Occasional Papers

Theater and Radical Politics in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria: 1860-1914

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Editing and design: Laila Shereen
Editing assistance: Ida Audeh
Layout assistance: Chris Stanton

This paper was originally presented as the Kareema Khoury CCAS Annual Distinguished Lecture on March 18, 2004. This lecture recognizes scholars who have made significant contributions to the study and understanding of the modern Arab world.

Introduction: Setting the Stage

A Curious Affair: The Ferrer Play of 1909

In the last days of October 1909, a play celebrating the life and work of Francisco Ferrer was performed in Beirut.[1] Ferrer, a Spanish social and political activist whose ideas combined elements of anarchism and socialism, had been executed three days before. Ferrer was a pedagogue who had created a modern curriculum and established modern schools in Barcelona based on the principle of "class harmony," a project very similar to the ideas behind the Université Populaire that appeared in France at the same time.[2] Ferrer's ideas enjoyed tremendous popularity throughout the world[3] both because of his pedagogy as well as his ideology, which combined Freemasonry, free thinking, a strong class consciousness, anarchism, and anticlericalism. He became an icon of the world's leftist movements in 1909, when he was falsely accused by the Spanish Church and condemned to death because of his alleged involvement in an anarchist "terrorist" attack. His trial and condemnation triggered demonstrations and protests throughout the world, from Italy to Mexico.[4]

In Beirut, a play about Ferrer was improvised on the spot. Written in four hours by Daud Muja'is and Emile Khuri,[5] the script was promptly memorized by the actors. Remarkably, the cast consisted of sixty people, most of whom must have been nonprofessional actors recruited locally. The leading role was played by 'Aziz 'Eid,[6] a well-known Syrian actor based in Egypt who had a predilection for controversial plays. The cast also included a certain Petro Pauli, a member of the Beiruti intelligentsia and an amateur actor[7] who, a few weeks earlier, had appeared with 'Eid in another political performance.[8] The play, which Muja'is proudly branded the first of its kind throughout the world,[9] was performed by *Jam'iyyat Ihya' al-Tamthil al-'Arabi* on the stage of the New Theater; "it was greatly appreciated by the people who filled its seats . . . the history of the last Spanish Revolution was acted and that of the martyr Ferrer, his imprisonment and condemnation, with an explanation of his principles and those of true socialism . . . the play was written by two local authors so that it serve as a school for the people (*al-sha'b*) who still ignore everything about the principle of general freedom *(hurriya 'umumiyya*), and of general brotherhood."[10]

In the first act of the play, "Ferrer" appeared on stage draped in a banner covered with slogans ("Liberty, fraternity, equality," "No poor ever hungered without a rich man profiting from it," and "Long live the free popular schools").[11] During that act, "Ferrer" gave a speech on socialism (*khutba ishtirakiyya*) that lasted around ten pages, while "the people" on stage "kept interrupting him with screams of excitement . . . asking for freedom and justice, and protesting against the Marrakech campaign."[12] At one point, the battle between the "soldiers" and 'the people' on stage became so heated that some actors were slightly injured.

Intellectuals gave speeches during the intermission and after the play.[13] The poet Shibli Mallat, owner of *al-Watan* newspaper, recited a poem entitled "The Eternity of Ferrer" ("Khulud Freira"); Felix Faris, owner of Lisan al-ittihad and a well-known member of

the Committee of Union and Progress's local branch, explained what socialism was. There were other speakers as well. The audience was delighted; "the play had won a place in their emotions and thoughts which no other play before had ever achieved."[14] The troupe was asked to perform it again on November 21, upon the request of a large number of literati.[15] It is unclear whether this second performance ever took place. What is clear, however, is that members of the clergy[16] were extremely upset by the performance's strong attack on the Spanish clergy for its persecution of Ferrer;[17] it even seems that "*il y eut de nombreuses protestations; et acteurs et auteurs furent cités devant le tribunal correctionnel, qui les acquitta. L'affaire eut du retentissement.*"[18]

The Emergence of a Radical Network in Beirut and Mount Lebanon

The performance of the Ferrer play in Beirut was not an isolated expression of support for leftist ideals. Indeed, there existed an entire network of radical leftist intellectuals in Syria active in Beirut and Mount Lebanon in the first years of the 20th century. By the time of the Ferrer play in 1909, members of this network actively sought to eliminate poverty, promoted ideas of social justice, denounced the exploitation of workers on moral and economic grounds, were fiercely anticlerical, identified with international leftist icons (or at least European ones), and referred to themselves and were referred to as radicals or socialists. Members of this network were involved with the periodicals *al-Nur* (Alexandria, 1904–1908) and *al-Hurriyya* (Beirut, 1909–1910?). They promoted and diffused radical ideas through newspapers, as well as through a wider social network that connected them to the *Nahda* core. This circle was able to formulate ideas and to disseminate and apply them through free reading rooms, schools for workers, and industrial and agricultural exhibitions. More important, members of this circle were profoundly convinced of the primacy of the theater in promoting social justice by denouncing exploitation and educating their audiences about socialism.

In another study, I explored the emergence of leftist networks and the formulation and dissemination of leftist ideas in the three cities under study;[19] here I explain the emergence of the theater as a central organ in the formulation and dissemination of radical leftist ideas and attempt to answer the following questions prompted by the Ferrer episode: why did supporters of a Spanish anarchist in Beirut choose the theater as their medium to express their ideological allegiances? Why was a mere theatrical performance taken so seriously, both by its proponents and its adversaries? More generally, what was the nature of the relationship between social and political contestation and the theater, and how did this relationship evolve between the years 1860 and 1914 in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria? What sort of relationship existed between the stage and radical leftist sympathizers?

I argue that the Ferrer play, in its subject matter as well as in its execution, was in many ways the culmination or epitome of various theatrical trends. This is demonstrated both thematically, in the references to revolutions and to the French Revolution in particular, the appropriation of contemporary events for the stage, the anti-imperialist stance, the virulent anticlericalism of the play, and in execution, as shown in the blurring of the line between audience and actors, amateurs and professionals, the participation of large numbers of "average people" in the role of the Crowd on stage, battling against figures of authority,

and the use of the theater for political speeches and rallies. All these elements of the Ferrer play of 1909 were the result of historical developments that occurred both within the framework of the theater and within society during the period under study. I do not suggest that the theater can be viewed solely as a vehicle for the promotion of radical ideas. Rather, the theater was inextricably linked to the construction, formulation, and diffusion of leftist ideas: that is, not only did the stage reflect the progressive radicalization of a certain intellectual elite and allow it to diffuse its ideas and gather support, but it also provided a unique means of expression, as well as a forum for the formulation of a coherent radical ideology, hence playing an essential role in allowing the construction of a leftist radical discourse.

To explain the reasons and ways the theater came to play such a central role in the construction and diffusion of radical thought, I first analyze the theater's general importance and investigate the place it had come to occupy, both discursively and materially, in the cultural, intellectual, and social life of Syria and Egypt, and specifically in the cities of Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. I then explain how a discourse linking the theater to reform, progress, and civilization and containing seeds of radicalism in and of itself, was constructed by a circle of intellectuals and then diffused through various echelons of the population, where it became dominant and triggered sheer theatrical frenzy. The chapter underlines the radical potential of the theater by examining the vital social transformations that it brought and implied. Among such transformations was the rights granted and appropriated by the population to perform, consume, and thus interpret topics that had hitherto been reserved to specific political and cultural elites. It also examines the effects such phenomena had on the public sphere and the resulting intervention of the Egyptian and Ottoman states and their attempts to control and regulate the theater through closely monitoring both theatrical space and repertoire. After assessing this radical and subversive potential, I analyze the actual politicization and radicalization of the repertoire itself. I argue that certain theatrical themes that appeared around the turn of the century were radical: they challenged the existing class structure and promoted social justice, anticlericalism, revolutions, and the right of non-elites to interpret and participate in contemporary local as well as global social and political events. Finally, I place the emergence of radicalism within the growth of mass politics and show that the theater was not only the most effective tool for the education of the masses, but that it also provided the necessary space for a rising radical bourgeoisie to constitute itself by constructing a coherent ideology that greatly relied on the promotion of an alliance between the middle and working classes. Before examining the specific relationship between the stage and radical politics, however, I begin by assessing the place of the theater in the social, political, and cultural life of Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria.

Theater Fever

Around the turn of the century, Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria were seized by a theatrical frenzy. A plethora of performances were regularly mounted, and people scrambled to squeeze into theaters or simply to congregate in front of a makeshift stage that often consisted of mere wooden planks.[20] Amateur troupes proliferated in schools, literary so-

cieties, or simply among friends,[21] their performances indulgently attended by dignitaries and average citizens alike. One gets a sense of the theater's importance and ubiquity in the lives of elites and non-elites alike at the beginning of the twentieth century in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria through the following measures: the number of plays written or translated by intellectuals and "regular" bourgeois alike; the quest, by average citizens, for rehearsal space; and the sheer volume of pages devoted to discussing theatrical matters in the press or in municipal reports. What were the reasons behind such a theater craze? In the following pages, I analyze the construction, by *Nahda* intellectuals, of a discourse that placed the theater at the center of progress and civilization. Then, I try to explain the dissemination and adoption of this discourse by large segments of the three cities' inhabitants.

The Nahda and the Theater: The Construction of a Discourse

When, in the first half of the nineteenth century, readers in the Arab world discovered Europe through the eyes of prominent literati (*al-Jabarti, al-Tahtawi, al-Shidyaq*), they were subjected to lengthy descriptions of an artistic genre about which they knew close to nothing. For these literati and many others after them, the discovery of the theater in London and Paris (*tiyatro, marzah, marsah*, or *masrah* in Arabic)[22] had caused tremendous excitement and unleashed many thoughts. Tahtawi, wishing to explain this new genre to his fellow Egyptians, described plays as "an imitation of what has occurred."[23] He then proceeded to elaborate: whereas the plays he saw were often entertaining and humorous, they in fact dealt with serious matters: "in truth, these plays (*al-'ab*, literally, games) are serious issues in the manner of comedy (hazl) . . . in them, a human being sees good deeds and bad deeds, the praising of the first and the condemnation of the second, so much so that the French say that it [the theater] inculcates morality (*tu'dib akhlaq al-insan wa tuhadhdhibuha*)."[24]

The moral dimension of the theater to which Tahtawi alluded in the 1830s—and therefore its inherent seriousness—would remain a dominant discourse throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. But what exactly did morality mean and what did it imply? What other traits were attributed to the theater? It seems fitting to begin searching for an answer to these questions by turning to the pioneer of Arab theater and examining his thoughts on the matter. In February 1848, Marun al-Naqqash (1817–1855) gave in Beirut an opening speech to the first ever performance of a play in Arabic,[25] "al-Bakhil," an adaptation of Molière's l'Avare. While praising the progress made by the inhabitants of "our realm" (*ahali biladina*), Naqqash pointed out that the inhabitants of the West (*ahali al-bilad al-ifranjiyya*) were still ahead in terms of "science, art, order and civilization."[26] This discovery paradoxically gave Naqqash hope: "through reading and hard work, perhaps I will understand the source of their greatness . . . and lift the veil off our continuous poverty."[27] The East's backwardness, suggested Naqqash, lay in the following causes: first, the inhabitants of these lands had shed their love for their country and displayed a visible lack of concern for public interest (*'adam al-tafshiya 'ala al-naf' al-'aam*);[28] they were all purely interested in their own private interests and paid no attention to the needs of their fellow countrymen (*abna' jinsihi[m]*). Naqqash contrasted this selfishness with the Europeans' love for their country, which they strove to improve through their actions, notably by spending money and subsidizing worthwhile projects that benefited the country as a whole. Second, Naqqash blamed his fellow countrymen's laziness for the country's backwardness.

This laziness was inexcusable, he argued, because "there is in this realm a very high number of noble students . . . eager and articulate . . . but they are content with their success, and rely on their friends [for any initiative]."[29] Finally, he maintained that progress required patience, whereas in Syria, "everybody is too impatient to plant the seeds today in order to have trees tomorrow."[30]

Naqqash thus equated progress with transcending private interests to serve public interests. What better way to promote and enhance public interest but through the theater? Like Tahtawi, he had discovered during his travels in Europe that the theater was more than entertainment. If plays were "on the surface, [about] entertainment and humor," in reality, they were "[about] truth and reform" (*min dhahiriha majaz wa mazah wa batiniha haqiqa wa islah*).[31] Even the rulers were attracted to the theater, and they gained political wisdom through it. Implicitly, then, it seems that Naqqash was arguing that the theater, by triggering some soul-searching among individual spectators, would ultimately benefit society as a whole, because a truly moral person tamed his selfish nature and did not push for his personal interests at the expense of society's.

Thirty odd years after Marun Naqqash's opening speech, as the theater began to gain ground among wider intellectual circles and notables, his nephew Salim elaborated on the connection between the theater and public interest in a seminal article on "the benefits/merits of plays or theaters," which appeared in *al-Jinan* in 1875.[32] In it, he repeated the argument put forth by Marun, that the reason for and the manifestation of Europe's primacy in the realm of civilization was its early promotion of theater. He also elaborated on his uncle's concept of public interest (*al-nafʿ al-ʿaam*) by introducing the concept of a social body (*al-hay'a al-ijtima`iyya*), which would be the catalyst for progress. The theater would be a vital maker of this social body.

Salim Naqqash began his long article by linking the rise of civilization with man's need to work with other human beings in order to satisfy his basic needs of safety and food. This collaboration between human beings thus led to the creation of a social body (*al-hay'a ijtimaʿiyya*).

> And when the number of human beings increased, so did their needs, and the importance of hay'at al ijtima' increased as a consequence . . . and he who knows about the condition of man in ancient times and his condition now, is bewildered by the progress made by humanity . . . the cause of civilization is the wellness of *hay'at al ijtima'*, without which man would have stayed in his savage condition (*al hamajiyya*). The Europeans knew this before us, and they devised ways to improve it [the social body]. Among these ways [were] theater houses. For the theater is the mirror that shows man a representation (*timthal*) of himself, so he sees his vices (*ʿuyub*) and shortcomings and avoids them . . . People gathered there, and their meetings were devoid of divisiveness and fanaticism (*taʿassub*). They made the theater a means to unite, pushing away that which divided them. And this sometimes brought innumerable benefits, and other times, great damage. This has to do with the difference of principles (*mabadi'*) it displays.[33]

Salim Naqqash thus associated the theater with progress and civilization: progress would be achieved both individually and socially thanks to the theater; individually, through the spectator's heightened moral consciousness, and socially, through the gathering of individuals in front of a stage and their common shared experience of the performance. This interaction between individuals who shared space and spectacle was itself a form of collaboration which made the individual transcend the self, "push away that which divided" him from this fellow spectators, and form a social body. Salim had thus gone a step beyond his uncle's conception of the theater and public interest by identifying a necessary organ in the making of public interest, the social body, and explaining how the theater played a key role in its making. Without a social body, Naqqash argued, there could be no civilization. Civilization (*al-tamaddun*), which was at the heart of Naqqash's concerns,

> means a language that instills in man the morality of urban dwellers (*akhlaq ahl al-mudun*), and transports him from a state of roughness/unrefineness (*khushuna*) and ignorance to a state of sociability/pleasantness (*ans*) and knowledge, but this definition does not encompass all that which we mean when we use the term tamaddun. I say that its more accurate meaning is that of life improvement, and the formation of the *hay'at al- ijtima*'.[34]

Civilization was thus not "merely" about social and individual progress but about life improvement, a philosophical project that was more than the sum of its social and moral parts. Naqqash elaborated on ways the social body could guarantee life improvement:

> We want to specify it (*tamaddun*) even more, by saying that it is a call for the tying of people to works, as well as the reason of their strength and the way to improve their condition. It is also a way to divide their wealth among them with justice (*qust wa 'adl*) . . . Suffice it to say that civilization is the connection of private interest to public interest (*al-amaddun huwa irtibat al-maslaha al-khususiyya fi al-maslaha al-'umumiyya*); that is, man, in his activities, should attend to the interest (*maslaha*) of all the people of his kind (*abna' jinsihi*); where such ties and assistance exist, there will we find civilization, and where we see man tending only to his own interests . . . there will there be roughness/barbarity (*khushuna*) and weakness resulting from the love of the self.[35]

Salim had thus connected private and public interests and spelled out the need for individuals to tend to the interest and well-being of "people of their kind" if they wanted to achieve civilization. But what exactly did Naqqash mean by "people of their kind"? Naqqash suggested the "love of the homeland" as a way to tie public and private interests; he remarked that the Europeans had understood the effect the theater had on strengthening such a feeling:

> the love of the homeland (*al-watan*) is among the best ways to tie private interests to public one . . . this is what people understand, by *tamaddun*,

> which Europeans spread through acting rooms. [These rooms, i.e. the theater] are the means to spread principles which are the basis of the country's progress and its means of civilization. They have achieved great art with their plays (*tafannanu kathiran*), and their rulers have helped them do so.[36]

Naqqash's homeland was not "the nation," but rather a land that welcomed foreigners and integrated them into this homeland.[37] The love for one's homeland implied recognizing what was good for it, including welcoming and supporting those whose work contributed to the creation of a social body, especially through the theater. Hence Naqqash, in a well-thought out argument, moved from the notions of social body and civilization to the love of the homeland. He argued that he, a Syrian, would contribute, through the theater, to leading Egypt on the path of civilization by increasing the Egyptians' love for their country and the creation of a social body. For that purpose, he insisted, the theater's benefits on Egyptian society would only materialize if the performances were in Arabic.[38]

Salim Naqqash's seminal article was the first elaborate expression of the idea that the theater constituted one of the most vital tools for progress, civilization, and the making of a social body. It is not difficult to grasp how reformist Naqqash's conception of the theater was: the theater was essential in shaping a social body without which civilization could not be attained; it bridged individual and social reform and allowed people (as individuals and as groups) in the audience to unite, transcend their divisions, and join forces for the sake of public interest. All these elements were promises of a new society, one which broke loose from an earlier one which, in Naqqash's view, was ridden with self-interest and social divisions. In that respect, Naqqash's vision was perfectly compatible with the general ethos of *Nahda* reformists and supporters—politicians, intellectuals, and notables—who whole-heartedly embraced the theater, just as they embraced the press, as a vehicle for the dissemination of reformist ideas that would lead to the formation of a social body and would thus benefit society.

Indeed, the discourse linking the theater to progress, social reform, and civilization became a dominant feature of the *Nahda* throughout the period under study—even thirty years after Naqqash's article was written, the theater was still hailed as the central institution for the advancement of civilization.[39] One reason that Naqqash's views on the theater were so influential was that he himself was not merely a man of the theater; rather, he was a true intellectual and a prolific author whose writings were taken seriously and were widely read. Not only was Naqqash a central figure in the world of the theater, but he also founded newspapers, was a member of and in close contact with various intellectual networks, and could disseminate his ideas through institutions as well as through informal, noninstitutional vehicles.

Although Naqqash's views on the theater and on society were compatible with the principles of the *Nahda*, Naqqash pushed a more radical envelop: first and foremost, he tied the development of civilization—to which the theater was essential—to wealth distribution, arguing that "civilization . . . is also a way to divide their [the people forming a social body] wealth among themselves with justice."[40] This was most likely the first assertion of a direct association between wealth distribution and civilization in the period under study; the fact that it was made through discourse on the theater is highly illustrative of the inti-

mate connection between the theater and radical thought. Second, Naqqash's efforts to link radical thoughts with the development of the stage were magnified through his long-lasting association with Jamal al-din al-Afghani, the most radical intellectual of the 1870s and 1880s. Indeed, the Muslim reformist also viewed the establishment of an Egyptian theater as the most effective way of promoting radical ideas and raising the political consciousness of the populace.[41]

In summary, the discourse linking the theater to social responsibility, reform, and civilization was constructed and diffused among *Nahda* reformists. Many aspects of this discourse contained seeds of radicalism, and in the 1870s and 1880s, a strong association emerged between the stage and the radical core composed by al-Afghani's disciples. The next section elaborates on the idea of the theater as a maker of civilization and hence as a vital organ for the formulation and diffusion of ideas, was not confined to a handful of intellectuals. Rather, it was a commonly held idea by members of various social classes and institutions who hastened to engage in theatrical patronage, production, and consumption. Across social categories and classes, the theater was universally accepted, in theory and in practice, as a most effective vehicle for the dissemination of ideas promoting social responsibility and reform. However, this omnipresence of theatrical activities could also be potentially subversive and radical, as the next section explains.

Institutions and the Promotion of Theatrical Production and Consumption

Two institutions, the press and the municipality, helped disseminate the idea that the theater is associated with progress and civilization. Indeed, like the theater itself, both were new institutions that emerged around the same period, and their impact on society was shaped and magnified by their overlap.[42] The press adopted and spread the discourse formulated by *Nahda* intellectuals that linked the theater to social change and promoted the use of the theater as a yardstick for cultural progress: "it is known that plays (*al-riwayat al-tashkhisiyya*), called theatricals (*al-tiyatrat*), are amongst the most important indications of progress and one of the most important reasons for the reform of customs and the implantation of historical wisdom in the minds of the people,"[43] wrote al-Jinan. A year later, *al-Ahram* continued on the same subject, emphasizing the role of the theater as a consolidating element of society and expressing its satisfaction with Arabs who acknowledged the theater's importance, studied it, and by doing so contributed to improving their own culture.[44]

The press's support for the theater was not merely discursive and theoretical support; it manifested itself in a "practical" manner by actively rallying the population behind the theater. In the 1870s, when the Arab theater was still a novelty in Egypt, newspapers such as *al-Ahram* published articles explaining the meaning of comedy in the hope of convincing readers to attend performances given by Arab troupes.[45] Later, they published scripts, synopses, and reviews of plays performed, so as to whet their readers' appetites for the actual performance.[46] Newspapers actively sought to promote certain troupes that they deemed talented, especially if they were on the verge of bankruptcy.[47] The press's great concern throughout the period under study was to convince people of means to support the theater morally and financially—a campaign perhaps most tirelessly led in the late nineteenth century by *al-Ahram*, whose owners the Taqlas were themselves particularly interested in

the theater.

The municipality also offered strong support and patronage to the theater and helped promote it discursively as well as practically. The municipality represented a liminal space between state and civil society, in which civic ideas could be discussed in a forum that was somewhat different, yet related, to the state. Unlike other completely civil institutions such as the private press, the municipality was actually endowed with the legal power to implement policies, and its discussions on the theater were more often than not translated into tangible policies that had a significant impact on the practice of the theater and contributed to bringing it to "the masses"—or at least a sizable part of the urban population. To shed light on the vital role of the municipality in promoting the theater and "bringing" it to the masses, consider the case of Alexandria and look at the discussions and decisions pertaining to the theater during meetings of its municipal council.[49] Keep in mind, however, that while Alexandria's case sheds light on the kind of debates on the theater that must have gone on in other cities such as Beirut and Cairo, the theater in Alexandria occupied a particularly privileged position in the life of both the municipality and the city. The uniqueness of the Alexandrian theater was related to a number of factors that were specific to Alexandria: the presence of a significant nonindigenous population (which constituted roughly a quarter of the city's population around 1900) and its over-representation on the city's municipal board, the existence of a group of bourgeois radicals who occupied positions of power in the board, and finally, the presence of a sizable Italian community.

Indeed, the Italian community of Alexandria had historical links to the theater as actors, authors, builders, sponsors, and spectators.[50] The first troupes to tour Egypt in the early nineteenth century were Italian. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Italian troupes were a continuous fixture in Egypt and major port cities of the Ottoman Empire. Their repertoire included not only high-brow classical plays, nor even plays destined for upper-class audiences, but also a lively tradition of *Commedia dell' Arte*, a combination of humor and social criticism. It seems that members of the Italian community in Alexandria were avid theater-goers, and the theater was certainly not reserved for people of means. Another element that helps explain why Alexandria was a hotbed for theater is the fact that many members on the board of the municipality were progressive notables who, among other things, had been instrumental in establishing a unique project in the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean: a free Popular university, the UPL d'Alexandrie, a unique venture that sought to educate workers and whose statement of purpose and curriculum emphasized the didactic role of the theater.[52] Partly because of these factors, many elements that were propitious to the theater in general and to a "social theater" or a theater for the masses in particular, converged in Alexandria. This convergence was to have serious and radical repercussions on the stage.

The scope of Alexandria's theatrical craze emerges through the pages of the city's municipality reports that reveal heated and frequent discussions, indicating just how seriously the theater was taken and confirming how widespread the discourse linking theater and reform had become among Alexandria's multiethnic bourgeoisie. From the very first year of the municipality's formation in 1892, council members, both indigenous and foreign born, engaged in lengthy and often passionate discussions on theatrical subvention: which troupes and theaters should the municipality subsidize? Did the municipality need to fund both European and Arab theaters?[53] How to justify spending the city's money on

plays, when there were more pressing issues to deal with: entire neighborhoods to revamp, sewer systems to expand, and hospitals to build? A number of municipal members began pushing for municipal subsidies for Arab as well as European troupes from 1894 onward. When an Egyptian member of the municipality expressed his desire to have part of the theatrical subsidies channeled toward an Arab theater, his opinion was seconded by a European—although the latter suggested that an "indigenous troupe" be granted one fifth of the sum allocated to its European counterpart.[54] Although the municipality systematically privileged European troupes over local ones, it seems that the imbalance of subsidies decreased over the years, as more subsidies were granted to Arab troupes.[55]

Over time, the reports showed a heightened sensitivity to issues of class. Various municipality members initially opposed the subventions, protesting that the theater would benefit only a fringe of the population, culturally as well as economically.[56] They argued that the money should be put toward popular entertainment such as street fests.[57] Ultimately, however, their reservations were put aside; by the beginning of the twentieth century, the theater had won the support of all municipal members. A number of them tirelessly insisted on promoting theatrical activities that would benefit both rich and poor, Europeans and Egyptians. In 1906, the debate about the construction of a new municipal theater[58] and the choice of the site led various members to display overt working-class sympathies, and the municipality pledged to subsidize the price of seats so that "the theater would be affordable to all."[59] This pledge was formalized in the proposal of 1909: the new municipal theater "would be placed at the service (*mis à la disposition*) of the indigenous population as well as Europeans of all nationalities, while remaining within the reach of all wallets."[60] During this debate, some members of the municipality even tried to turn the theater into an institution serving first and foremost members of the working class: "*M. Stross a très bien exposé le but d'un théâtre qui est un établissement pour l'éducation et le délassement du peuple, où les classes moins aisées en plus grand nombre que la classe riche, viennent s'instruire et se récréer après le labeur de la journée.*"[61]

It is striking that the theater occupied a central focus of discussion during Alexandria's municipal meetings. Certainly no other cultural institution was as carefully examined or triggered as intense a debate as the theater. In the eyes of the municipality, the theater was a city maker, just as for intellectuals of the *Nahda*, the theater was a social body maker. It brought different people together: rich and poor; Egyptians and Europeans; Christians, Muslims, and Jews. It allowed the inhabitants of the city to feel that they were one audience, forming one public that not only attended spectacles, but was itself a spectacle: this diverse public eager to absorb culture was to be the living proof of Alexandria's modern (and European) aspirations.

There was yet another aspect behind the "city-making" quality of the theater. Indeed, the theater generated a capital that would be channeled to various echelons of society and would therefore benefit the entire economy of the city, bringing in tourism and luring investments.[62] The municipality's view of the theater was thus twofold: first, it sincerely believed in the social value of the theater and saw the theater as a maker of society, an educator of the masses, and a generator of public life. It linked progress and civilization to the development of the theater and imputed Europe's superiority through its promotion of that institution—exactly as Arab intellectuals of the *Nahda* had done. Second, the municipality held the theater to be the symbol of and the tool for a certain kind of city; in some ways, it

viewed the theater's relationship to culture as the equivalent of the stock market's relationship to finance; both culture and the stock market confidently asserted the city's adherence to a certain set of modernist and European values.

In an epoch obsessed with the gaze of Europe, Alexandria, like so many other cities of the Ottoman Empire (and of the Habsburg and Russian empires), displayed its modernity with a certain urgency. It had to be able to compete or at least be on par with European cities.[63] Alexandria's municipality associated two central features to "European" and "modern" cities: public consumption of culture and public concern for the working class—or, more accurately, a public display of interest in its fate. In European cities, this second feature had been translated into building low-income houses and striving to educate the masses.[64] It is not difficult to see how effortlessly the theater intersected with all these issues pertaining to class anxiety and modernity. For Alexandria's municipality, the theater served as the perfect display for public consumption of culture, as well as an eloquent reminder of the municipality's campaign to educate the working classes.

From Discourse to Practice: The Popularity of Theatrical Activities

The efforts of the press and later of the municipality helped to ensure that the discourse that made the theater one of the major paths (if not *the* path) to progress was internalized by large segments of the populations of Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, and theory was soon put into practice. The result of this was that the sponsorship, production, and consumption of theater truly permeated all levels of public life. Professional troupes proliferated at a bewildering speed,[65] and so did amateur performances. Virtually every school in Syria and Egypt, local or foreign, Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, was busy putting on performances and inviting parents as well as governors and dignitaries to attend them.[66] Their repertoire ranged from the sacred to the profane, and sometimes these two categories overlapped. Charitable institutions also staged theatrical performances, asking troupes to perform for free for fundraising.[67] This seemed to have been common practice from the theater's early years: the sum raised by Marun Naqqash after his first performance in Beirut of *al-Hasud al-Salit* (some time between 1850 and 1854) went to help the poor.[68] Similarly, the Isreali Cairene charitable society, *al-Jam'iyya al-Khayriyya al-Isra'iliyya*, put on a performance at the Opera in April 1881 to raise money for the poor of its community.[69]

Patronage was not confined to institutions. Often, notables invited actors to give private performances at their houses, the occasion sometimes being the celebration of a birth or a marriage.[70] Notables lent their support to the theater in a variety of ways. Some of them financed the translation, writing, and printing of plays—sometimes in their own printing press—and then distributed these plays for free.[71] Or they would secure a much-needed venue for theatrical activities: most theater houses in Alexandria—and probably also Beirut and Cairo—were commissioned privately, rather than being state-sponsored.

Whereas there is ample documentation regarding theatrical patronage, sources that could shed light on audiences are sorely missing. Who actually made up the audience at most of the performances? Who made up "the general public"? "The masses"? It seems that theatrical performances were generally extremely well attended, and some theaters in Egypt could and often did hold as many as 2,000 spectators.[72] Indeed, *al-Ahram* reported that people scrambled to get tickets for the performance of *al-Hasud al-Salit* by Salim Naqqash's

troupe in 1876 in Cairo; every single seat was sold.[73] Theaters in Syria also held huge numbers of spectators. When, starting in 1906, the Ottoman state lifted a temporary ban on the theater in Syria, Egyptian troupes flocked back to Damascus. Sa`id al-Qasimi and Khalil 'Azm described the inhabitants of Damascus going "*en masse*" to attend these performances.[74] When, in that same city, *Hadithat jarih Beirut* was performed in 1911, the size of the audience far surpassed the theater's seating capacity. According to a contemporary witness, "the room which could fit 800 people contained those 800, with another 300 people standing."[75] An important feature of all these theatrical performances is that they seemed to have brought together people from various ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds. In the case of the aforementioned play sponsored by a Jewish benevolent society, the actors were Jewish, the audience included Muslim high dignitaries, and the training for the actors—who were all amateurs—was provided by the Christian Yusuf al-Khayyat.[76] Audiences during many performances commissioned by charitable institutions included members of the under-privileged classes.

A Potentially Subversive Institution

As shown in the preceding sections, the theater has potentially radical and subversive elements. First, from its introduction into the Ottoman Arab provinces around the middle of the nineteenth century, it had been viewed as a sign and a catalyst of progress and reform; and such an association had become internalized by large segments of the cities' populations. Second, the theater created a public that was most likely more mixed religiously, ethnically, and socio-economically than that of many other artistic or cultural gatherings—or, at least, it had a strong potential for bringing together individuals, groups, and classes that mingled less with one another in other settings. This new public could engage in defining itself and make its own public sphere; through the theater, its members could also (at least in theory) communicate across class and ethnic divisions in a space that was not defined by state or religious institutions. There were also other potentially subversive aspects to theatrical production and consumption as it developed in the Ottoman Arab provinces between 1860 and 1914: first, the fact that the theater, in the period under study, did not become the exclusive fiefdom of professionals; second, the making of a "trans-national" network of dramatists, continuously on the move and specifically between Egypt and Syria; third and related to the previous point, the special role played by Syrians in the world of the theater and in the formulation of radical, leftist thought in Egypt; and fourth, the theater's contribution to the public sphere, and particularly through the proliferation of private theater-houses that offered an added space that could potentially be used for extra-theatrical activities.

How exactly did all these features contribute to the theater's potential subversiveness and radicalization? The appropriation of the stage by a general, nonprofessional population—as illustrated by the efforts to found a theater in a working-class suburb of Beirut[77] and the establishment of an amateur theatrical association by employees of the Egyptian post in Alexandria[78]—meant many things: the access of "the masses" to a modern, reformist institution, their acquisition of a theatrical repertoire that was very often radical in and of itself, and, most subversively, the legitimacy to interpret and adapt a script and the right to improvise its own scenarios. A western genre whose production was initially reserved to an

educated elite, the theater had let loose a middle-class and intellectual culture onto a population that was subjected to this culture's hegemony at the same time as it was actually empowered to dissect, analyze, represent, and subvert it. As such, the theater was not only the vehicle for a dominant elite to disseminate its ideology, but also the means by which commoners appropriated elite culture. It also provided contesting and marginalized groups, and especially disgruntled workers, a space for gathering and holding political meetings.

Another potentially radical feature of the theater in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may have been the perpetual movement of actors between Syria and Egypt and the formation of training and recruiting networks.[79] Because Arabic performances had begun earlier in Syria (1850s) than in Egypt (1870s), Syria was a "natural" recruitment pool for actors. Many troupes based in Egypt, such as Qabbani's, recruited actors and stage designers while on tour in Syria and brought them back to Egypt.[80] This was particularly true for actresses:[81] it is said that Qordahi, returning in 1894 to Alexandria from a tour in Syria, brought back with him eleven actresses.[82] A great number of actors and actresses recruited or trained in Syria opted for Egypt. By the turn of the century, there was a plethora of Syrian troupes in Egypt. Some remained there on average two to three years, but others achieved great fame and formed schools of acting.[83] Professional actors, Syrians and non-Syrians alike, maintained a strong connection with Syria, went on tours there, and even spent entire summers in Beirut and pleasantly cool Mount Lebanon, fleeing from the Egyptian heat.[84] The troupes moved constantly between the two provinces, creating a repertoire,[85] a language, and a network of people, all of which continuously circulated.[86]

The movement of people, the establishment of an actors' network, and the making of a transnational repertoire and of a transnational *popular* culture that went beyond merely local issues all seem to have encouraged the theater to deal with radical themes. Perhaps this was partly due to the special relationship which developed between certain "stars" specifically and members of a reformist middle class in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria.[87] Many famous actors, such as ʿAziz ʿEid or Salama Hijazi, were recognized by their contemporaries as *Nahda* intellectuals; they frequented learned circles and were close to the major intellectuals and reformists of their period. ʿAziz ʿEid, in particular, seems to have had strong ties with Beiruti radicals; in the span of a few weeks, he held the leading role in two political plays performed in that city in 1909.[88] Given that ʿEid and his troupe performed a play entitled *The Masons* in Cairo[89] (one of the performances took place in Hijazi's theater) and given his involvement in the Ferrer play a couple of years after that, it is also highly likely ʿEid was a Freemason and had close contact with Freemason circles in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. Iskandar Farah also seemed to have had serious radical connections: more than once, he put his theater at the disposal of striking workers and their middle-class representatives and spokesmen. Furthermore, his plays, which were clearly politically sensitive, were often forbidden or interrupted in mid-performance by policemen, especially around 1909–1910.[90] It is worth noting that Salama Hijazi, Iskandar Farah, and ʿAziz ʿEid had worked together at various points in their careers.[91]

Finally, the emergence of the theater provided an additional public space which was to significantly strengthen and expand the public sphere and hence bring forth potentially subversive and radical changes. The production and consumption of plays and the new kind of crowd which the theater "created" had significant repercussions on the public sphere, because it implied the public's discussion and interpretation of topics hitherto re-

stricted to certain religious and political elites. Moreover, the creation of a new geographical space spanned by the theater contributed to the expansion of the public sphere. Indeed, activities within theaters and on stage were by no means confined to theatrical performances, and theatrical locales often served as a stage for political speeches, rallies, and gatherings.[92] Some of these speeches were improvised: after one politically charged play on Cretan independence, one spectator was "moved by the spirit" and broke into a political khutba, "giving an impassioned speech in which he mentioned freedom and demanded it . . . the excitement increased among the spectators . . . the chief of police stopped the speaker from finishing his speech . . . then he took [him] along."[93] Other speeches might have been more rehearsed, such as al-Afghani's famous speech in Alexandria's Zizinia Theater in May 1879, in which he is said to have advocated the separation of political and religious authority in Islam.[94] The Egyptian nationalist leader Muhammad Farid recalled making his first major speech at Shaykh Salama Hijazi's theater on Junaynat al-Bahri street in April 1908.[95]

Like older spaces such as coffeehouses, the theater was vital for the construction of a working class because it provided the necessary space for the development of a working-class public sphere.[96] Theaters provided a locale for workers, strikers, and labor union organizers, all of whom seemed to have made it a habit of meeting there.[97] In March 1902, the Cigarette Workers' Association, composed of both local and foreign members, met in Alexandria's Tiyatro 'Adnan, while in 1908, its Cairene branch opted for Iskandar Farah's theater on 'Abdulaziz Street.[98] Similarly in 1911, striking tobacco workers negotiated the terms of a settlement with their employers in Cairo's Harmonia theater.[99]

The Need to Regulate and Control Theatrical Space

Given the potentially subversive role that the theater could and did indeed play, it is not surprising that the state sought to control it, regulate access to it, and monitor its repertoire. In fact, both Egyptian and Ottoman states tried initially to rid themselves from the subversive potential of the theater by banning it altogether. When the ban was lifted, the authorities attempted to regulate it. In Egypt, the Ministry of Education issued a decree in February 1888 forbidding students from participating in theatrical activities. The reason it gave for its crackdown on the theater was its concern to preserve social order.[100] It claimed that the students' excessive attraction to the stage was affecting their academic performance, leaving the state with no option but to forbid students from participating in this "unseemly profession" and threatening them with expulsion from school.[101] The argument that the theater posed a serious threat to the existing social order was not confined to the state. According to the authors of *Qamus al-sina'at al-shamiyya*,[102] actors and theater directors in Syria were paying so much attention to their profession that social chaos was imminent: places of performance became overly crowded—hence turning into both health and security hazards—and moral havoc ensued, as "many corruptions (*mafasid*) resulted from it: the craftsman who worked all day would spend a day's salary on the theater, leaving his family to starve."[103] These arguments were very similar to those put forward during the seventeenth century against coffeehouses, then new and popular spaces in the Ottoman Empire.[104] Indeed, both spaces were attacked by their opponents for serving the "opium of the masses:" coffee, tobacco, and plays were all avidly consumed, dispossessed the poor from their money, and made the masses lazy and unproductive.[105] The social chaos triggered

by the theater, claimed the authors, justified government intervention and the subsequent banning of plays. For reasons that remain unclear, however, the banning was short-lived, and the state decided to try and control the theater instead, by regulating the space within it and prohibiting the performance of selected plays.

In Egypt, the first article of *Nizam al-masrah* (1874) strictly ordered that "the theater be placed under the supervision of the local authorities, regardless of his owner."[106] Then followed a series of articles spelling out the proper conduct for both actors and spectators:[107] actors had to show respect for the public in their gestures as well as their dialogue; whoever broke this rule would "be tried and put in jail immediately after the end of the play."[108] Similarly, spectators had to reciprocate by remaining silent: article two stipulated that "whoever does any noise . . . for one reason or another . . . will be immediately kicked out."[109] This would serve as a first warning: if the culprit repeated this breach of etiquette, "he will be [permanently] forbidden entry to the theater."[110] Article four elaborated on the concept of noise control: it specified that it was absolutely forbidden to "whistle, or produce noise by banging with a stick or with feet, or *tashwish* ("interference," mostly whispering loudly). Another article categorically forbade smoking in the theater. Furthermore, the state, being prescient enough to realize that it lacked the imagination to think of all the ways in which order could be threatened in a theater, wisely added another clause: "in cases not mentioned and not legislated, the necessary procedures will be taken, depending on the kind of violation."[111] Finally, for added protection, just in case all these articles did not dissuade potential trouble-makers from misbehaving, the state ordered that "eight soldiers, or shavush [be] posted inside the theater, to implement orders given by the chief of police."[112]

A couple of decades later, when municipalities had been put in charge of regulating all spaces within a city,[113] another set of laws completed the control over the theater: in Alexandria as in other cities in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, the *Règlement sur les théâtres* of 1904 repeated the same restrictions regarding noise control; even more categorically, it insisted on the moral content of plays performed, stating that "all shows and all representations of an immoral nature will be formally forbidden. The police have a right to suspend representations or shows of this kind."[114] The new *Règlement* also stipulated that "no theater could be erected without the municipality's previously written authorization."[115]

Banning and censorship were other tools with which the state exercised its control over the theater. The Egyptian Règlement sur les théâtres (1904) ordered that "prior to the performance, every theater manager should submit the repertoire of shows and representations . . . to the city's governor, and get his approval."[116] Similar measures were adopted in the Ottoman Empire generally and in Syria specifically:[117] *Al-Ahram* reported that a letter was dispatched from Istanbul to the vilayet of Beirut, ordering that "political newspapers . . . be monitored /censored (turaqab) by the Ministry of information . . . and theatrical plays . . . be sent to the Asitane to be monitored there (*turaqab*) before they are performed."[118] These measures, however, did not mean that the dichotomy between approved "good, moral plays" and rejected "bad, subversive, immoral plays" was clear-cut; in fact, the history of censorship and banning is much more complex than it seems to be. Many if not most plays written between the 1880s and 1914 probably never saw the light of day—they were either not published or not performed—and certainly quite a few plays were performed only once before the government decided that they were dangerous and therefore ought to be banned. However, this does not mean there was necessarily a merciless logic or a master plan de-

ciding the fate of plays. Many a play that ought to have been banned in Egypt—because it truly contained subversive material, either of a nationalist, pro-constitutional, or a leftist nature—was not, whereas some seemingly innocuous plays were.

The state gave itself the legal right to seize control of the new space generated by the theater as well as the theatrical repertoire; however, whether it chose to apply the law systematically and whether it could always do so is a different matter. Regardless of whether the Egyptian and the Ottoman state succeeded in controlling theatrical space and repertoire, the elaborate infrastructure of control that had been erected is significant in and of itself. Thus, the government's decision to ban certain plays, interrupt others in mid-performance, or simply close down one theater or another may be viewed as an indication of the theater's real or perceived subversiveness and radicalism. Furthermore, as previously suggested, the theater's impact on the public sphere was magnified by the rise of other new civil institutions and most specifically the press. Indeed, like the theater, the press had appropriated the right to present, discuss, and interpret local and global themes and events that had hitherto been reserved to limited spaces of discussion, determined and monitored by the state. The press often leapt to the theater's defense if it felt that the state was threatening this newly carved public domain by intervening in theatrical affairs.[119] For instance, many newspapers vehemently disapproved of censorship and of police interventions during theatrical performances, warning both state and population that such measures were the first steps toward tyranny.[120] The printing of the state's decision to ban a play or intervene during theatrical performances rendered such a decision public, and it made the state accountable for its decision to the public—or at least the reading public. The audience that cared about such decisions became much larger than the limited number of individuals directly affected by the banning. The publicity of the state's decisions allowed the theater to gather support from the population, as illustrated in the case of the *Danishway* play, which revolved around a shooting of Egyptian peasants by British soldiers: when in 1908 the play was banned suddenly by the state after it had been performed for months, its author addressed a letter to *al-Ahram*, "reporting" to its editorial staff that the Ministry of the Interior had issued a decree prohibiting the play's performance.[121] *Al-Ahram* published the letter and openly expressed its solidarity with the author, at the same time as it rallied support from its readership.[122]

Radicalization of Theatrical Repertoire

From Social Theater to Radical Theater: The Politicization and Radicalization of Theatrical Repertoire

By the early twentieth century, a potentially radical discourse linking the theater to profound reform had become widespread and internalized in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. This discourse was accompanied by new and potentially subversive practices among actors and spectators. Did this radicalization manifest itself through changes in theatrical repertoire in Egypt and Syria? How can we "quantify" it? Did certain themes emerge at one point and become predominant? Were there differences in the content of plays performed

in Syria on the one hand and Egypt on the other? What about the audiences' responses and reactions to theatrical performances? What light do they shed on the radicalization of theatrical repertoire and that of society generally? How can we measure an audience's "radicalism"? Unfortunately, because we lack sufficient information concerning the performances of these plays, the majority of these fundamental questions cannot be satisfactorily answered. Indeed, most scripts of the period are no longer available, and many plays were performed without a script; we therefore have no way of analyzing their content. Despite all these difficulties, and on the basis of the limited number of available texts from the period, information concerning their banning, and titles suggesting the themes of the plays, it seems that, between 1860 and 1914, the subjects addressed in theatrical performances became increasingly political and radical. Moreover, the audience's reaction to theatrical performances appears to have followed a similar pattern.

The first plays performed in Arabic in the mid-nineteenth century had been translations of European plays adapted to a local setting—that is, names of characters were Arabicized, local references introduced, and songs added.[123] These adaptations were usually based on works by three seventeenth century playwrights—Molière, Corneille, and Racine—which form the essential of the French theatrical canon. Later adaptations around the turn of the century included translations of Shakespeare as well as of classical Greek authors, such as Euripidice and Sophocles. As such, the fact that the first performance of a play in Arabic was an adaptation of Molière's *l'Avare* reflects well a trait that characterized the Arab theater in its first decades. Most plays, both translated and "freshly composed," were morality plays revolving around a character's negative trait that was exposed and condemned, such as avariciousness, greed, or dishonesty. Such plays were often set in the classical Islamic era, drawing their inspiration from, or literally adapting for the stage a story from, *A Thousand and One Nights*.[124] Their format was often akin to operettes, in the sense that the historical context was quite hastily brushed and the focus was on the characters rather than the historical setting, even when the play claimed to be a historical one.[125]

By the 1890s, plays adapted as well as freshly written had become more decidedly social, critical, and political.[126] Eighteenth century French Enlightenment works were translated and adapted to the stage or served as inspiration to plays set in a local context but dealing with the same topics. Voltaire's works and adaptations of J.J. Rousseau's novels into plays were extremely popular.[127] European (mostly French) contemporary or near-contemporary novels were also widely translated and adapted to the stage, including the work of Victorien Sardou.[128] Significantly, among the most popular plays performed in the three cities of focus here in the early twentieth century were stage adaptations of Alexandre Dumas's work, many of which were social critiques calling for class equality. Among Dumas's most popular adaptations were I*bn al-sha'ab, Nubugh wa ikhtilal, aw riwayat fannan*,[129] which were performed from 1905 to 1907 in Egypt and Syria.[130] Dumas's work was translated by Farah Antun (1874–1922), one of the leading radical and socialist thinkers of the *Nahda*, whose contribution to radical theater was enormous.[131]

At the same time, plays freshly written pointed to a shift within the theater's perceived mission, as the main theme moved from individual redemption to social reform. More accurately, the link between individual and social reform had been made explicit, and the theater sought to bridge the private and the public and to make the private part of the public domain. Under the guise of rehashing the same old popular stories, the stage

was actually presenting didactic plays that bluntly exposed the problems riddling Egyptian and Syrian societies: class rigidity, patriarchy, and the need for women's education.[132] One monologue, entitled *Fatat al-'asr* (The Contemporary Girl), called for female education while criticizing bourgeois values: "by education I do not mean embroidery, piano or drawing; leave such things to the people of Paris. My desire is that the girl be . . . able to read and know many things in writing and cooking"; it wisely concluded, "education is better than guineas, it never abandons those who have it."[133] Other plays, such as Isma'il 'Asim's Sudq al-ikha" (The Honesty of Brotherhood), were more overtly political in nature, criticizing Egyptian society's blind imitation of the West, condemning western education, calling for the establishment of Egyptian girls' schools rather than western schools, and promoting the teaching of science in Arabic rather than western languages.[134] Perhaps the apogee of "social theater" was reached by Farah Antun, whose work promoted a combination of anti-imperialist,[135] Arab proto-nationalist and socialist values[136] and advocated social and moral reforms through the depiction of vice and especially the seduction of young women, gambling, and drinking. As I demonstrate in my analysis of the ever-increasing attempts of the reformist middle-class to build an alliance with the working-class, many plays promoted a strongly anticapitalist message, in which "Big Business" through the stock market, banks, and real-estate speculation, "usurped" the right of the middle and working-classes to access their country's wealth.[137]

Significantly, topics of social justice, such as the call for wealth redistribution and criticism of rigid class structures, were almost never tackled independently or in isolation from larger issues. Rather, they went hand in hand with a larger reformist agenda that included criticism of the East's facile imitation of the West, the call for curbing the power of local and foreign churches (or even a frank attack on them), the promotion of female education, and the demand for an Ottoman constitution. Reform was therefore a "package" in which class issues were but one item. Social radicalism, as it emerged in these cities but also in many other parts of the world at that time, invoked this combination of issues. These causes were all interconnected in the minds of their promoters and accepted as such by the wider public. There were many implications for this plethora of causes presented and defended together. First, this packaging helps explain the broad support for radical ideas among a certain reformist but not necessarily radical public; indeed, if social justice was one cause among many—and very often, not the most prominent one—it became more "diluted" and hence more palatable for the general bourgeois public. Second, because class issues were almost never extracted from a larger reformist agenda and singled out during the period under study, there did not develop a discourse focusing exclusively on class at the expense of any other category (ethnic, national, clerical or anticlerical, and so on). More precisely, if such a discourse did appear, it was short-lived and relatively unpopular. Hence, causes such as the Ferrer Affair could trigger tremendous passion in Beirut in 1909 because they combined a critique of existing social hierarchies with a vociferous anticlericalism and an attack on European colonial expansion.[138]

Staging the Revolution

Several specific themes were addressed by the theater, as it became progressively more politicized and radicalized in the first years of the twentieth century. One such theme

was that of the Revolution, and especially the French Revolution.[139] In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the *Marseillaise*, probably the strongest "signifier" of the French Revolution, had been appropriated and adapted to the local stage (or, at least, its tune had been).[140] By the early twentieth century, a number of plays, adapted from French authors,[141] emerged on the market and became clear favorites in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria.[142] Among the figures who contributed most to bringing the French Revolution home was Amin al-Rihani, whose study of it came out in 1901 and was much circulated, read, and discussed.[143] Perhaps the most important "advertiser" of the revolution was Farah Antun who, through the pages of *al–Jami'a* (1897–1906), the periodical he founded in Alexandria, helped his readers discover "a new world . . . the world of European literature which we did not know before . . . Arabic literature was that of authority and tradition and customs whereas . . . *European literature, especially French literature, was that of the revolution* . . . the literature of the mind that feels and of the heart that thinks, the literature of Voltaire and Rousseau and Diderot."[144] Most notably, Antun's translation and adaptation of *Ange Pitou*, one of Dumas's novels on the French Revolution, was to leave a lasting impression on all those who read it. In Salama Musa's words: "[I did not] know of a single conscious person who did not read this story [*Ange Pitou*] and who was not transformed by it and by the rest of Antun's work."[145]

More than merely reflecting the growing concern and interest in the French Revolution among intellectuals, the stage was actually fundamental in allowing for and even pushing for the radicalization of a certain group of intellectuals. This radicalization came precisely through an internalization of the French Revolution and the intellectuals' participation in the Revolution as spectators and actors. Thanks to the theater, radicals and aspiring revolutionaries throughout the Ottoman Empire began to engage in role-playing on stage, assigning to themselves the roles of Saint-Just, Danton, and Robespierre. This internalization of and apprenticeship in the revolution, first conducted through the performance and "first hand experience" of the French Revolution, gave the "Saint-Justs" and "Robespierres" of Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria a preview of mass leadership. Not only did the stage serve to disseminate these ideas to a larger audience, but it also allowed the masses to learn their part in the Revolution and rehearse their role as the revolutionary Crowd. By being on stage or in the audience witnessing a revolution, revolutionary leaders as well as the masses learned their roles and internalized the revolution's inevitability in the path toward human progress. The theater was thus pivotal in allowing radical actors and playwrights as well as the masses to imagine, rehearse, live, and glorify the revolution.

Indeed, and partly as a result of the theater, some time around the turn of the century the French Revolution stopped being a thing of the past. Whereas a previous generation of Ottoman Turkish and Arab reformers had referred to the principles of the French Revolution (or more accurately, to the values of the Enlightenment), called for their application in the empire through the restoration of the constitution,[146] and conceived of the French Revolution as the pivotal moment in history and its point of reference, a new generation was emerging that not only engaged with the principles of the revolution but actually lived and internalized 1789 by identifying individually and associating others with the heroes (or even the villains) of the French Revolution. One letter written by Shibl Damos to Amin Rihani in 1901 captured precisely that state of mind, as the author expressed his wish that he might live to see his own (Ottoman/Syrian) revolution: "Will we be able

to live to see this great sight, will I survive to see you its Danton, and I its Robespierre, but differently from what Danton and Robespierre were for the French Revolution. I am dying for something similar to happen, but . . . I fear that [we will have to wait a long time for the revolution]."[147] Perhaps even more telling is that when the Unionist coup was proclaimed in 1908, many people broke into the *Marseillaise*.[148] In this respect, Hannah Arendt's extraordinary analysis of the impact of the French Revolution on Russian revolutionaries certainly applies to some of the new radical reformists in the Ottoman Arab provinces:

> What the men of the Russian Revolution had learned from the French Revolution—and this learning constituted almost their entire preparation—was history and not action. They had acquired the skill to play whatever part the great drama of history was going to assign them, and if no other role was available but that of the villain, they were more than willing to accept their part rather than remain outside the play.[149]

The internalization and staging of the French Revolution was in fact a dress rehearsal for the imminent and much awaited Ottoman Revolution.[150] Sükrü Hanioglu has written of the Young Turks' "preparation for a revolution," and indeed around 1900 and throughout the empire, a radical fringe among reformists—including the circle around Rihani—began seriously investigating the concept of revolution in order to set the stage for the forthcoming revolution, Ottoman or otherwise. George Hubayqa,[151] a friend of Rihani based in Cairo, informed him in a letter that he had been "studying the subject of revolutions; how they are brewed (*tutbakh*) and who makes them,"[152] and was trying to get information on the following questions: "how is it possible for an *umma* to revolt (*tathur*); what does it need in terms of money and knowledge and experts . . . how is it possible to establish a new government."[153] Having identified these topics as being "among the most important topics which reformists should know about before they start shouting . . . for revolutions and encourage people to bear arms," he asked Rihani to send him a reading list and some books.[154]

If these thinkers could only fantasize about a revolution in the first few years of the twentieth century, by 1908 the dream had become reality. The Young Turk revolution brought with it a constitution, general euphoria, and a series of plays celebrating it onto the Egyptian and Syrian markets. Many of these plays were the work of Syrians and specifically well-known Syrian intellectuals in Egypt; they were performed both in Syria and Egypt and enjoyed great popularity. Antun Gemayyil's *Abtal al-Hurriyya*[155] and Najib Kan'an's *Fatat al-Dustur* were among the most popular of that genre; it is said the latter's depiction of Midhat Pasha provoked great enthusiasm from the public.[156] "Regular" people were recruited beforehand to act in the role of the revolutionary crowds or the people's army in these plays, just as they had been recruited for the performances of the French Revolution and others.[157] One of Rihani's correspondents assured him that if he wished to have his play on the 1908 Unionist coup *Abdulhamid fi Atina* performed in Zahle, "all of Zahle's inhabitants will be your soldiers."[158] The battle on stage between the "soldiers" and "the people"—the great majority of whom were amateur actors, recruited from among the population—became so passionate during the Ferrer play that some of the actors were slightly injured. The line between audience and cast would become even more blurred when the audience, forgetting itself, would suddenly erupt onto the stage and join the revolutionary crowd there.

The popular participation in the staged revolution might have been one of the reasons for the Young Turks' opposition to the performance of plays celebrating the 1908 revolution and Abdulhamid's dethroning. Indeed, *al-Dustur al-'uthmani*, denouncing Abdulhamid's spying network and celebrating the Constitution and the Unionist coup, was suddenly banned in October 1909, after many performances and having enjoyed great popularity. Even more strikingly, when in 1908 Amin Rihani decided to stage his play *al-Sujana aw Abdulhamid fi Atina* celebrating the end of Hamidian rule, he encountered great opposition from Unionists in Beirut. Pleading with the president of the Beirut Commercial Court for assistance, Rihani argued that "Abulhamid is today like any other prisoner. Why can't we perform his role on stage, so that people in the future will know about his bad deeds?"[159] Part of the answer perhaps pertained to the Unionists' deep suspicion of the masses and revolutions.[160] For them, the staging of the constitutional revolution presented a terrible danger: not only did it grant the masses a role as "the people," but it also made them participate in the performance—and hence discussion and analysis—of contemporary events.

The Appropriation of the Contemporary by the Stage: The Theater as a Press for the Masses

Besides performing the Revolution, a new trend had appeared on stage in the first decade of the twentieth century, and specifically around 1907–8: the performance of contemporary events, both local and international.[161] The theater had abandoned seventeenth century France and Abbasid Baghdad and turned toward the present. Plays were set in twentieth century Alexandria, Beirut, Istanbul, or Barcelona, commenting as much on large-scale international events such as Beirut's bombardment by the Italian fleet in 1911, as on the daily practices of Alexandria's rich and famous. One monologue entitled *al-Bank al-Zira`i* (the Agricultural Bank)[162] bluntly named and denounced the Alexandrian bank's owners, the Susa brothers, as "silk-clothed pashas" who "steal the money of the poor and drink people's blood with their meat."[163] Thus, the stage served as the press of the masses, offering access to information on local and global political developments. At the same time, it granted non-elites and aspiring elites the right to participate in the making of their own history as equal players, observers, and public commentators. It also served as a "court" of the people: the arm of justice might not be long enough to reach bankers stealing the money of the poor, but the public naming of these silk-clothed pashas was a kind of trial, providing some form of punishment of the culprits and hence justice for the oppressed.

Furthermore, the staging of non-local contemporary events must have triggered the audience's deep empathy with the suffering of world populations. By reporting on strikes and the living and working conditions of the proletariat in various countries around the globe, the press must have contributed to the creation of a sense of solidarity between workers in different realms; stage performances of contemporary scenes of oppression and suffering must have had a similar effect. In fact, Egyptian and Damascene audiences responded very strongly to plays such as *Hadithat jarih Beirut*[164] set during the bombardment of Beirut by the Italian fleet in 1911 and performed soon afterwards; similarly, Beiruti audiences empathized greatly with Ferrer's plight and his persecution by State and Church. The radicalizing effects and implications of transposing contemporary (and international) events onto the stage were not lost on the State. Indeed, many of the plays treating contem-

porary events—those celebrating the Young Turks' revolution and Abdulhamid's exile, the Ferrer play, and *Hadithat jarih Beirut*—were censored, banned, or interrupted in mid-performance by the police. In some cases, troupe members risked serving time in prison.[165]

The Specificity of Syria (Beirut and Mount Lebanon): Theater and Anticlericalism

The Ferrer play of 1909 was subversive and radical because it represented the culmination of various radical trends within the theater: the organizers behind the play staged the Revolution, prompted the participation of the "people" in it, appropriated contemporary events, and reserved the right of the people to interpret them unofficially. To top it all, they also offered a biting criticism of the church, which led to clashes between actors and the clergy. In fact, the frequent opposition to theatrical performances by various clergies was one salient feature of the theater in Syria, as compared to the relative quiet of its Egyptian counterpart.[166] Although some form of challenge to the church's authority was to be found among all denominations,[167] it was mostly the Maronite church and Catholic missions, especially the Jesuits, that were most severely targeted. The antagonism toward the Church depicted on the stage simultaneously contributed to and reflected the growing wave of anticlericalism that swept over Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Already a relatively widespread phenomenon in the first years of the twentieth century in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and among the Syrian diasporas in North and South America,[168] anticlericalism was until 1914 on the rise among commoners and intelligentsia alike and constituted a serious challenge for the Church. The battle between individuals for and against the clergy took place on the pages of periodicals and books, as well as on stage,[169] but the theater was the main vehicle for the expression of anticlerical ideas. This feature significantly affected the theater's radicalization; indeed, anticlericalism went hand in hand with the promotion of radical policies and ideas, such as land and wealth distribution, a challenge to existing social structures, and an anticapitalist discourse calling for the East's protection from Western economic, religious, cultural, and political encroachments.

Antagonism had not always characterized the relationship between church and stage. In fact, when the theater first appeared in Syria in the 1850s, the church quickly understood its mobilizing and proselytizing potential. It did not hesitate to appropriate the stage for the setting of morality plays and the propagation of Christian, and specifically Catholic, dogma, especially between 1860 and 1880. However, starting in the 1880s the Church regularly voiced its disapprobation of certain performances. In August 1888, the play *al-Sirr al-khafiy*, performed by the Jewish school of Beirut and written by its principal Salim Kuhin, was severely criticized for its immoral content by *al-Bashir*, a leading newspaper and the organ of the Jesuit college.[170] A few years later, around the turn of the century, major clashes between church and stage erupted, and tensions remained high until 1914.[171] During these years and especially after 1908, the relationship between church and stage in Beirut and Mount Lebanon became openly antagonistic.[172]

What were the roots and manifestations of anticlericalism in Syria? Put succinctly, the late nineteenth century was a trying period for the church, and in particular the Maronite church and Catholic missions. The authority of the Maronite church had already been severely eroded by the peasant revolts of Mount Lebanon in the years 1858–1860,[173] and the sectarian violence of 1860 in Mount Lebanon triggered an unshakable belief, espe-

cially among the educated elites, that the church's authority had to be limited and confined to certain domains. In the following decades, the power of the church was further eroded by the establishment of various community councils (*majalis al-milla*), secular bodies of notables who challenged the exclusive authority of the clergy over communal affairs. In various instances, communities—often poor, rural ones in Mount Lebanon—complained that the church sided with the rich and that its clergy was uneducated and did not tend to the needs of the population. Within the clergy itself, a strong populist movement emerged, accusing the higher ranks of the church of distancing themselves from "the people" and being lured by worldly riches. There were repeated calls to seize church property, as the scope of expansion in agriculture and a general economic crisis meant that employment opportunities had reached their limits.[174] The foundations of the Maronite church were further shaken by the wide appeal of Freemasonry and the challenge posed by Protestant missionaries, which gave dissatisfied populations the powerful bargaining card of conversion.

In this context, the theater seems to have become one of the preferred vehicles of the anticlerical camp to promote its ideas, and the stage became a major battlefield. As the anticlerical movement increased in popularity, the Maronite church's rather desperate attempts to crush it seem to have become increasingly ineffective. The performance in Beirut of the *Juif Errant* play in 1911, one of the high points of anticlericalism, vividly illustrated the tension between clericals and anti-clericals. It also shed light on the church's feelings of being under siege, and, given the degree of its over-reaction, its ultimate weakness. The play, based on a tremendously popular mid-nineteenth century novel by the French author Eugène Sue, combined calls for social justice with a biting criticism of the Jesuits and their accumulation of wealth. Its performance in Beirut was guaranteed to cause a commotion; and commotion indeed best describes the events that preceded, accompanied and followed its staging. Periodicals close to clerical circles (and in particular to the Maronite church and the Jesuits) mounted a campaign to prevent the performance and urged the Ottoman authorities to ban it. The *wali* of Beirut refused to do so and referred to the new constitution that guaranteed freedom of speech. This was not enough to appease the clerical camp, and the play itself was interrupted in mid-performance by pro-Jesuit students. Following the performance, the clerical camp organized a broad petition-signing campaign, protesting against the play and at the Ottoman state's decision to allow it to be performed.[175] The protest campaign was so effective that it gathered nearly four thousand signatures from Beirut and Mount Lebanon, as well as remote villages, the great majority of whose residents would never see the play.[176]

Thus far, my focus has been the subversive potential of the theater as a genre and as a space. Plays became more radicalized and certain major radical themes emerged within the theater's repertoire that arose within a larger context of political and social transformations, which the theater reflected as well as triggered. The next section demonstrates that the relationship between the theater and radical politics was strongly connected to the rise of mass politics and the emergence of a new class. Indeed, the theater played a vital role in the making of a new, radical bourgeois class, and allowed this class to conceptualize, formulate, and diffuse a coherent discourse, and in particular, to construct an alliance with the working class.

Radicalization of Theatrical Repertoire

The Rise of Mass Politics and Mass Education

In the early years of the twentieth century, a conceptual shift occurred as social, intellectual, and political elites throughout the Ottoman Empire began positing new social and political categories. Rather than speaking exclusively on behalf of their millet, class, or neighborhoods, social elites and aspiring elites systematically began to include groups such as peasants, the urban lower classes, and urban wage workers into their political discourse. They sought to establish contacts with previously marginalized groups and to mobilize them by diffusing their political messages among them. However, elites and aspiring elites first had to reform, discipline, and educate members of these groups in order to lay the groundwork for the successful diffusion of their ideas.

Many historians have framed this educational impetus as mostly (or solely) manifesting itself among nationalists, both Turkish but specifically Egyptian.[177] In fact, this didactic impetus was not confined to one ideological movement: members of all groups with a political project put forth a discourse of social reform, a vision of "a mass" movement (be it *al-umma, al-hay'a al-ijtima'iyya*, or another formulation of the social body), and emphasized the need to begin reforming the masses through education. In the early twentieth century, these groups included Syrian and Egyptian secular intellectuals seeking to reform their societies broadly or with a leftist radicalist bent, Muslim reformists, Italian anarchists and anarchist *sympatisants* among Alexandria's bourgeoisie, and nationalists. In some ways, *all* these movements—which, at least until 1914, did not form fixed or mutually exclusive categories—were radical; all of them sought to incorporate the masses into their political projects and their visions of a different society; all of them had a rhetoric of wealth distribution, be it the undeserved wealth of the indigenous and nonindigenous elites (foreign companies, Levantine and European capitalists, and so on); and all of them asked for a change in the relationship between state and society. Furthermore, all of them were seen by the state, as well as other institutions, as posing a threat to their authority and potentially disturbing the status quo.

For these new movements, the theater was an essential, if not the main tool for reforming, disciplining, and educating the masses. In particular, the education of the working class, as a distinct category, was becoming the focus of various mass movements. A dominant historiographic trend pertaining to workers' education in the Ottoman Empire and specifically Egypt has over-emphasized the role of nationalist parties in establishing night schools for workers and has placed nationalists at the vanguard of such projects. Such an analysis is in fact inaccurate. In Egypt as well as Syria, projects to educate the working classes had materialized earlier and had involved the extensive use of the theater. In the Middle East, perhaps the first such project and the first clear use of the theater in educating the working classes came with the establishment of Alexandria's UPL in 1901, which offered a great number of classes and lectures on the theater, including a history of the theater (in French and Italian).[178] The fruit of a local initiative, the UPL viewed the theater in the same light as the Parisian headquarters of that same institution, which embraced the idea of social liberation through art and held that the theater was the most effective tool for that

purpose.[179] In Syria, the revolutionary potential of the theater for mass education, especially political education, was held and formulated quite distinctly and as early as 1904 by members of *al-Nur* circle who, five years later, would put on the Ferrer play. Between 1904 and 1909, this group certainly saw in the theater one of the most important forms of social art. Its members were constantly involved in theatrical activities: they regularly published theatrical reviews,[180] gave public lectures on the merits of the theater, wrote scripts, adapted novels into plays,[181] produced plays, and acted in them. In fact, by the time of the Ferrer play, this group had arguably come to conceive of the theater as the most effective vehicle for the masses' political and social education.[182]

The idea of the theater as a school for the masses was not novel, but it had undergone serious changes from its earlier formulation. As previously discussed, the discourse of the theater as a school for individual morality as well as social consciousness had been present since the theater first made its appearance in Syria and later in Egypt.[183] The theater was also to contribute to individual progress by sharpening the mental tools of the audience; it was "a sort of school, in which are gathered humor, witticisms, distinction and knowledge."[184] However, this sort of school differed considerably from that which proponents of mass ideologies pushed for. In the 1860s and 1870s, Salim Naqqash and others had focused more on bringing individuals from various religious backgrounds together, at a time when the main concern in the eyes of reformists was sectarian division rather than class tensions. It is only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the concept of the mass was first formulated, let alone that of the working classes. In other words, the rise of mass politics propelled the theater at the front of mass education and specifically working-class education. By 1910, the theater had become so inextricably associated to workers' education that *al-Hilal* could, in all seriousness, make the analogy between the formation of Arab troupes and the establishment of free schools specifically targeting workers, arguing that "this [the formation of Iskandar Farah's Arab troupe] is a venture whose educational fruits will not be less valuable (*la taqill fi thamariha al-adabiyya*) than the establishment of a big school that educates youth for free."[185]

Bourgeois Morality and the Making of a Working Class

Within the context of mass politics, one group in particular was to benefit from what the theater had to offer. Consisting of radical and intellectual middle-class individuals, this group used the stage for two purposes: first, the construction and formulation of a coherent radical ideology—a task central to the group's existence as such, and one which might have remained unaccomplished were it not for the stage—and second, the dissemination of this ideology to larger audiences. It was precisely because this group combined radicalism with bourgeois values that its impact was strongly felt. Various components of the ideology that it promoted on stage appeared in the publication of Sulayman Hasan al-Qabbani's compilation of popular monologues performed in Alexandria in the first decade of the twentieth century.[186] Published around 1914 by this Alexandrian actor, the booklet *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin* included a number of popular monologues and lyrics, a brief introduction on the art of the theater and its emergence in various parts of the world, and a series of articles on appropriate behavior in the theater. The striking aspect of these monologues is their authorship: out of twelve monologues whose authors were named, seven

were definitely the works of Syrians from Egypt,[187] including Dr. Ibrahim Shududi (the author of three monologues) and Tanios ʻAbduh. Both Shududi and ʻAbduh seem to have had a serious radical connection: if the periodical *al-Iqdam* is to be believed, Dr. Shududi was a member of the Socialist party founded in Cairo by Shibli Shumayyil in 1907.[188] A dentist in Tanta, he was famous for his *zajals* and was asked to write plays for the rising star Najib Rihani some time around 1914.[189] The three monologues dealt quite radically with a number of social issues. Tanios ʻAbduh, the owner of the Alexandrian *al-Sharq* periodical, seems also to have been a member of Shumayyil's party.[190]

Among the most striking aspects of the monologues is the articulation of a discourse seeking to construct an alliance between the middle and working classes and linking individual morality to the economic well-being of society. The monologues depicted indigenous and nonindigenous upper classes as hopelessly debauched. Privileged heirs (*al-warithin*) were accused in one long monologue of squandering their fortunes in coffeehouses on hashish, drinking, and women.[191] These effeminate,[192] obscene dandies whose trousers hugged their thighs so tightly they could barely move[193] were not merely squandering their inheritance on roulette and female dancers. They were in effect dispossessing Egyptian society of a capital that was rightly its own, because they spent their money on non-Egyptians who would send it to their "homelands" rather than reinvest it into the Egyptian economy: "look at Mr. Christo [the owner of the coffeehouse], sitting like a sultan on his bank, constantly cashing money. His work gets better everyday. He is protected from the law by the consulates, and is getting fatter collecting our money, which he sends to Greece."[194] In fact, there was nothing Egyptian about these Egyptian upper classes: not only did their financial excesses not benefit the Egyptian economy, but they themselves had become indistinguishable from non-indigenous upper classes, speaking a language punctuated by French and Italian and leading equally debauched and dissolute lives.[195] Their spouses even read Zola's *Nana*, surely a marker of their immorality.[196] Hence, loose morals did not only lead to individual perdition but, more gravely, they constituted a guaranteed path to the economic ruin of society. Members of the middle class were warned of the consequences of such behavior, in case they were tempted to taste the forbidden fruits: "if he is an industrialist, he becomes . . . dishonest, cheating in his profession . . . and if he is a doctor, he fries (kills) his patients."[197]

Dismissing the upper classes as hopelessly debauched—with the only glimmer of hope provided by women, thanks to female education[198] —this group regarded the middle and working classes as providing the only remaining hope for society. For these classes to blossom and save their society from collapse, however, they needed to be mobilized for work; hence the monologues' praises and incantations about the virtues of work: "have you not seen beehives, how everybody works in there, no distraction and no boredom. Egypt is a hive, a fertile ground (*al-marʻa al-khasib*), and you are the bees;"[199] or again, "let us roll up our sleeves, bring produce and revive industry, and bring back a lost greatness."[200] It was not enough to rely on the *dustur*, the writers warned: while political freedom was necessary, it needed to be accompanied by hard work in order for Egypt to be truly civilized:

> Ye Egyptians! Enough excitement (*ghurur*) and screams (*fugur*); you are in the era of civilization
> roll up your sleeves and say long live the *dustur*; may it become freedom

> freedom does not mean getting distracted (*tawashshash*) and drunk, this isn't freedom
> ...freedom means knowing one's duty.
> roll up your sleeves (*shammir*)... [201]

To regain past grandeur and pride and become civilized, Egyptians had two options. The first was to follow the Japanese model and "show the West that we, like the Japanese, refuse to live in insult and contempt."[202] The other option was to literally become the West. As the "wounded" in *Jarih Beirut* proclaimed: "I wish I did not hasten to die before my due time, [but lived to] see the East rise, despite the attacks of time, and recover its majesty . . . [until] the characteristics of civilization (*taba'i' al-'umran*) take hold of them [the people of the East], and the East becomes West."[203]

Thus, rather than be a space for leisure, the theater was to tirelessly educate the masses about the merits of work. Theatrical activity itself epitomized this work ethic, because the establishment of amateur troupes sought "to prevent the wasting of free time in places of entertainment."[204] Indeed, the middle-class radicals who appropriated the stage promoted it as the antithesis of the coffeehouse: whereas both public and private morality were lost in the coffeehouse, they were gained in the theater; whereas Egyptian capital and potential labor were wasted in the former, they were being channeled toward the well-being of Egyptian society in the latter. The theater was not depriving people of entertainment; it was simply offering a different type of entertainment: unlike coffeehouses, which catered exclusively to debauched men, theaters focused on providing family entertainment, and theatrical performances were often open exclusively to family members.[205]

Many monologues had an undeniably anticapitalist tone; banks in particular were blamed for impoverishing not only the "average" person but the entire city as well.[206] These banks refused to lend honorable people (who were owed money which they were unable to recover) the necessary sum to avoid bankruptcy, "as if the banks of this realm have connived . . . to cut my source of gain and add to my misery."[207] Banks were not alone in dispossessing the local, average population of its capital; other tools of capitalism would ultimately lead to the destruction of Egyptian society. All these tools were interconnected: stock market, shares, land value, salaries. In the words of one actor,

> I have gained what you have wished upon me, poverty has bitten me; you have . . . lowered my value . . . I have lost my fortune. . . . Am I to blame if I complain about my hardships? I have one thousand proofs and reasons: the loss of money in stocks and stock-market and that of valuable credit; the collapse in the value of land and the rise in rent and the cost of living; the banks' stubbornness and the rise in interest; the halt in payments and the end of security.[208]

The only way out of the system's built-in injustice was the establishment of a new basis for society, one that required an alliance between the middle and working classes on the grounds that these two classes constituted the work force.

The theater had thus become one of the main stages for the formulation and dissemination of radical and middle-class, bourgeois ideals—radical, because the plays chal-

lenged the legitimacy of the ruling classes by showing them to be irredeemably debauched, effeminate, and jeopardizing the economic well-being of Egyptian society. Indeed, the ruling upper classes deserved neither their wealth nor the right to power. The underlying message was that all upper-classes, local as well as foreign, harmed the local economy and hence deprived the middle and working-classes of what was legitimately theirs; the local upper classes, by squandering local fortunes and filling the pockets of individuals who would remove this money from the Egyptian market, and the foreign upper classes—especially bank owners—by bluntly exploiting the natives and dispossessing them of what was rightly theirs.[209]

These features, though radical, were at the same time quintessentially bourgeois. The system replacing the old one would maintain class distinctions even more strictly than those upheld by the previous social system, in which rich and poor were at least equal in the eyes of vice. Indeed, one of the reasons for criticizing coffeehouses and places of perdition was that they were sites in which rich and poor intermingled and were even turned into equals: "you see the Effendi sitting with an ass, and the bey sitting with a porter (*shayyal*),"[210] "the youth drowns in Azbakiyya, the heir as well as the servant (*mustakhdim*).[211] Rather than eliminate social codes and class distinctions, middle class radicals sought to impose a new set of codes by which everybody could potentially abide. Ultimately, members from various classes could, if they behaved according to this code, become bourgeois, because being bourgeois meant having a work ethic and conducting oneself in a specific way publicly and privately. The theater was the site of apprenticeship where individual behavior was tamed into bourgeois social behavior. Hence the selection of press articles, at the end of the *Bughiyat*, inculcating good bourgeois behavior in the theater, and covering topics such as the merits of speaking softly, refraining from aiming one's magnifier at women in the audience, and getting to the theater on time.[212] The manners to be taught in the theater were western bourgeois manners; indeed, a few articles on "good manners" were originally written in a European language.[213] If *al-Hilal* is to be believed, these lessons in bourgeois conduct were relatively successful: whereas during earlier performances, actors had had to contend with an unrefined public that laughed during tragic moments, fell asleep during serious dialogues, and chatted throughout the performance, later performances hosted a more refined public, and this, in turn, positively affected the quality of the acting.[214]

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the role played by the theater in the articulation, promotion, and dissemination of radical ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria around the turn of the century. A privileged relationship existed between radicalism and the stage. Not only did the theater serve as a tool to express radical ideas and disseminate them to society and particularly to the masses and working classes; it also provided a necessary forum for the conceptualization, articulation, and internalization of such ideas and hence played a vital role in the making of a radical middle class. From its introduction into the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century, the theater had been conceived of as an important organ for social reform. By the late nineteenth century, the discourse associating it with progress and civilization had become widespread not only among intellectuals, but also among the general populations of Beirut, Cairo, and Alexan-

dria. This fact, as well as the ensuing omnipresence of theatrical activities, contributed to making the theater a potentially subversive genre.

Indeed, the theater, as it developed in our cities in the late nineteenth century, implied and triggered deep social transformations. Among these transformations were the population's appropriation of the theater and the de facto right of non-elites as well as aspiring elites to perform, consume, and thus interpret topics that had hitherto been reserved to specific political and cultural elites. As a consequence, the public sphere expanded and was strengthened. Such a transformation was subversive and radical in and of itself, a fact that is confirmed by the elaborate mechanism of control and regulation of theatrical space and repertoire, devised by both Egyptian and Ottoman states. Additionally, the making of a "trans-national" network of actors, who were constantly on the move and were often in close contact with radical leftist circles in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, must have privileged the incorporation and integration of radical, global, and internationalist elements into the theater's repertoire.

Around the turn of the century, plays became more politicized and radical than earlier ones: they challenged existing class structures, promoted social justice, and called for the end of tyranny and imperialism. Certain themes became especially popular: the French Revolution and revolutions in general, local and global contemporary events, and, in Syria, anticlericalism. The theater allowed radicals and masses to imagine, rehearse, live, and glorify the revolution, and the staging of revolutions assigned to both intellectuals and the masses their roles as leaders and revolutionary Crowd. Furthermore, through the adaptation of contemporary events onto the stage, the stage became the press of the masses, offering access to information on local and global political developments. It granted non-elites and aspiring elites the right to participate in the making of their own history as equal players, observers, and public commentators. The emergence of mass politics and the rise of a new class comprising middle class radicals "sealed" the symbiosis between stage and radicalism and provided the middle class the necessary space for the construction and dissemination of a coherent ideology that relied greatly on the promotion of an alliance between the middle and working classes.

The focus of this chapter has been the role of two new and popular institutions, the press and the theater, in the construction and dissemination of radical culture in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. By radical culture, I have mostly referred to the making of a radical "mental universe" of contestation, one which "predisposed" certain groups within these cities to act as well as think in a subversive and radical manner, and produced a radical canon. This canon circulated both through periodicals and plays and contributed to the creation of a geography of contestation connecting the three cities. The press and the theater were also closely associated to the emergence of a new group of radical middle class intellectuals. They allowed members of this group to construct themselves through the articulation of an ideology of reform and challenge the status quo, and especially contest the existing sources of authority (and especially state and religious institutions). The two institutions also allowed this emerging group to disseminate its radical ideology, as well as imagine, construct, and appeal to a larger audience, namely, "the masses." ■

NOTES

[1] "Li Ferrer," *al-Hurriyya* (October 30, 1909), 230. This is the first study and, with the exception of contemporary sources, the first mention of this performance and of Middle Eastern reactions to Ferrer's death. The primary sources themselves are scarce: Khairallah Khairallah, *La Syrie* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1912) very hastily mentioned the play, although the author's own participation in it and his support for Ferrer are almost certain. A much richer—if clearly biased—source for this episode is *al-Hurriyya*, a periodical issued in Beirut in 1909 by Daud Muja'is, one of the writers of the Ferrer script and among the main instigators of the Ferrer episode. *Al-Hurriyya* devoted four articles, over the span of four weeks, to the play and its repercussions, as well as reports on demonstrations against Spain and the Spanish church throughout Europe and quotations by leftist figures such as Jean Jaurès about Ferrer himself.

[2] The first school established by Francisco Ferrer opened in Barcelona in 1901, the same year that the Université Populaire Libre (UPL), a comparable educational institution, was established in Alexandria.

[3] Including parts of the Ottoman Empire. In Salonica, a big demonstration took place in solidarity with Ferrer in October 1909. Paul Dumont, "Naissance d'un socialisme ottoman," in Paul Dumont, *Du socialisme ottoman à l'internationalisme anatolien* (Istanbul: les Editions ISIS, 1997), 73–84.

[4] For an analysis of this episode, see *L'Affaire Ferrer* (Paris: Centre National et Musée Jean Jaurès, 1989).

[5] "Masrahiyyat Francisco Ferrer," *al-Hurriyya* (November 13, 1909), 253–58.

[6] 'Aziz 'Eid was not just any actor. According to Landau, 'Eid, a Syrian by birth, was the first among three chief creators of the modern popular theater in Egypt. His career took off when he joined Iskandar Farah's troupe in the early twentieth century. However, Landau makes no mention of 'Eid's participation in the Ferrer play in Beirut. Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), 86. Although his reputation was as a vaudeville performer, 'Eid seems to have had a predilection for controversial roles. In 1908, his troupe had performed Ibrahim Najjar's Masrahiyya fi sabil al-istiqlal in Cairo, which was banned because it was highly critical of Muhammad Ali and was accused by the authorities of "wanting to plant the seeds of divisions between Egyptians and Turks." Ramsis 'Awad, *Al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah qabla thawrat 1919* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Kilani, 1972), 15–18. Again, in 1909, 'Eid acted in Amin Rihani's play '*Abdulhamid fi Atina*, another play that provoked controversy and was deemed subversive.

[7] According to Tarrazi, Petro Pauli was the director of the two periodicals *al-Watan* and *al-Muraqib*. Tarrazi, Tarikh al-sahafa 1, no. 2, 184.

[8] Amin Rihani's play "Abdulhamid fi Atina" was described as having "a sound social purpose in which [Rihani] meant to criticize habits and traditions and religious and 'national' intolerance (al-ta'assub al-dini wa al-qawmi)." 'Aziz 'Eid played the role of Abdulhamid, and Pietro Effendi Pauli also

figured in the cast. "Al-Tamthil al-'arabi," *al-Hurriyya* (October 9, 1909), 180-81.

[9] This was highly unlikely; in fact, there was a "Ferrer" play performed at Gaité Montparnasse in Paris in October 1909. See *L'Affaire Ferrer*, 20.

[10] "Masrahiyyat Francisco Ferrer," *al-Hurriyya* (November 13, 1909), 253–58.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] *Ibid*., 254.

[13] All seem to have been in fusha rather than colloquial Arabic.

[14] "Masrahiyyat Francisco Ferrer," *al-Hurriyya* (November 13, 1909), 258.

[15] *Ibid*.

[16] Most probably the Maronite clergy and the Jesuits, although they are only indirectly named.

[17] See Felix Faris, "Min ajlihi," *al-Hurriyya* (November 27, 1909), 283–85: "the play was a criticism of the Spanish clergy, so why did the local clergy get up in arms? . . . the clergy here is not one united group; each group among them has positive and negative traits; Jesuits are different from local monks, monks are different from priests, and the Ottoman state is different from the Spanish one. Therefore, the clergy in this country does not deserve the fate that history has thrust upon the Spanish clergy, except if the [Syrian] clergy behaves in a similar fashion [to the Spanish clergy] (God forbid). If this were to happen, we would strike the one tyrant in all countries. [The clergy] complained . . . accusing us of diverging from religion. They are mistaken, for we are stronger in faith and follow more closely the laws of Christ than those who reside in palaces and drape themselves in crimson garbs" [i.e. high ecclesiastical dignitaries].

[18] Khairallah, *La Syrie*, 110.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] For a description of a theater in Beirut, see the memoirs of Pietro Perolari-Malmignati, who traveled to Syria in the 1870s: "Entering the house that serves as a theater, we cross a room...and through a wooden staircase, we arrive to our bench, a sort of naked table, without varnish or color...It is quite small . . . the theater, a non-descript room, is full of people. I did not expect to find so many, and it seems to me to indicate a certain civilization, that there should be in Beirut so many people willing to spend two francs to attend a comedy. There are no women among the spectators...and most of the audience is Muslim, because the author of the comedy is Muslim...The governor and other people are sitting right in front of the stage, smoking a water-pipe. The top of the small stage is decorated with a sun with yellow rays, the crescent with a star in the middle and, on the side, Ionian columns." Pietro Perolari-Malmignati, *Su e giu per la Siria: Note e schizzi* (Milano: Fratelli Treves editori, 1878), 154.

[21] Even government employees in Alexandria established their own theatrical company (sharikat tamthil) in 1903. Muhammad Yusuf Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-ʿarabi al-hadith 1847–1914* (Beirut: Dar Bayrut li al-Tibaʿa wa al-Nashr, 1956), 173. Najm gives information on fourteen theatrical associations (jamʿiyyaat tamthil) in existence between 1885 and 1914 in Egypt; seven of them were in Alexandria and three in Cairo. The location of the remaining four has not been specified. According to the author, these associations did not restrict themselves to performing plays; they also discussed and studied them. To these fourteen associations must be added performance troupes that were associated to clubs, associations, and schools. *Ibid*., 182–86.

[22] A 1926 article in *al-Muqtataf* sheds light on the etymology of the term used in Arabic to designate the theater. According to it, the term "*masrah*"—which is the one currently in use—had, in 1926, only recently emerged. The author of the article remembered that, in his youth, the term *marzah* was used, which meant "a gathering (*mujtama*') for singing and dancing, mostly for comical purposes." Then the term *marsah* appeared, probably derived from *marzah*. Interestingly, the author defended the use of the term "*tiyatro*," which derived from classical Greek, arguing that Arabic has borrowed many words from other languages and that there was no harm in doing so. In Egypt, the world "opera" was often used for theater, after the Opera building where many plays were performed. *Al-Muqtataf*, vol. 69 (July 3, 1926), reproduced in Muhammad Kamil al-Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah, vol. 1* (Damascus: Manshurat Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1994), 353–54.

[23] Rifaʿat al-Tahtawi, "Fi muntazahat madinat Bariz," a chapter in Tahtawi's *Takhlis al-ibriz fi talkhis Bariz* (1834), reproduced in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah*, vol. 1, 17–25.

[24] *Ibid*.

[25] More precisely, this play is generally considered to have been the first play performed in Arabic. However, Moreh and Sadgrove have suggested an earlier one produced by Abraham Daninos, an Algerian Jew, and performed in Algiers in 1847. Shmuel Moreh and Philip Sadgrove, "Jewish Contributions to 19th Century Arabic Theatre: Plays from Algeria and Syria, a Study and Texts," *Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 6* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

[26] Marun al-Naqqash, "Introduction" to Arzat Lubnan (Beirut: al-Matbaʿa al-ʿUmumiyya, 1869), in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah, vol. 2,* 415–20.

[27] *Ibid*.

[28] *Ibid*., 416.

[29] *Ibid*., 415–20.

[30] *Ibid*.

[31] *Ibid*., 418.

[32] Salim Naqqash, "Al-Jinan" (August, 1875), in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah, vol. 1*,

39–47.

[33] *Ibid*., 41.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] "It is said . . . that the people of Egypt . . . [are so welcoming, that they] make the stranger forget about his own country." Ibid., 44.

[38] Ibid., 44–46.

[39] See, for example, Mohammad Kurd 'Ali, "Al-Tamthil fi al-Islam," al-Muqtabas, Muharram 1324 (1906), in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah,* vol. 1, 143–44.

[40] Salim Naqqash, al-Jinan (August 11, 1875), in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah,* vol. 1, 41: "'*ala annana naziduha tahdidan [kalimat al-tamaddun] fa naqulu annaha . . . wasitat taqsim arzaqihim wa ma baynahum bi qust wa 'adl.*"

[41] This radical potential of the theater was perhaps first grasped by the Muslim reformist al-Afghani, who as early as 1870 had advised Ya`qub Sannu'a to establish a popular Egyptian theater with the aim of sharpening the population's political consciousness. Al-Afghani's radicalizing influence on the development of the theater was continued by two of his most active disciples, Salim Naqqash and Adib Ishaq, both of whom were central figures in the world of the theater. Even when they left the theater, turned toward journalism, and established newspapers (*Misr*, *al-Tijara*, and *al-Mahrusa*, all issued in Alexandria), their interest in it never faded and they continuously reported and commented on theatrical activities. On al-Afghani, see Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 103–20, Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, c1968), and idem, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

[42] Indeed, these three institutions, the press, the municipality, and the theater, were very often run by the same individuals and formed intersecting and overlapping networks whose members had followed similar educational and professional paths. In a following section, the effect of this alliance between the theater and the press in particular on the growth and protection of a public sphere is discussed in greater depth.

[43] "Al-Jinan," 6 (March 15, 1875), cited in Philip. C. Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1996), 56; my emphasis. This idea of historical wisdom does not seem to have been picked up by other periodicals—or at least, it was not as clearly expressed. Interestingly, al-Jinan's notion of progress and civilization also had a very pragmatic edge to it. The rest of the article dwelt on tourism and the material benefits it brought and argued that the theater

would attract European tourists and hence would bring a source of revenue to the country: "much money has been spent to establish them [foreign theaters] here, but they are still confined to foreign languages. There are many benefits from this: for many rich foreigners come to Egypt to spend the winter season and it is the most appropriate country for it. When they come, they spent tens of thousands of pounds in the country. If they did not find the exactly right places of entertainment and beautiful parks, they would not come in great numbers...likewise the actors spend a large part of their salaries here." *Ibid*. A similar combination of economic considerations and social consciousness was present in the Municipality of Alexandria's discussions of theatrical issues.

[44] See *al-Ahram* (December 20, 1876), cited in Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 126.

[45] See for instance, Salim Hamawi's letter to the editor: "Comedies (*kumidya*) are plays which convey seriousness through comedy. In them events which actually happened are imitated so that man can learn wonderful lessons from them. [The spectator] sees what occurred in strange events, imitates the good and avoids and rejects the bad, since he has seen the praise given to the praiseworthy act and the censure of the rejected evil act. Thus man's morals are refined and he progresses to the peaks of ethics and goodness. It has been said that kings have learned good behaviour from these plays." In *al-Ahram* (30 December, 1876), quoted in *Ibid*., 135.

[46] Newspapers began printing excerpts of plays almost immediately after they were founded. For example, *Hadiqat al-akhbar*, the first unofficial or semi-official Arabic periodical in the Middle East founded by Khalil al-Khuri in Beirut in 1858, was by 1860 printing al-Ahdab's theatrical works. More so, a significant number of printing presses owned by periodicals regularly published plays and even sold tickets for theatrical performances. To give one example, tickets for *Fi sabil al-dustur* (1908) could be purchased from Maktabat al-Hilal in Faggala. '*Awad, al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah*, 88.

[47] See, for instance, *al-Ahram*'s attempts to gather support for Qordahi's troupe, in Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 155–56.

[48] See *al-Ahram*'s article dated November 23, 1880, in which the author " inquired as to when an Arabic troupe would be seen and when Arabs would make an effort to support an Arab troupe. He hoped that the (European) theatrical activities in Cairo and Alexandria would 'stimulate self-respect amongst the inhabitants of the port [Alexandria]' so that they would 'contribute [financially] to the troupe [to enable it] to present plays in their language.'" *Al-Ahram* (November 23, 1880), quoted in Ibid., 150.

[49] The reasons for focusing on Alexandria's municipality partly have to do with the availability of municipal archives and their accessibility. The archives used for this purpose are those of the Municipality of Alexandria (Archives de la Municipalité d'Alexandrie, AMA), which are typed memos/reports from the meetings held by the municipality between 1892 (the year of its foundation) and 1914. These reports were those of the Délégation Municipale (referred to as DM) or of the Commission Municipale (CM). They are in French. There are other reasons behind the choice of Alexandria for a case study of its municipality's theatrical activities. First, while going over the archives of Alexandria's municipality, I was struck by the sheer number of references to theatrical subventions.

Even before analyzing the content of the passages related to the theater, it became clear that theatrical issues were of central concern to that institution. For general information on the municipality of Alexandria, see Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830–1930*. For a background history about the formation of Alexandria's municipality, see Michael Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead: Government and Society in Alexandria, 1807-1882* (Cairo: AUC Press, 1997). The archives of Beirut's municipality are missing and were probably destroyed in the Lebanese Civil War. However, a number of contemporary sources provide an occasional glimpse into the kind of theatrical activities sponsored by the municipality of Beirut.

[50] See Angelo Sammarco, *Il Contributo italiano nella formazione dell'Egitto moderno* (Alexandria: Angelo Procaccia, 1937).

[51] A report in the municipality archives on theater attendance singled out the Italian working class: "la population ouvrière, italienne, entre autres, fréquente le théâtre: il ne faut donc point que le théâtre soit éloigné...pour que la population qui ne peut pas prendre de voitures et qui ne peut pas faire cinq km à pied, puisse s'y rendre après son travail." Stross, AMA/DM, May 4, 1910, 8; my emphasis.

[52] This project also had deep connections to the Italian community and the Italian working class in Alexandria, as well as the municipality.

[53] See, for instance, AMA/DM, June 15, 1892, AMA/DM, November 23, 1893, AMA/DM, November 30, 1909. Between 1892 and 1912, lengthy and fairly passionate debates took place around the theater at least twice or three times a year.

[54] AMA/DM, November 21, 1894, 215-16.

[55] See for instance AMA/DM, July 6, 1909: "Subvention pour la troupe arabe de 'Al-Tamthil al-'asri' dont le directeur est Salim Atalla," or AMA/DM, December 18, 1912: "*Allocation d'une subvention au théâtre arabe de Georges Abyad . . . sa troupe étant entre toutes la plus importante et la mieux comprise.*"

[56] Including a certain Abani bey, who most probably was nobody else but Sulayman Qabbani, the author/compiler of *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin* and at one point an actor himself. It seems rather unlikely that there would be two Sulayman Qabbani at that time in Alexandria. Unfortunately, we have virtually no information on this character's biography. Sulayman Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin* (Alexandria: Gharzuzi press, n.d. (c.1914)).

[57] See, for instance, AMA/DM, October 28, 1896 and AMA/DM, November 29, 1899.

[58] The idea of a municipal theater was first suggested in 1906, but it took many years to decide on its location and various logistical matters. Debates on these issues were still raging in 1910.

[59] AMA/DM, January 2, 1906.

[60] AMA/DM, November 30, 1909.

[61] AMA/DM, May 4, 1910, 8.

[62] See AMA/DM, June 15, 1892, in which one of the municipal members argued that the theater was a source of wealth for the city and would create employment for a large number of people. A similar argument was made as early as 1875 by al-Jinan. See footnote 43.

[63] See, for instance, AMA/DM, August 1, 1894, 168: *"Alexandrie est bien plus propre que beaucoup de villes d'Europe, beaucoup plus par exemple que Trieste, Marseille, Naples, Toulon.*" Or during a debate in 1902 on a medical congress to be held in Alexandria and the role of the municipality in facilitating this event: "*La ville d'Alexandrie ne peut faire moins que certaines petites localités d'Europe.*" AMA/DM, November 26, 1902.

[64] Alexandria's municipality also seriously discussed this possibility, but the project of building low-income houses did not materialize. On this topic, see AMA/CM, November 7, 1906: "*Si le gouvernement consentait à céder [un terrain], à un prix tout à fait de faveur [pour bâtir maisons bon marché] . . . on aurait ainsi résolu, comme l'ont déjà fait beaucoup de grandes villes d'Europe, qui ont traversé des crises pour les mêmes causes, la question de permettre à la classe la plus laborieuse de la population, de vivre non écrasée par les loyers, en respirant un air pur et en respectant les lois de l'hygiène.*"

[65] Najm cites thirty-three small troupes (many of which were short-lived) that were formed in Egypt between 1887 and 1908. (In the 1890s alone, thirteen such troupes were established.) These troupes were usually religiously mixed (with casts including Syrian Christians, Muslims, and Copts). Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 168.

[66] By "every school," I am referring to non-Quranic schools, because I assume that they were not bitten by this theatrical frenzy. To give a few examples, students at the Beiruti Ottoman school of al-Rashidiyya put on a performance of al-Ahdab's play, *al-Mu'tamid bin 'Abbas*, in 1870. Muhammad Yusuf Najm, ed., *Masrahiyyat al-Shaykh Ibrahim al-Ahdab* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1985), 20. Other schools, such as those of the Beiruti Maqasid, also held performances. The Jewish school in Beirut was, according to one contemporary, famous for its plays: "the most famous [plays] were those performed in the school of Zaki [Kohen] in Ashrafiyya. I used to attend them clandestinely and envied those who had received an official invitation." Quoted in Moreh and Sadgrove, *Jewish Contributions to 19th Century Arabic Theatre*, 78. Schools in Alexandria and Cairo also regularly put on performances. See, for example, the plays performed at Alexandria's Saint-François-Xavier in *Saint-François-Xavier: le Collège et ses lendemains* (n.p., n.d. (1955)), 26.

[67] In fact, when the *vilayet* of Beirut ordered that political newspapers be monitored by the government and that theatrical plays sent to Asitane to be checked before they could be performed, *al-Ahram* commented that this would mean a severe financial loss for benevolent associations: "after this, there will be no more theaters remaining in our country...and it is no secret that that plays in Beirut are some of the most important resources that benevolent associations rely on to help the poor and needy...this law...has closed the doors of this source." Abdulrahman Yaghi, *Fi juhud al-masrahiyya al-'arabiyya: min Marun Naqqash ila Tawfiq al-Hakim* (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1999), 52.

[68] Niqula al-Naqqash, "Introduction" to Marun Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnan 1869*, in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah, vol. 2*, 421.

[69] Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 151.

[70] As illustrated by al-Ahdab's performances at the houses of Beiruti notables. Specifically, in 1876, al-Ahdab was summoned to perform a play in the house of Beiruti notables Hajj Muhieddin and Hasan al-Bayhum in celebration of the wedding of one of their sons. Najm, *al-Ahdab*, 20.

[71] Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi was one such patron. Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 58.

[72] Such as the Politeamas in Alexandria, which was being built in April 1881 on al-'Attarin street. Ibid., 70.

[73] *Ibid*., 129.

[74] Sai'd al-Qasimi and Khalil al-'Azm, *Qamus al-sina'at al-shamiyya*, vol. 2 (Damascus: Dar Tlas, n.d.), in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah, vol. 1*, 131–32.

[75] Farhan Bulbul, *Al-Masrah al-suri fi mi'at sana 1847-1946* (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, al-Ma'had al-'Ali li al-Funun al-Masrahiyya fi al-Jumhuriyya al-'Arabiyya al-Suriyya, 1997), 118–19.

[76] Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 151.

[77] In Shiyyah, a working-class suburb of Beirut that fell under the jurisdiction of Mount Lebanon, members of the local charitable association wrote to the Maronite Archbishop Yusuf al-Dibs in 1899, informing him of their intention to found their own theater and asking for his permission to build it on vacant land next to the local Maronite church. They furthermore asked for the theater building to be turned into church waqf if the association were to be dissolved in the future. Interestingly, the term "Maronite" does not appear in the name of the association; we do not know whether it was a religiously mixed group or not, although all the names of its active members were Christian. "*Al-'Umda wa al-a'da' al-'amila li al-Jam'iyya al-Khayriyya bi al-Shiyyah*," Letter addressed to Bishop al-Dibs dated January 25, 1899, The Archives of the Maronite Bishopric of Beirut, Beirut.

[78] In 1894, Jam'iyyat al-intaj al-adabi (the Association for Literary Production) was established in Alexandria by employees of the Egyptian post under the presidency of Salim 'Atallah. It was to last for many years and even held occasional performances at the Qordahi theater. Jirji Zaidan, *Tarikh aadab al-lugha al-'arabiyya,* vol. 4 (Cairo, 1937), 87. See also Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 178. Intriguingly, there was also an amateur troupe called "the Troupe of the National/Patriotic Peasant" (*Jawq al-Fallah al-Watani*) that was founded in Alexandria in 1895 and performed "Cleopatra" in Samnod in April of the same year. Unfortunately, we lack any information about it. Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 179.

[79] To give an idea of its intensity, Salama Hijazi's troupe, probably the most important

troupe in Egypt in the early twentieth century, went to Syria four times between 1906 and 1911—that is, pretty much annually. Bulbul, *Al-Masrah al-suri fi mi'at sana*, 115.

[80] In the words of Bulbul, "then [after 1884-5] Qabbani returned to Alexandria, presented a couple of plays, then returned to Damascus. He brought back new troupe, as well as his family. He then returned to Egypt, performing in Alexandria, Cairo, Tanta and others places. This is how he spent the years 1884–1900, moving between Damascus and Egypt, and bringing back actors, stage designers, and so on." *Ibid*., 35.

[81] Most women recruited in the 1870s and 1880s were not initially professional actresses, but once in a while, the head of a troupe would be lucky enough to stumble on women with real talent. Such seems to have been the case with the Beiruti-born Badi'a Masabni, who was to become one of the leading stars of her time. In her memoirs, Masabni recalled how she discovered the theater and how the opportunity to join a theatrical performance presented itself. She was then introduced to George Abyad, en tournée in Syria and looking to enlarge his cast. Pleased with what he saw, Abyad recruited her. However, Masabni soon moved back to Beirut, where she was introduced to Madam Jeannette, a Frenchwoman who ran "a kind of a cabaret, and had foreign women working for her: French and Romanian and Austrian and Germans." Masabni would be the only Arab among fifteen female artists. See "Badi'a Masabni, Mudhakkarat," recorded by Nazik Basila (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayat, n.d), 81, 87 and 112.

[82] Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 111.

[83] For a list of these troupes, see Bulbul, *Al-Masrah al-suri fi mi'at sana*, 110–14.

[84] Salama Hijazi was one among many who spent summers in Syria. Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 138.

[85] A great number (if not the majority) of plays performed by Syrian troupes in Egypt had previously been performed in Syria, specifically Beirut, before that. For instance, *Sun' al-Jamil*, which was performed by Yusuf al-Khayyat's troupe in 1877 at the Zizinia theater in Alexandria, had previously been performed several times in Beirut in 1875 and 1876. Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 138.

[86] The memoirs of two famous actors, Badi'a Masabni and Najib al-Rihani, give a very vivid depiction of the fluidity of the theatrical world, the constant branching out of actors to form their own troupes, the head-hunting and snatching of various "stars" from one troupe to another, the incredible amount of plagiarism that took place between one troupe and another (whether they were in Syria, Egypt, or even Brazil), and the constant examination of each other's work and acquisition of various techniques from one another. See Masabni's *Mudhakkarat*, and *Najib Rihani*, 2d ed. (Cairo: dar al-Jaib, n.d).

[87] The Syrians in Egypt, the Shawam, played a particularly central role in the theatrical life of Cairo and Alexandria. Until Word War I, they dominated the world of the theater in Egypt as both actors and directors, with figures such as Salim Naqqash, Iskandar Farah, Sulayman al-Qordahi,

Yusuf al-Khayyat, Badi'a Masabni, Najib Rihani, George Abyad, and 'Aziz 'Eid at the forefront. They also trained newcomers and formed an entire generation of actors. Among their most successful "students" was Salama Hijazi, who was initially a singer and had been spotted by Sulayman al-Qordahi, recruited, and turned into a star. Syrians in Egypt also managed, owned, or built theaters, sometimes grand ones such as the Zizinia or the Teatro Rossini in Alexandria, as well as less prestigious and very popular ones such as Qordahi's and Iskandar Farah's theaters in Alexandria and Cairo respectively. Syrians were particularly fundamental in articulating the need for an Egyptian theater as well as an Arab one, and they first did so through the Beiruti al-Jinan in the early 1870s, and then through Syro-Egyptian papers. Their support for the theater can also be seen through the number of translations, adaptations, and publications of European plays, as well as through the speeches given by intellectuals and professionals praising theatrical performances. See Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 117.

[88] See the introduction.

[89] The play, while not overtly sympathetic to Freemasonry, was certainly not critical of it. See 'Ali Shalash, *Al-Masuniyya fi Misr* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya li al-Kutub, 1993), 30–35.

[90] This happened at least twice: once, in December 1909, during a performance by Iskandar Farah and his troupe of *Shuhada' al-wataniyya*, a play written by Victorien Sardou and originally entitled *Patrie* ('Awad, al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah, 25), and once during the performance of the play *Nicola Carter* in Cairo in July 1910 (*Ibid.*, 33). On Sardou's *Patrie*, see footnote 130.

[91] Hijazi and Farah had founded a troupe together. Later, after they had gone their separate ways, Farah recruited 'Eid. For details on their professional collaboration, see Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*.

[92] A fact that was not unique to Egypt and Syria. In France, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, strikers often met in ballrooms (*salles de bal*), theaters, or even circuses. See Michelle Perrot, *Jeunesse de la Grève: France 1871–1890* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 203. In Argentina, anarchists and strikers also held their meetings in theaters, including Buenos Aires's Alegria Theater. See Fernando Quesada, *Argentine Anarchism and La Protesta* (New York: Gordon Press, 1979), 28.

[93] *Al-Muqattam*, July 8, 1910. Quoted in 'Awad, *al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah*, 42.

[94] Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 155.

[95] Muhammad Farid, *The Memoirs and Diaries of Muhammad Farid, an Egyptian Nationalist Leader*, introduction, translation and annotation by Arthur Goldschmidt (San Francisco: Mellen University Research Press, 1992), 25.

[96] I am borrowing Geoff Eley's expression. Geoff Eley, "Edward Thompson, Social History and Political Culture," in Harvey Kaye and Keith McClelland, eds., *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 12–49, 28.

[97] Whereas all the examples we have on this phenomenon pertain to Egypt, it is extremely likely that the same applied to Syria. Significantly, in 1925, during the May First celebration, a certain Salim Agha Kuraydiyya, owner of the Cristal Theater in Beirut, offered the theater as a meeting space for workers. Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbak, *Hikayat awwal nuwwar fi al-'alam wa fi Lubnan* (Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1974), 86.

[98] *Al-Ahram*, May 4, 1909, quoted in Sulayman Muhammad al-Nukhayli, *al-Haraka al-'ummaliya fi Misr wa mawqif al-sahafa wa al-sultat al-misriyya minha min sanat 1882 ila 1952* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Ittihad al-'Aam li al-'Ummal, 1967), 73. In fact, there is yet another link between Cairo's tobacco workers and the theater: Jirji Tannus, who was one of the speakers at the cigarette rollers' strike of 1901 in Cairo, was very likely the same person as George (Jirji) Tannus, the writer and translator of various plays, including Voltaire's adaptation of Proteus into *Fi sabil al-dustur*, (a play that also seems to have been known as *Kayfa yunal al-dustur*, as well as the widely popular *Fatat al-hurriyya*). Tannus was also a journalist, a theater critic, and the artistic director of many troupes. In 1904, he even founded his own troupe, Mujtama' al-tamthil al-'asri, which performed many of his plays, including *Shahid al-'arsh, al-Sha'ab wa al-qaysar*, and *Fatat al-hurriyya*. The activities of this troupe came to an end in late 1908. Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith,* 171.

[99] Nukhayli, *al-Haraka al-'ummaliyya fi Misr,* 42.

[100] In Egypt, theatrical performances were banned in 1888, but it is not known when the ban was lifted. In Syria, the ban was imposed some time in the late 1880s and lifted in 1906.

[101] Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 80.

[102] al-Qasimi and al-'Azm, *Qamus al-sina'at al-shamiyya, in Khatib, Nazariyat al-Masrah, vol. 1*, 131–32.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] See Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

[105] Although the theater's opponents argued that theatrical performances made their audience lazy and unproductive, the stage was simultaneously appropriated by certain political groups precisely in order to teach the masses how to stop being lazy and unproductive and specifically to convince them to quit consuming hashish and alcohol.

[106] Is not quite clear when laws concerning the theater in Egypt and in the Ottoman Empire were first formulated; Najm refers to a body of laws specific to the theater and dating back to 1874, but it is likely that there must have been an earlier set of rules and regulations dating back from the Tanzimat period. *Nizam al-masrah* (1874), reproduced in Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 21–22.

[107] Rules and regulations regarding the behavior of actors as well as spectators in the theater

were not only imposed by the state, but were also underlined by the press and a larger bourgeois radical elite, which regularly made it a point to teach its readers the proper manners during theatrical performances.

[108] *Nizam al-Masrah* (1874), in *Najm, Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 21.

[109] *Ibid*.

[110] *Ibid*.

[111] *Ibid*.

[112] *Ibid*.

[113] Although municipalities were under the jurisdiction of the state, their relationship to the urban population and to the theater differed from that of the state.

[114] "Deuxième annexe au procès verbal de la Commission Municipale du 29 juin 1904: règlement sur les théâtres arrêté par la Commission Municipale dans sa séance du 29 juin 1904," AMA/DM, June 29, 1904, 201.

[115] *Ibid*., article 1.

[116] *Ibid*., article 23.

[117] The issue of censorship is crucial for shedding light on the different developments of the theater in Egypt and Syria. For one, it helps explain the difference in terms of the number of plays written and produced: from the 1880s onward, the Egyptian theater flourished, in quantity if not in quality, catching up and quickly surpassing its Syrian counterpart, the latter being severely affected by the harsh censorship that reigned over Syria until 1908. Censorship was also one of the many catalysts for the emigration of many intellectuals, and the theater in Egypt was to greatly benefit from this exodus. However, the lines remain extremely blurred when it comes to separating the permissible from the forbidden; can one really claim that the situation in Egypt allowed for greater freedom of expression, on stage and in public life generally, than that which existed in the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian years (1876 and 1908)? And conversely, did the situation radically improve in Syria after the Young Turk revolution? If so, how did it compare to Egypt? These fundamental questions are virtually impossible to answer with any certainty.

[118] Yaghi, *Fi juhud al-masrahiyya al-'arabiyya*, 52.

[119] The "alliance" between the press and the theater must have been partly strengthened by the fact that these two spheres were run by and large the same number of individuals. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a great number of journalists were also involved in the theatrical world (Naqqash, Ishaq, and Sannu'a, to name just a few). This was linked to the emergence of an intellectual category. Through its involvement with the press, the theater and educational institutions, this

category or class had access to means of articulating and disseminating its ideas. The concomitant emergence of the world of the press and that of the theater and the overlap between them magnified the tremendous social impact of these institutions.

[120] Exceptions to the rule could be found, however: for instance, whereas *al-Liwa', al-Jarida*, and *La Réforme* in 1910 opposed government crackdown on the theater, *al-Watan* was in favor of such practices. State-owned newspapers obviously reflected the official version, whereas other papers had clear political affiliations.

[121] *Al-Ahram* (August 20, 1908), in '*Awad, Al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah*, 12.

[122] It would play a similarly vital role in rallying the population's support for strikers by publishing petitions in which workers expressed their grievances and laid down their conditions for resuming work.

[123] Interestingly, works of Shakespeare, Molière, Racine, Voltaire, and Dumas, to name just a few, were translated more than once; for example, Voltaire's Merope was translated and adapted for the stage at least three times in the 1870s and 1880s in Beirut. See Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 154. Even more surprisingly, the same work would sometimes get translated more than once in the space of a year or two. There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon: first, the translations took place in different cities and were not well "advertised," which meant that every locus of theatrical life (at an urban or even at a literary group level) needed to have its own translation and adaptation for the stage. A second potential explanation is that some translations were deemed mediocre, and the challenge was picked up by another translator to produce a better version. A third explanation might have been that some translations were in fusha, whereas others were in colloquial Arabic: for instance, Sadgrove suggests that Jalal's translations of Molière and Racine's plays were in the Egyptian dialect, whereas the Syrian translations were in *fusha* and were set to music and song, a feature absent from Jalal's translations. Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 102. Whatever the reasons, the fact that there were numerous translations of one single work points to the popularity of such works and hence to their "canonical status."

[124] The first Arabic play performed in Alexandria was entitled *Abu al-Hasan al-mughaffal aw Harun al-Rashid*, and was based on a story in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. The play, which had first been staged in Beirut in 1850 by Marun Naqqash, was performed by his nephew Salim's troupe in Beirut before being staged by the same company at the Zizinia theater of Alexandria in December 1876. Ibid., 128.

[125] See, for instance, al-Ahdab's plays. For an introduction to these plays, see Najm, *Al-Ahdab*.

[126] The production of scripts exclusively for the theater seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. Many if not most of the plays performed around 1900 were adaptations to the stage of a "*riwaya*," a confusing term as it designated both novel and script. Besides translations and adaptations from the classical European theatrical repertoire, most plays performed were either adaptations of novels written in Arabic or novels translated and adapted from French and occasionally

English. Hence, even when the "script" itself is not available, we have an idea of the topics addressed by the play, if it had been adapted from a European or an Arabic novel. The overlap between novel and script is conveyed quite vividly in Farah Antun's article "Fann al-riwaya" in which Antun constantly jumps between the "read" and the "acted" *riwaya*. See Farah Antun, "Fann al-riwaya" (The Art of the Novel/Play), *al-Jarida*, part 8 (1906): 305–11, reproduced in Michel Jiha, *Farah Antun* (Beirut: Riyad al-Rayyis, 1998), 173–82.

[127] For instance, in 1881 Khayyat' s company presented in Alexandria a play entitled "The Unjust Suffer Adversities" that seemed to have been based on Voltaire's Merope. Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 154. Another one of Voltaire's plays, Proteus, was translated and performed by Jirji Tannus in Cairo (between 1904 and 1908), and in Jerusalem in 1908. (That show was sponsored by the Grand Lodge of Jerusalem.) See 'Awad, *Al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah*, 88, and Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 171.

[128] Victorien Sardou (1831–1908), whose *Patrie*, written in 1869 and set in the late sixteenth century, glorified the Flemish rising against the Spanish king and combined constitutional, patriotic, and anti-clerical themes, was immensely popular in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria in the early twentieth century, both as text and as play. One of the lines in the play was "*Nous ne voulons pas de roi-despote, soldat brutal, moine avide*." On this play's performance in the three cities, see Ramsis, *Al-Tarikh al-sirri li al-masrah*, 25.

[129] Salama Hijazi established a theater, Dar al-Tamthil al-'Arabi, around 1905. One of the plays performed there in September of that year was *Ibn al-sha'ab*. This was in fact a play by Alexandre Dumas (the elder), translated by Farah Antun as *Nubugh wa ikhtilal, aw riwayat fannan*, a "political and literary play" about an actor in nineteenth England, and an attack on social inequalities. 'Awad, *Ittijahat siyasiyya fi al-masrah qabla thawrat 1919* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Amma li al-Kitab, 1979), 101.

[130] *Ibid*., 75.

[131] Farah Antun (1874–1922) was another key thinker whose ideas shaped the articulation of socialist and radical thought in the Arab world. Born in Tripoli and educated at the Orthodox school in Kaftin, North Lebanon, he left school to work in the family business; unlike Shumayyil, he wasn't part of SPC's "intellectual elite." In 1897, he moved to Alexandria and founded a periodical, al-Jami'a al-'uthmaniyya, which then became al-Jami'a. Like al-Muqtataf and al-Hilal, al-Jami'a's mission was to popularize western ideas on science, social issues, and literature. However, the paper encountered difficulties, after Antun got into a religious debate with the religious reformer Muhammad 'Abduh on secularism and the nature of Islam and Christianity. Antun left Egypt for New York, where al-Jami'a came to an end. Antun then returned to Cairo. Probably the second most influential leftist thinker in the Arab world after Shibli Shumayyil (chronologically speaking), Antun's brand of socialism differed from Shumayyil's in two main aspects: first, he was attracted to a rather romanticized brand of socialism, and he chose fiction as a vehicle for his vision of socialism (including his 1904 novel, *al-Din wa al-'ilm wa al-mal*). In Antun's romantic view of socialism (unlike Shumayyil's socialism), religion had a place, albeit a noninstitutionalized and more mystical form of religion, but he insisted that religion be kept out of public life. The second element that distinguished Antun's socialism from

Shumayyil's was Antun's clear opposition to the British occupation in Egypt, whereas Shumayyil was more ambivalent about the matter. Indeed, Antun was recruited by Muhammad Farid to write and edit for various Watani party publications, such as *al-Liwa*' and *Misr al-fatat*. For more information on Farah Antun, see Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*; Michel Jiha, *Farah Antun*; Reid, *The Odyssey of Farah Antun*; idem, "The Syrian Christians and Early Socialism in the Arab World;" Sa'id, *Thalath lubnaniyyin fi al-Qahira: Shibli Shumayyil, Farah Antun, Rafiq Jabbur*.

[132] The play *Hana' al-muhibbin*, which enjoyed great popularity in the 1890s, provides a good example. Its plot revolves around the "classical" premise of a seemingly impossible love story between two people from different backgrounds, with the father of the would-be bride invariably opposed to the wedding. Written by Isma'il 'Asim in *fusha*, this play, which offered a biting social critique of class rigidity and patriarchy, seems to have enjoyed great popularity. It was performed twice in Cairo in 1893 by the popular troupe of Iskandar Farah and later in Cairo and in cities of the delta by other troupes, including Salama Hijazi's and George Abyad's. Isma'il 'Asim, *Al-A'mal al-kamila*, studied and edited by 'Ali Isma'il (Cairo: Dar Zahrat al-Sharq, 1996), 3.

[133] Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 39–52.

[134] 'Asim, *Al-A'mal al-kamila*, 3.

[135] See for example his play Sultan Salaheddin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, written in 1914. On this play, see Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 329.

[136] As seen through his play "Misr al-jadida wa Misr al-qadima" of 1913.

[137] See the section "Bourgeois Morality and the Making of a Working Class."

[138] A widely held belief among even the most radical intellectuals of Cairo, Alexandria, and especially Beirut was that, in order to prepare the grounds for an all-encompassing Revolution—that is, a social revolution as well as a political one—the first and most urgent task was to rid society of religious intolerance. In the words of one such thinker who professed to have spent many years studying the topic of revolutions and how to conduct them, "the most important issue, before spreading the revolution, is to kill religious intolerance in whose presence revolutions cannot be cultivated." George Hubayqa, "Letter to Rihani," Cairo, January 9, 1903, in Rihani, ed., *Al-Rihani wa mu'asiruhu: rasa'il al-udaba' ilayhi*, 47–50.

[139] On the impact of the French Revolution on Ottoman thinkers generally, see the special issue of Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée (REMMM) devoted to that subject. *Les Arabes, les Turcs et la Révolution française*, edited by Daniel Panzac, REMMM (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud), no. 52-54 (1990), as well as *Ra'if Khuri, Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab East*, translated by Ihsan 'Abbas; revised and edited by Charles Issawi (Princeton, NJ: Kingston Press, 1983).

[140] The French Revolution's introduction onto the Ottoman Arab stage most likely took place through the Marseillaise, which was sung on stage during many performances that had little to

do with the French Revolution. Authors of plays sometimes borrowed a French tune to accompany Arabic lyrics and eventranslated the lyrics. Among the songs whose lyrics and tune were particularly popular was the Marseillaise, sung for instance during the performance of Antun Shuhaybar's *Mudda'i al-sharaf*, performed in Beirut's Jewish school in the 1890s. Moreh and Sadgrove, *Jewish Contributions to 19th Century Arabic Theatre*, 90.

[141] For instance, Dumas's *Ange Pitou* and Sardou's *Robespierre* (1895), as well as an adaptation of Rihani's work on the French Revolution. For details on their performances on stage, see Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*.

[142] Their popularity can be gauged by the number of times these plays were performed and their "scripts" read. Dumas's work was particularly appreciated. One of his plays was translated as "al-Burj al-Ha'il" by Farah Antun, before being published in Alexandria and produced there and in Cairo some time around 1898. See Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 22. See footnote 86.

[143] See George Hubayqa's letter to Rihani: "I distributed your book on the French Revolution among various dailies: *al-Muqattam*, *al-Ahram*, *Misr, al-Watan, al-Khazzan, al-Ra'i al-'aam, al-Ra'id al-misri, al-Mu'ayyad*. Yussuf [Rihani, Amin's brother who lived in Cairo for three years] took a copy and I sent another one to the khedivial press. That is, ten copies, except the ones you sent me personally, which still remain with me. I could not follow the dailies to see what they have written about [your book]...I am sending you the article in al-Muqattam which reviewed it." George Hubayqa, "Letter to Rihani," Cairo, January 9, 1903, in Rihani, ed., *Al-Rihani wa mu'asiruhu: rasa'il al-udaba' ilayhi*, 48.

[144] Musa, Tarbiyat Salama Musa, 52; my emphasis. It is telling to compare this view of French literature and French drama, as revolutionary, to that of a French priest based in Alexandria around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Reporting about the "corrupt morals" of Alexandrians and their lack of interest in religious matters, the priest complained that "*tout ce qu'il y a de mauvais dans la littérature française, arrive à Alexandrie. On lit tout, et on ne trouve d'attrait au théâtre que s'il est équivoque, grossier, scabreux, etc*." In letter n.s., n.d., Archives Saint-François-Xavier (ASFX), 519 C (1).

[145] *Ibid*., 55–57.

[146] On this topic, see the writings of Adib Ishaq and many others in Khuri, *Modern Arab Thought*. For a broader non-Arab Ottoman context, see Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*; Sükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Bozarslan, "Les Courants de pensée dans l'Empire ottoman."

[147] Shibl Damos, "Letter to Rihani," May 28, 1901, in Rihani, ed., *Al-Rihani wa mu'asiruhu: rasa'il al-udaba' ilayhi,* 25. Damos was most likely writi ng from Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he and his brother were based.

[148] According to Bozarslan, when the news of the Unionist coup reached Istanbul, Doctor Ahmed Bey entered the School of Medicine singing the *Marseillaise* at the top of his lungs. Bozarslan, *Les Courants de pensée dans l'Empire ottoman*, 148.

[149] Hannah Arendt, *Essay on Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), quoted in French in *Ibid*., 151.

[150] Or, as Arendt suggested, it was the continuation of the French Revolution: "If it is true, as Marx said, that the French Revolution had been played in Roman clothes, it is equally true that each of the following revolutions, up to and including the October Revolution, was enacted according to the rules and events that led from the fourteenth of July to the ninth of Thermidor and the eighteenth of Brumaire...It was not in our time but in the middle of the nineteenth century that the term 'permanent revolution,' or even more tellingly *révolution en permanence*, was coined (by Proudhon) and, with it, the notion that 'there never has been such a thing as several revolutions, that there is only one revolution, selfsame and perpetual.' " Arendt, *Essay on Revolution*, 44.

[151] Unfortunately, nothing is known about this character. He might have been the same "Hubayqa" as the one whose name appears on the membership list of Alexandria's Université Populaire Libre in 1901–3.

[152] George Hubayqa, "Letter to Rihani," Cairo, September 1, 1903, in Rihani, ed., *Al-Rihani wa mu'asiruhu: rasa'il al-udaba' ilayhi*, 47–50.

[153] *Ibid*.

[154] *Ibid*.

[155] Antun Gemayyil was *al-Ahram*'s editor. The play, written in 1908, was a one-act celebration of the 1908 coup, glorifying the roles of Niyazi Bey and Enver Bey in bringing about the constitutional revolution. It was staged during a literary Ottoman party in Cairo, in August 1908, by a troupe of young Syrian literati. 'Awad, *Ittijahat siyasiyya fi al-masrah*, 76.

[156] In December 1908 the play Fatat al-dustur was performed in Cairo or Alexandria, in the teatro 'Abbas, and "when Alfonse effendi Zakkur [clearly a Syrian] acted the role of Midhat Pasha, the audience clapped very hard . . . and cried." Ibid., 83.

[157] Most notably the Spanish "revolution" celebrated in the Ferrer play.

[158] Jamil Ma'luf, letter to Rihani, Zahle, May 7, 1909, in Rihani, ed., *Al-Rihani wa mu'asiruhu: rasa'il al-udaba' ilayhi*, 99.

[159] Rihani, letter to Munir Bek, president of the Commercial Court in Beirut, Frayke 1908, in Rihani, Rasa'il 1896–1940, 125. It is not clear whether Rihani's play ever got performed; Landau asserts that it was produced in Beirut in 1909, which means that it took some months of negotiations before Rihani got his way. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, footnote 456, 249.

[160] On this important theme, see, among others, Hanioglu's *Preparation for a Revolution*, as well as Bozarslan's *Courants de pensée dans l'Empire ottoman*.

[161] This was not the first time, but, in that period, it was becoming more of a trend. In 1873, Namik Kemal and his friends had ended up in exile because they had performed a play based on the Turco-Russian war, and the public had gotten overly excited by it. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 66–67.

[162] Performed by Hasan Kamil, who generally seems to have recited many monologues with a social agenda. See "al-Bank al-Zira'i," in Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 78–80.

[163] "The bankers Susa have taken your money and ours." Ibid., 78.

[164] Hafiz Ibrahim and Isma`il Sabri's play *Hadithat jarih Beirut* (*The Incident of the Wounded of Beirut*) was about Italy's invasion of Libya and the subsequent bombardment of Beirut in 1911. Salama Hijazi turned it into a musical and distributed the roles. It was first performed in Damascus by his troupe and then performed in Cairo by George Abyad's troupe in 1912 in the Khedival Opera Theater, and very likely in Alexandria and Beirut as well. See Bulbul, *Al-Masrah al-suri fi mi'at sana*, 118–19, as well as Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 118. One contemporary witness, Wasfi al-Maleh, described going to attend a performance of that play in Damascus in 1911, as "the first terrifying political incident" of his life: "the [theater] room which could fit 800 people, contained those 800, with another 300 people standing...The play was supposed to come after the performance of another play. There were some delays after the entr'acte...after some time, the director appeared with the chief of police and announced that the performance of the play had been forbidden...the public was furious, and speeches were given...in which it was suggested that the play be performed by force... then the police intervened, and the troupe spent the night in prison. The audience [which included a high number of notables and present and future political leaders, such as 'Abdulrahman al-Shabandar and Shukri al-'Asli] sent a telegraph to the Porte protesting about such measures." Quoted in Bulbul, *Al-Masrah al-suri fi mi'at sana*, 118–19.

[165] Such was the fate of the troupe performing Hadithat jarih Beirut in 1911 in Damascus. Bulbul, *Al-Masrah al-suri fi mi'at sana*, 118–19. The actors in the Ferrer play were luckier: they were put on trial but acquitted.

[166] This chapter focuses on the tensions between church and stage, because they seem to have been particularly strong in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. However, we should keep in mind that there were occasional clashes between ulama and the stage as well. There does not seem to have been a unified position by the Muslim clergy on the topic. Ulama could be as supportive of the theater as they could vociferously oppose it, and some ulama and sheikhs even wrote their own plays. The lack of one unified voice coming from the ulama is evident in a lengthy discussion that took place in 1911 on the pages of the Damascene al-Haqa'iq on whether the theater was halal or haram. Whereas one sheikh found everything condemnable about the theater (the facts that men were disguised as women and that mockery was haram seem to have displeased him most), another washed his hands from the matter by claiming that he had not been present at the specific performance whose merits were being evaluated. He also insinuated that such matters should be dealt with case by case, rather than issuing an absolute verdict on the theater—an opinion also held by the Mufti of Beirut. *Al-Haqa'iq,* vol. 2 (1911), parts 1-7, reproduced in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah, vol. 1*, 173–223.

[167] There was an impetus among all communities for the establishment of a secular body representing them, *majlis al-milla*, which often challenged the manner in which the church ran the affairs of the community.

[168] See Rihani's letters from 1899, 1900, and 1901, on journalistic feuds among the Syrian press of the Americas, on that issue in Rihani, *Rasa'il 1896–1940*, 21–23.

[169] Such as the epic disputes that raged between al-Bashir, the mouthpiece of the Maronite clergy, and al-Muqtataf.

[170] As commented on by al-Bashir, the mouthpiece of the Jesuits in Beirut, "the students donned the garb of girls and women, and displayed in front of the audience the passion of ardent love and expressions of longing directed at their beloved boyfriends...while we approve of moral plays... and acknowledge their benefit for students, we do not agree on them appearing in theatres (*mala'ib*) dressed as girls and women, uttering words of love from their mouths, because of the lethal venom [of such action] for the morality of the young." al-Bashir, XIX (September 4, 1888), 934, quoted in Moreh and Sadgrove, *Jewish Contributions to 19th Century Arabic Theatre*, 76–77.

[171] To give one example among many: a clash erupted between the students and the clerical teaching body at the Hikma Maronite school of Beirut during a prize distribution, which was accompanied by a play on Joseph. *BBA BEO BEYRUT* 269, Beyrut Gelen, telegraph 188, 1311 [1894]. See also the letter from the Syriac-Catholic patriarch to the wali of Beirut in which the patriarch "expresses his displeasure at the performance of a play in French which offends Christian sentiments." Unfortunately, the play in question is unknown. It seems this letter was a copy of the petition signed by various bishops and sent to the wali on February 25, 1322 (1904–1905). *The Greek Orthodox Archives of Beirut*, Beirut: Beyr 1594.

[172] The aftermath of the Unionist revolution of 1908 was to accentuate anticlericalism, as well as push more toward the Left various groups that had been vaguely sympathetic to leftist ideas.

[173] See Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) as well as Laila Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1994). In Makdisi's words, "for the Maronite Church, the Kisrawan revolt [of 1858] could not have come at a more awkward moment. In 1858, Patriarch Bulus Mas'ad had convened a Maronite council at Bkirke in an effort to lay the moral, spiritual, and educational basis for a modern Maronite clergy and community. Therefore, as the Church was positioning itself as the sole representative of the Maronite 'nation'—as it was deliberately cultivating a self-consciously modern image—it was paralyzed by a popular movement that, according to an advisor to the Patriarch, threatened the ta'ifa with 'destruction.'" Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 103.

[174] Hakim-Dowek, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea,* 273.

[175] The text of the petition was the following: "It is being exposed (ma'rud) to your highness

that an acting troupe came to Beirut, and that, after it had defied the sanctity of proper conduct (intahaka hurmat al-adab) in what it performed in terms of immoral plays (riwayaat khila'iyya) which... was not appropriate for young women to view, it proceeded to insult the honor of our Christian religion, by mocking our beliefs, and by...making slanderous accusations about our spiritual leaders, such as...murder and robbery and deceit despite their being known for their many good deeds and their [efforts in] spreading them in the service of knowledge...but what has added to our sadness and increased our protests, is that those who could have controlled the situation (*man bi yadihim zimam al-umur*), such as the chief police, were their allies; they did not pay attention to the protests of our spiritual leaders and the leaders of our associations, but rather, they allowed the troupe to perform scenes which are insulting/demeaning to our holy creed. The head of police was treating whomever among us showed his disapproval, as if he were a convict and a criminal, whereas he was facilitating the task of the infringers...And since this act was mukhillan li al-adab, so very injurious to our holiest of feelings and our noblest of sentiments, causing worry and tension (*tanafur*) among one religion and another, and between religious and non-religious people (*mutadayyinin wa ghayr mutadayyinin*), and insulting (*mumtahinan*) to proper conduct and religion and morality between the people, which are the basis of religion and civilization ('*umran*) against the spirit of the dustur and its text, and against the intentions of the government, we have come forth with this petition, protesting against these outrages (*fadhai'*), impatiently awaiting (*taskinan li al-khawatir*) the legal punishment of those responsible. We are thankful to your excellency." *BBA DH-SYS* 64-24, #9, 6.5.1329 [April 18, 1911].

[176] See the letter of protest, dated April 18, 1911; at least fifty-seven copies of it, typed and in Arabic, were sent to the Ministry of the Interior in Istanbul, each one of them containing between forty to ninety seals or signatures. In other words, if each petition was signed by sixty-five people on average, this meant that a total of around three thousand seven hundred individuals signed the same letter of protest. Ibid.

[177] Among others, see Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," in *Poetics Today, International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 156-90.

[178] Briefly, the UPL was founded as a collaborative effort between Italian militant anarchists based in Alexandria and members of a progressive and cosmopolitan elite, many of whom were on the municipality board of the city.

[179] The Parisian Université Populaire had been connected to the establishment of the Théâtre civique in June 1897. Lucien Mercier, *Les Universités populaires*, 1899-1914: *Education populaire et mouvement ouvrier au début du siècle* (Paris: les éditions ouvrières, 1986), 31. The link between the university and the Egyptian theater was further strengthened by Ya'qub Sannu'a's connection to the Parisian Coopération des Idées, a progressive organization presided over by Deherme, the founder of the Universités populaires. After his exile to Paris in the 1878, Sannu'a continued writing plays and stayed in contact with Egyptian dramatic figures and reformists. (He himself had been a member of al-Afghani's circle in the 1870s and remained a convinced reformist.) Sannu'a's lecture, in October 1902, at the Coopération des Idées, indicates that the Egyptian dramatist had ties with progressive and anarchist circles in Europe; it is highly likely that he even played a central role in pushing for the

establishment of a UPL branch in Alexandria.

[180] Theatrical reviews were a regular feature in *al-Nur* and its continuation, *al-Hurriyya*. They were of plays Muja'is or other contributors had attended, including ones performed in Cairo, which were reviewed by *al-Hurriyya*'s correspondent in Cairo, Husayn Wasfi Rida, in his rubric "Fi al-tariq."

[181] In fact, almost every member of that circle was involved in the theater at some point or another, between 1904 and 1909, and probably later. To mention a few examples of many: Mallat's poetry was incorporated into theatrical performances; in addition to the Ferrer play of 1909, Muja'is wrote a play that was performed during the industrial and agricultural exhibition in Shuwayr; Khairallah Khairallah wrote Peace to the Syrian Land, which was performed, in French, by a French troupe passing by Beirut. *Al-Nur* (January 15, 1908), 606.

[182] A sentiment expressed by Husayn Rida, a correspondent to *al-Hurriyya* based in Cairo, and a member of the Syrian radical circle that put on the Ferrer play. In Rida's words, "I read a lot about the drama of socialism with [the murder of] its leader Ferrer; I saw authors write [about it] very powerfully; however they could not move me the way I was moved [when I saw the play]." H. Rida, "Fi al-tariq," *al-Hurriyya* (November 20, 1909), 270–73.

[183] See, for example, Marun Naqqash's view on the theater as discussed in the introduction.

[184] *Al-Ahram*, 1342 (March 10, 1882), quoted in Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, 155–56.

[185] "Al-Tamthil al-'arabi: nahdatuhu al-akhira 'ala yadd al-janab al-'ali," *al-Hilal* (May 1, 1910), 464.

[186] Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*. Many of the monologues were in colloquial Arabic, often combining Syrian and Egyptian dialects.

[187] Out of seventeen monologues, five are authorless, three are by Dr. Ibrahim al-Shududi, one by Amin Taqiyyeddin, one by George Alfa, one by Khalil Mutran, one by Tanios 'Abduh (all Syrians); another is by Fu'ad Salim (origin unknown), one by Ahmad Muharram, one by Mahmud Khayrat, and one by Isma'il Sabri and Hafiz Ibrahim. The Syrians of Egypt, the Shawam, played a special role in the cultural and intellectual life of Egypt and specifically in the formation of a radical leftist movement.

[188] *Al-Iqdam*, March 30, 1908, quoted in Amin 'Ezzeddin, *Sirat muthaqqaf thawri: al-Mansuri* (Cairo: Dar al-Ghadd al-'Arabi, 1984), 32. We do not know whether such a party existed, but the fact that Shududi could have been a member of such a party is suggestive of his radical sympathies.

[189] Najib Rihani, *Mudhakkarat Najib al-Rihani*, 16.

[190] One gathering at Shumayyil's house brought together a handful of people, including Tanios Effendi 'Abduh, "the poet." Shumayyil, in Razzuq, ed., *Hawadith wa khawatir*, 255. 'Abduh also

translated Hamlet. See Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 16.

[191] Ibrahim Shududi, "Shubban al-Azbakiyya,"in *Ibid*., 39–52.

[192] They wore pink and swung their hips. *Ibid*., 40.

[193] *"t'la'i al-gada' mashi muhalfadh, khaif 'ala ruhu min al-'ayn*
fi hudumihi mashdud wa muqammat, rah yanfaliq min 'ujbihi ithnayn
wa al-bantalun rah yinsharmat, min kitr dayqihi 'ala al-fakhdhayn."
Ibid. Similar description of the dandy—perfumed, wearing skin-tight pants, and swinging his hips—appears in one of Amin Taqiyyeddin's monologues. Amin Taqiyyeddin, "Fata al-'asr," in Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 63–66.

[194] "Shubban al-Azbakiyya," in *Ibid*., 43.

[195] See Ibrahim Shududi, "Wasf al-mar'a al-sharqiyya," in Ibid., 53–63, which uses Arabicized French and Italian expressions.

[196] *Ibid*., 56.

[197] "Shubban al-Azbakiyya," in *Ibid*., 52.

[198] Upper-class women offered the only hope to an otherwise unreformable upper class. Whereas upper-class wives also contributed to dilapidating their husbands' capital (hence damaging the Egyptian economy), female education could put an end to this trend. One of Ibrahim al-Shududi's monologues begins on a very misogynous tone accusing upper-class westernized women of ruining their husbands by playing poker and generally leading a life of laziness and leisure, and even neglecting their children. However, the tone suddenly changes to reveal the author's sympathy to women who not only took care of men in their capacity as mothers and wives, but were full of potential and could equal, if not actually surpass men. The truth was that upper-class men were useless and spent all their time and money in tavernas: "what does it mean: it is permissible for a man to spend his nights in khans, drinking, gambling continuously, playing the roulette for hours?" If women were superficial and uneducated, it was the men's fault: "from where would [women] get an education, while the people in our country are asleep; go and educate them in school so that they don't remain similar to animals and that they surpass us in knowledge." "Wasf al-mar'a al-sharqiyya," in *Ibid*., 53–63.

[199] "Shubban al-Azbakiyya," in *Ibid*., 53.

[200] Al-Bank al-Zira'i," in *Ibid*., 80.

[201] "Ibn al-dar," in *Ibid*., 85.

[202] Isma`il Sabri and Hafiz Ibrahim, *Jarih Bayrut*, in Ibid., 122. The same advice appears in another monologue, "roll up your sleeves . . . follow the Japanese model" in"Ibn al-dar," in Ibid., 85. Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, the first victory of an "Eastern" power over a "Western" one, had

an immense impact on Ottoman society, as it triggered hope for the East's revival and triumph over Western imperialism. Hafiz Ibrahim composed a famous poem, "The Japanese Maiden," celebrating the victory of Japan over Russia, and Mustafa Kamil wrote a book (*The Rising Sun*) on the very same topic. See Farag, *Al-Muqtataf 1876-1900*, 308. In fact, in some cases, the infatuation with Japan and the belief that it was the ultimate proof of an Eastern country's ability to progress and be secular even predates the Russo-Japanese war. Farag's work on al-Muqtataf shows how, starting in 1880, the periodical held the belief that "the case of Japan was unique and, without it . . . one would have given up the idea of Progress in the East as hopeless." The periodical had devoted many articles on Japan, which "had only yesterday emerged from the dark ages," and compared Japan's remarkable accomplishments to Egypt's lagging behind in issues such as secularism, intellectual independence from Europe, and industrialization. Farag, *al-Muqtataf 1876–1900*, 307–17.

[203] Isma'il Sabri and Hafiz Ibrahim, Jarih Beirut; Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 122; my emphasis. This play was performed on March 19, 1912 at the Opera, Cairo.

[204] This was the self-proclaimed aim of the amateur troupe established in Alexandria in 1894 by employees of the Egyptian post under the presidency of Salim 'Atallah. Jirji Zaidan, *Tarikh aadab al-lugha al-'arabiyya*, vol. 4, 87 (Cairo, 1937), quoted in Najm, *Al-Masrahiyya fi al-adab al-'arabi al-hadith*, 178.

[205] Such were the rules and regulations of the amateur troupe established in Alexandria by Egyptian post employees. *Ibid.*

[206] *"u'a min al-bunuk; dol wa hayat abuk,*
nawiyin yilhasuk wa yisfu al-madina."
"Al-Bank al-Zira'i," in Qabbani, ed., *Bughiyat al-mumaththilin*, 78. The city, rather than the "nation," was the chosen unit in this monologue.

[207] *Ibid.*

[208] George Alfa, "Al-Azma al-iqtisadiyya," in *Ibid.*, 89–90.

[209] "It is my blood and yours which they [the Agricultural bank and the pashas] have sucked." "Al-Bank al-Zira'i," in *Ibid.*, 78.

[210] "Shubban al-Azbakiyya" in *Ibid.*, 41.

[211] *Ibid.*, 51–52.

[212] Qabbani, ed., Bughiyat al-mumaththilin, 131. As we have previously mentioned, there were many articles in the press on how to conduct oneself in the theater. The middle class wished to monitor and regulate the behavior of audiences as well as the cast. Qabbani, for instance, emphasized the need for actors to have "proper manners" (*muhadhdhab al-akhlaq*). *Ibid.*, 36.

[213] See "Min kitab 'iyyak,'" translated into Arabic by Ibrahim Ramzi Effendi, in *Ibid.*, 133.

[214] "al-Tamthil al-'arabi," in *al-Hilal* (1905), reproduced in Khatib, ed., *Nadhariyyat al-masrah*, vol. 1, 145–54.

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