can't' die. The next lines that closely follow reflect Tuéni's feelings regarding political agenda: "My country begs me, 'Take me seriously,' / then turns and goes berserk as a wounded pigeon" (lines 22-23). She ridicules Lebanon for imploring to be addressed with honesty and reverence when it is evident that her country is not 'behaving' as though it wants to be taken seriously. Her manner of confronting Lebanon emphasizes her love and sorrow for it. The lines, "My country lasts because it must" (line 29) portray a sense of endurance that could only be recognized as a component of the Middle East's struggles and encounters.

Tuéni's next poem, "Women of My Country," contains feminist undertones as she addresses Lebanese women:

You reassure mountains,
make men believe they are men
convince ashes of their own fertility
and tell the land that it will never pass away. (lines 7-10).

¹⁷ A person who practices Sunni Islam, one of the two branches in Islam.

¹⁸ A Shi'a is a person who practices Shia, one of the two branches in Islam.

She indicates Lebanese women are strong and that she has the highest regard for them. These lines further denote that women are the spine of any society; that the support and strength derive from a woman's intelligence, compassion, and perseverance. Though Tuéni's poem is explicitly addressing Lebanese women, her words could be applied to women all over the world.

Additionally, the last two lines of her single-stanza poem continue to promote this feminist ideology: "Women of my country, / even in chaos you discover what endures" (lines 11-12). Her love for Lebanese women is blatant and definite. According to Ippolito,

As an author, her perspective as an upper-class woman may differ from that of other women writers were more concerned during the war with the daily life necessities.

However, like them, Tuéni developed a position that often opposes that of men, characterized in the general context of the representation of the war by a strong display of signs of masculinity. ("Engendering Poetic Memory" 78)

As I discussed in Chapter 2, Arab writers are quite known for incorporating political and economic agendas into their poetry, particularly to express their feelings toward them. Evidently, Tuéni is doing the same. Only in this case, she is encouraging women. Whether we are discussing Arabic Modernism, Modernismo, or modernism in America or Europe, the general consensus remains the same: women modernists, though certainly discussed and researched, are not equally and frequently examined as modernism (and white, male modernist figures) itself. For example, "a number of women well-known in the 1920s have been excluded from most canonical studies on modernism" (Camacho 107-108). Therefore, if recognized female modernist figures are being excluded from modernism scholarship, then I doubt there would be a plethora of scholarship on Arabic women writers.

As a female modernist, Tuéni's perspective of Lebanon would be considered distinct in comparison to her countless male counterparts. We can perceive her emotions in her poem, "Beirut." In the first stanza, she states:

Beirut has died a thousand times and been reborn a thousand times.

Beirut of a hundred palaces, Beryte of the stones

where pilgrims from everywhere have raised statues

that make men pray and wars begin. (lines 5-8)

I question whether Tuéni could be referring to Beirut's modernist movement during the 1950s-60s, amidst Lebanon's Civil War, when she states, "Beirut has died a thousand times and been reborn a thousand times" (line 5). Evidently, Beirut's 'death' was a result of the Civil War's destruction and ruination, whereas its 'birth' assumes the form of Arabic modernists and skillful, capable citizens and refugees who contribute to a movement that seems to keep their minds at peace. Another line that further depicts this concept appears to symbolize modernism: "In Beirut each thought inhabits a mansion" (Tuéni line 11). Arguably, Tuéni is referring to Arabic modernism and its influence.

Moreover, the lines "where pilgrims from everywhere have raised statues / that make men pray and wars begin" (7-8) appear as though they are alluding to people practicing one of the religions in Beirut. In simple terms, even though Beirut is located in the Middle East, the majority of Lebanon comprises Christians and Muslims. Although Lebanese people of varying religions live in peace, this matter is, perhaps, one of the greatest sources of political conflict. Tuéni's poem "Beirut" ends with the lines, "Beirut is the last place in the Orient / where man can dress himself in light" (24-25), depicting a sense of freedom that one could find in Beirut, further

linking Tuéni to the Arabic modernist movement. In this case, this poem would lack meaning and significance if we were to apply it to an alternative country.

A Modernist and the Postcolonial

Tuéni's modernist approach redefines global modernism because it leads us to recognize that perhaps anyone can be a modernist; that modernism is not exclusive. It is arguably a globally inclusive movement that writers could participate in if they adhere to the denotation of modernism: "A tendency or movement towards modifying traditional beliefs and doctrines in accordance with modern ideas and scholarship" ("modernism, n.3"). It is the techniques and intentions in modernism that label a figure 'a modernist,' and it is the actions of innovation in literary work.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, following the colonization of Lebanon, the French language was integrated into Lebanese schools as another language. This appears to have impacted Tuéni's education seeing as she is, in fact, a Francophone poet. Having said this, though Tuéni showcases modernist techniques in her poetry, could we consider her an Arabic modernist? Or perhaps a French modernist? In other words, what constitutes an Arabic modernist? Is it the language or the culture? I argue the latter. Despite that Tuéni's poems are in French, they preserve a depiction of Lebanese culture. The title 'Arabic modernism' refers to the language rather than the people of the Arab world, but I maintain my argument that culture defines modernism. Following France's occupation, Lebanon's culture expanded to integrate French values and customs. Thus, people such as Tuéni were brought up in an intermixed culture that became their own and essentially became Lebanon, even after its independence.

In this context, Tuéni is incorporating a country's culture, history, and political agenda. Nadia Tuéni inadvertently expands the boundaries of global modernism by using modernist techniques and modernizing her poetry and integrating Lebanon into the narrative. Through this, she is widening the scope of Arabic modernism. Much like modernism in the U.S. and Europe, location is critical in interpreting and understanding prose and poetry. A Western reader would interpret Tuéni's poems about Lebanon quite dissimilarly from a reader who is somehow linked to (or perhaps has visited) Lebanon. By way of illustration, Western lifestyle and location differ significantly from Eastern lifestyle. Therefore, a Western reader may view the Middle East as the 'Other' will indubitably interpret Tuéni's poems in a way that reflects their views. This political view quickly developed into an economic and social issue that limited Middle Eastern writers to expand their work globally: "In some cases, the difficulties begin with the prejudices against a region of the world. Especially in the current domestic context with regard to the Middle East, it was not an easy proposition to have this translation published in the United States" (Ippolito "Intercultural Politics" 181). On the other hand, many Arabic writers such as Yusuf Al-Khal gained recognition during Arabic modernism's peak in the 1950s because they used Western influence to modernize their literature in their own, separate manner.

Similarly, though not equivalent, through Tuéni's poems, the association between Arabic modernism and global modernism becomes quite apparent. She provides her Western readers with a culture that the West (along with modernism in the West) has yet to thoroughly encounter. Her poetry's notability lies in the fact that they occur in and center on the Middle East. If such was not the case, her poetry, though momentous in its form, would lack this variation of

distinction, seeing as Middle Eastern literature is not as widely discussed in the West as Western literature.

Arabic Modernism and Nadia Tuéni in Retrospect

Nadia Tuéni addresses her beliefs and impressions of Lebanon's political and cultural facets through her poetry. In her poems, "My Country," "Women of my Country," and "Beirut," Tuéni establishes a relationship between Arabic modernism and global modernism, proving that although Arabic modernism exists as its own subset movement, it remains a critical contribution to global modernism. As a result, I argue that Nadia Tuéni is a modernist. By examining Tuéni's poems through a Postcolonial lens, I maintain the notion that global modernism is, indeed, global, despite much debate. Though recognized for her French poetry, Tuéni has contributed to Arabic modernism. Her poems not only transparently illustrate her outlook and thoughts, but they further exhibit meticulous imagery. Contrarily, one could argue that Tuéni could certainly not be deemed as a modernist, particularly on account of writing in French rather than Arabic. However, that would raise the question of whether writing in a different language would alter the circumstances, because, ultimately, a language could not completely define an individual's culture.

In her collection, *Lebanon: Poems of Love and War / Liban: Poèmes d'amour et de guerre* (2006), Tuéni delineates her emotions of grief during the Lebanese Civil War, along with her compassion and love for Lebanon's resistance and resilience. In regard to her poems, "Beirut" and "My Country," Tuéni hints (though whether it is intentional or not is uncertain) at a form of association to Beirut's modernist movement throughout her poems. As a result, it is

unmistakable that Tuéni's poems participate in the redefinition of modernism. Her work incites the recognition that modernism is perhaps not what some critics would argue: a temporal movement. Rather, modernism is a global movement that writers of various cultures could (and have) contributed and participated in. Tuéni's writing expands the limitation of modernism by reflecting on a location that many writers would not consider. With this in mind, Tuéni's contribution appears to be unrecognized and, most importantly, disregarded.

Comprehensive Conclusion: Arabic Modernism and My Closing Thoughts

Critics have frequently debated whether Arabic modernism was an entirely separate movement from 'Western' modernism. However, using my argument that Arabic modernism's temporality isn't a fixed period, I disagree with the notion that it is entirely separate. With the examination of Arabic modernism's temporal and geographical spans, it is critical to investigate little magazines in the Middle East. The little magazine is the central factor in modernism and reveals much about Arabic modernism's period and locations.

Chabot and Greenberg have argued that modernism is a period concept, but I digress with this claim, along with Chabot's view that scholars must solely examine modernism loosely and in a broad sense. If such was the case, modernism scholarship would lack any form of global development. One of the primary objectives of modernism scholarship is to study its intricacies. Otherwise, we could disregard additional scholarships. The study of modernism in various cultural contexts is essential to its meaning and our understanding of it. On the other hand, I concur with Chabot's statement that scholars should consider modernism through culture and language as that will further modernist discourse.

In a similar manner, Friedman's proposition hinges on the notion that modernism must be studied thoroughly in multiple contexts "to map new ways of thinking" (*Planetary Modernisms 2*) to dismiss restrictions in our studies. With the addition of advanced technology, she further theorizes that analyzing and examining past texts will establish original thoughts and possibilities in modernist scholarship. Along with this, Friedman addresses spatiality within modernism studies by proposing that modernists should center their scholarship on global practices, including a myriad of cultures, as well as a wider range of time in history.

Comparable with Friedman, Mao and Walkowitz offer their take on spatiality in modernist discourse by demonstrating a sense of global interconnection and an interdisciplinary approach to modernism that would offer opportunities to further develop this scholarship. They recognize the possibility that modernism's existence could extend to "the late twentieth century or even as far back as the early seventeenth" (738). Although I agree with this consideration, I question how this notion could further affect modernist studies if many scholars have argued that modernism is a temporal movement.

Furthermore, Arab writers frequently establish an emphasis on historical and political events within their poetry. As Creswell and Meyer have discussed, Arab writers are deeply influenced by political, cultural, economic, and social factors, as it has often become a part of their form. This could be corroborated by writers of the Mahjar Movement, who, in this case, were perhaps some of the first Arab figures to influence Arabic modernists with their innovative literary forms and ideologies.

The first chapter investigated modernism's temporality and geographical scope by considering the questions 'When did modernism take place?' and 'What defines modernism?' I

outlined critical arguments in modernism discourse by critics, such as Walkowitz, Chabot, Friedman, among others, to clarify whether modernism truly originates from its temporal period or its literary content. In this case, I have found that the latter emerges as more accurate. In short, I argue that Arabic modernism emerged in the early 1910s and 1920s. I attain this through the analysis of Adonis's poems, "The Banished" and "Season of Tears," among others, before exploring the Mahjar movement and the Pen League, and their influence on Arabic modernists.

In the second chapter, I investigated the political occurrences that affected Arabic writing and modernism, including World War I and its repercussions. In 1915, the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon befell the country, instigating Kahlil Gibran, a prominent Beirut writer, to compose his poem "Dead Are My People." I utilized this poem to interpret the extent of impact to which politics have made on Arab modernists. Furthermore, I examined French-Lebanese relations and the deep-rooted effects of France's colonization in 1920.

This chapter additionally outlined the dichotomy between the Middle East and the West through Edward Said's *Orientalism* and his concept of the Other. I applied these theories to my argument by claiming that it would have been challenging for Arabic writers to construct a literary exchange with the West, even with the means of the little magazine. By examining the magazines *Shi'r*, *Al-Adab*, *Al-Funoon*, *Al-Sufur*, and others, I disputed the theory that Arabic modernists replicated Western ideologies. Rather, I illustrated how Arabic modernists extracted influence from their Western counterpart to introduce distinctive concepts.

The third chapter examined three of Nadia Tuéni's poems from her translated collection *Lebanon: Poems of Love and War / Liban: Poèmes d'amour et de guerre* (2006) with focuses on translation and postcolonial theories. Tuéni's poems emphasize her views of Lebanon

and its political, social, and cultural facets. Her poems, “My Country,” “Women of my Country,” and “Beirut,” highlight the cruciality of Arabic modernism in the discourse of global modernism. This, I argue, makes her a modernist. I argue that although Tuéni is a francophone poet, she is a valuable contributor to Arabic modernism. Ultimately, I believe that culture defines modernism. Though culture and language typically intermingle, it is not always the case. Therefore, Tuéni’s contribution marks her as an Arabic modernist because her poems reflect Lebanese culture and are politically inclined, despite that she is a francophone. Her poems additionally reflect sorrow and compassion during the Lebanese Civil War, which further promotes the redefinition of modernism. Her contributions, among others I examined in these previous chapters, corroborate the theory that modernism is not a temporal movement, but instead comprises transnational writers, cultures, and engagement.

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